



Superintendent's Report September 9, 2021

With the added excitement of a tropical storm, our schools opened on September 2, 2021! I want to thank everyone for their understanding that we needed to have a delayed opening. A HUGE thank you to our custodians and maintenance staff who worked all night long to remediate the groundwater that flooded Hillside School and to clean the classrooms. Their dedication and hard work overnight on Wednesday, September 1, 2021, is what allowed us to open with the delay on Thursday, September 2, 2021. They are truly heroes!

Our teachers did an outstanding job in preparing their classrooms and lessons for our students' arrival on September 2 and 3, 2021. I applaud their great efforts. The students with whom I have spoken over these first four days have all shared that they are happy to be back in school! It is wonderful to have all of our instructional spaces abuzz with excitement as teachers, students and administrators are all back together in our two schools.

I acknowledge that we have had a few challenges in the past few days, but assure our community that we are working to correct them.

- One challenge was scanning all of the students into school in a timely manner. As announced yesterday, we will no longer have parents complete a daily health questionnaire and students will no longer be scanned into school. Our new procedure is that parents will complete an attestation form in the Realtime Parent Portal to promise that they will monitor students' health each day and will not send students to school if they are ill or have COVID-19 symptoms. This started today and did hasten entry into the schools.
- Another challenge is that both schools have a start and end time that is only five minutes apart. We are aware of the challenge this creates for families with students in both schools. Please know that we are working to remedy this in the future, but for now, please know that students will not be marked tardy at either school until 8:45 a.m. so this allows 25 minutes between dropping students at one school and then driving to the next school.
- Some parents have been inquiring as to why we aren't allowing students to enter the school buildings earlier than the announced time. In years past, students were able to arrive early and line up in the hallways. This is not possible this year due to Covid-19 social distancing guidelines and we don't have enough hallway space for students to wait outside classrooms while still keeping three feet of social distance. Further, teachers contractually begin their supervision of students at 8:30 a.m. We ask for your understanding in our efforts to keep schools open and not spreading COVID-19, especially among our unvaccinated students.
- Lastly, some parents were upset about subscription bus service. The district is not required to arrange this service, but we did arrange it with Rinaldi Transportation to support our families that wanted bus service. The issue was that Rinaldi Transportation

needed at least 40 students to provide the service. There weren't enough families who registered and paid the fee. However, thank you to Mr. Villanueva, who worked with Rinaldi to get the subscription bus to start on Monday, September 13, 2021.

Back to School Nights will be held this month. We were hoping that they could take place in person, but with the goal of doing whatever is necessary to keep our schools open, we have decided that it is safer to have virtual Back-to-School Nights, as we did last year. It just isn't prudent to have potentially 20 – 40 parents in one classroom at a time. Teachers will lead the Back-to-School Night sessions via Zoom from their classrooms so they can provide a view of the classroom for parents. Principals will communicate the information about the Back-to-School Nights and will provide Zoom links for parents to attend. The schedule is as follows:

- PreK: Tuesday September 14, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.
- Grades K – 2 and Ms. Cohen's 4th Grade only: Tuesday, September 14, 2021, beginning at 7:00 p.m.
- Grades 3 – 4 (not Ms. Cohen's 4th grade): Wednesday, September 29, 2021, beginning at 7:00 p.m.
- Grades 5 -6: Tuesday, September 21, 2021
- Grades 7 – 8: Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Our district will be observing Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 – October 15, 2021, to recognize the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States. Students will be reading books by Hispanic and Latino authors, will be learning about Hispanic scientists and engineers, conducting research on Spanish-speaking countries, learning about Hispanic festivals and Latin music and art. This is one part of our District Diversity Council Action plan to highlight cultural awareness month celebrations throughout the school year. One of our district's core beliefs is that "we value diversity and pledge to create a positive culture that safeguards equity, inclusion, dignity and respect for all." When we understand and respect the cultures of our community members, we are a stronger community!

Again, thank you to everyone – administrators, teachers, nurses, counselors, child study team members, secretaries, custodians, business office staff, maintenance staff, technology staff, the PTO and the KPG, parents and students – for everything we did to reopen our schools this year after a tropical storm and in a pandemic!

Vincent Mc Hale