

# Message from Superintendent Jim Murray



## IMPRESSIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

I have had the opportunity to participate in several organizations, including the music and athletic boosters, Kiwanis, Rotary, Knights of Columbus, and the Humboldt Community Foundation. All of them have initiatives in place that will better our school district. Our community's retired teachers have approached me about supporting school supplies for needy families. Another group of parents is exploring ways to better our sports complex at the high school. I golfed in the Cy-Hawk Challenge and left in awe the number of players with a vested interest in supporting our school district. I don't think I impressed them with my duck hook drive across highway three, but I'll work on it. Thank you to all who make a difference in our students' lives.

## "THE REAL DEAL"

I heard the same message throughout my interviews with community members in June and July. They don't want to hear that everything is well as they know education is a challenging profession.

- COVID-19 continues to be our primary challenge. Our average daily attendance rate remains steady at over 90%. Students are out for COVID-related exposure, mostly with relatives. Educating and keeping those students caught up is extremely challenging. The High School staff have been most impacted and utilize a portion of their professional development time to prioritize student makeup work. Staff absenteeism hasn't been unmanageable thanks to the teamwork of employees willing to pitch in where needed.
- Students moving in and out of the district has had a significant impact on our special education rosters. We are currently realigning some special education staff rosters to serve our students best. We are asking a lot of our teachers and appreciate their flexibility.
- Since being hired, I wondered if there was a perception of vaping and drugs at the high school. There have been a few vaping instances at school and no illegal drugs. We will continue our supervision strategies in place. I expect the drug dogs will be at the school during this school year. We will follow the district's code of conduct policies and be firm, fair, and consistent. We know illegal substances are accessible to our students and will continue to provide preventative education and support.
- We are actually down one student from last year. While minimal, it is very challenging for rural Iowa districts to maintain their enrollment numbers.

## Free Meals For All Students Through The Remainder of the School Year

Great news! We will provide free breakfast and lunch meals for the remainder of the school year for all kids ages 18 and under. Kids don't have to be enrolled in our school district to receive them. Students attending school will follow regular routines. There will be a pick-up station daily from 9:00 - 9:30 at the Humboldt High school west doors for children not attending school. The menu is posted on the district website and is subject to change. Contact Melinda Busick, Food Service Director, with any questions. (515)332-3612 or [mbusick@humboldt.k12.ia.us](mailto:mbusick@humboldt.k12.ia.us). Students will be charged for extra purchases including milk, main dish, and sides.

# LEARNING & SUCCESS FOR ALL

## WEATHER CANCELLATIONS & DELAYS:

Be sure to update your contact information in Infinite Campus to receive weather-related school phone messages and texts. If we start late on a Wednesday, **WE WILL NOT** dismiss one hour early.

# HUMBOLDT

Community School District

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

23 3rd St. N.,

Dakota City, IA 50529

**515-332-1330**



[www.humboldt.k12.ia.us](http://www.humboldt.k12.ia.us)



@OfficialHCSD



@humboldt\_csd



**The high school parking lot is complete. Thank you for supporting the project.**



**Creighton Jenness**  
 Director of Special Education  
 & Middle School  
 Assistant Principal

Numerous things are going well at Humboldt Middle School. Our teachers, secretaries, associates, food service, and custodial staff have gone “above and beyond,” and I express my gratitude for all of their work and extra effort. The

students have been doing great with all of the changes they have incurred, and I have genuinely enjoyed getting to know them more each day. One critical initiative at the Middle School is having a predictable system of support in place. We call it a Multi-tiered System of Support, MTSS, to address both academic and behavioral interventions. The Administration team is working closely with Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency staff. Strengthening our MTSS is challenging because it requires coordinating a lot of district resources. Parents are an essential part of the process. Our work will pay great dividends with all of our students’ success in the future.

As Director of Special Education, I feel fortunate to have a strong team of teachers and AEA support staff. I am starting a Special Education Advisory Panel to look at our current practices and improve them for Humboldt. Our goal is to enhance the students’ special education services and strengthen parent relationships.

I have enjoyed meeting with everyone so far, so if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, and I will be happy to help.

**Abby Horbach**  
 Director of Safety and  
 Mental Health &  
 High School Assistant Principal



Hi, I’m Abby Horbach, the High School Assistant Principal and the Director of Safety and Mental Health for the district. We have had a great start to the school year, and we are so happy to have the students back. We want to thank the community for all of their support with our transition after the abrupt ending. Our staff has done an excellent job of building relationships, monitoring our students, and communicating concerns as they arise. Safety is our primary focus, and we are very transparent in our communication.

As stated in my previous article, a positive, safe school environment is crucial to students’ healthy academic and social-emotional development. Our goal is to always be proactive in our efforts as opposed to reactive in our responses. We want to be prepared for everything to best support staff, students, and their families in the best way possible.

With safety in mind, the administrative team met to address specific areas of need. One area we felt was necessary is surveillance. We will be installing more advanced cameras outside in the awesome new high school parking lot and around the many of the buildings where areas may not be as visible on the old system. New doors and locks are being installed in specific areas where the doors may not have closed or locked. Unannounced Drug Dog sweeps will occur this year. None of our administrators are provided advance notice. The administration is increasing building visibility to deter student issues.

To support mental health, counselors, administration, and other specific employees who participated in a recent suicide risk assessment training to best support struggling students. We will also be working with the Area Education Agency Staff throughout the year to develop crisis plans and protocols in an emergency. Lastly, the district partnered with our local sheriff’s office to participate in active shooter professional development. Again, our goal is to be prepared and proactive.

**Mark Wenzel**  
 Twin Rivers Elementary Principal



The last couple of months at Twin Rivers Elementary have been a learning experience for everyone. The families have been so supportive and flexible in adjusting to the changes we continue to make in returning to a consistent routine. The students and staff have learned new skills related to remote learning and a socially distanced classroom. One of the advantages of the small school district is the space to socially distance and have a relaxed mask approach much of the time. The After School program recently started and currently is servicing about 20 students each day, three days a week. The workout room has also become available for community members.

Students at TR had the opportunity to see the “Water Rocks” presentation from Iowa State University. Students are accustomed to having special presentations and field trips from time to time, and Covid-19 has put a halt on many of those experiences. It was nice to have one of those types of presentations for our students. Facilitators conducted the program outside, and masks were worn. Water Rocks gave the students something special to look forward to. Even though it isn’t business as usual, it was a highlight of the school experience.

Students and teachers have been hard at work and just recently completed the beginning of the year assessments. The results are used to make decisions about current instruction and curriculum adjustments to meet each student’s needs. Students have also experienced many hands-on projects, such as learning how to make a video presentation, mail a letter, and plant a tree.

Thank you to everyone from the Twin Rivers and Humboldt Family for continuing to make adjustments and helping us grow during this unique year.

**Chris Hardgrove & Vonda Bindel**  
 School Nurses



We’ve been having a great year so far, considering the challenges associated with a pandemic. Families have done a nice job with keeping sick ones home. Parents have been cooperative with waiting for any test results. They have also been supportive and understanding when kids are sent home until they can safely return. Our teachers have been warriors preparing makeup work for students and using technology: like Zoom and Flipgrid. Our staff continues to work closely and follows COVID-19 guidance from Joleen Sernett at Humboldt County Public Health. Flu season is fast approaching. Symptoms are similar to COVID-19, so we ask families for understanding. We will err on the side of caution and send home more students than usual.

If contacted by the Humboldt County Department of Public Health, please continue to follow their guidelines on when it is safe to return to work or school. Refer to our school policy regarding the 24-hour rule on when to return for other illnesses.

We continue to look forward to a fun-filled and healthy school year!

## Ryan Fedders Taft Elementary Principal



The staff and students at Taft have done a tremendous job of implementing and following our mitigation procedures, which have allowed students to remain safely at school. There have been adjustments along the way, like changing lunch schedules and asking students to wear masks more often, but everyone has taken these adjustments in stride as we've learned together along the way. Thank you, parents, for your flexibility and understanding!

I also want to commend our staff for their flexibility. We stressed an "all hands on deck" approach before the school year began, and everyone has embraced this mentality. Our staff members have gone above and beyond for students from covering lunch or recess duties, subbing for an unfilled staff vacancy, or implementing brand new technology. Our year wouldn't be off to a great start without each of them!

We have completed our beginning of the year screening assessments. Classroom teachers and interventionists are now hard at work, digging through the data to determine student needs and align interventions to best support these needs. We're fortunate to have many experts in this area within our school system! The most significant way that parents/guardians can help support this process is by continuing to read with your child at home each night. You can also reach out to your child's teacher if you have any concerns.

Over the course of my first few months in town, I've enjoyed getting to know parents and community members in Humboldt. I am continuing to try and learn names and faces; there is a lot of work to do on this front! Feel free to email me at [rfedders@humboldt.k12.ia.us](mailto:rfedders@humboldt.k12.ia.us) or call at 515-332-3216 with any questions or concerns you may have!

## Lora Kester Mease Elementary Principal



The Motto at Mease Elementary is, "You never cease to learn at Mease!" We have all been making great strides in learning as we continue to ensure the safety of all students and staff. We have taken our mitigation strategies seriously. Some things we are doing differently include:

- assigned seats in the classroom, specials, and lunchroom
- desks spread apart and few students sitting at a lunch table
- smaller groups out for recess and in lunch
- masks when in the hallway and bathroom
- lots of extra handwashing and hand sanitizer
- extra cleaning in the rooms

The students and staff have been resilient as we continue to put learning first. Students are learning foundational skills in reading and math. We have taken advantage of Autumn to study how trees are changing. Instead of field trips to the fire station, we invited the firemen and trucks here, and we all learned about fire prevention. The children are also learning how to be good friends. We miss parents visiting and volunteering in the building and hope that we can return to that soon. We hope that parent/teacher conferences helped to keep you informed. Feel free to reach out at any time if you have any questions. The school number is 332-3578, and via email ([lkester@humboldt.k12.ia.us](mailto:lkester@humboldt.k12.ia.us)). Parents, please remember to check your email or the website regularly for the Mease Message. It always contains important information.

We look forward to a great year of continued learning!

## Paul Numedahl High School Principal



Hello Wildcat Nation! It's been a busy start to the first quarter of school. We had a great homecoming experience, completed MAP testing, and had much success with our extracurricular programs and activities. Our students have done a tremendous job following our mitigation strategies and guidelines. With the new mask guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Health in place, we have not recently quarantined students due to virus exposure at school. Our ultimate goal is to keep students safe, healthy, and in school.

Cultivating and sustaining an inclusive school community and culture continues to be a top priority. Attendance and participation at school are part of and add to a positive school culture. As a result, the high school staff is taking a closer look at school attendance and participation data. The outcome of this work is increased school attendance and participation to sustain and enhance our vibrant school culture.

Something new this year will be Coffee and Conversation with the principal. This will be an informal gathering taking place once a month. The purpose of these conversations is give people a chance to meet the new high school administration team and to update community members of school events and activities. More details concerning these informal gatherings is coming soon.

In closing, I would like to thank the all Wildcats for welcoming me and my family to the Humboldt community. Humboldt is a truly great place to live, work, and raise a family!

## Megan Douglas K-12 At-Risk Interventionist and Homeless Liaison

Megan Douglas is our new K-12 At-Risk Interventionist and Homeless Liaison. Mrs. Douglas' position is a unique new position this year for the Humboldt Community School District.

In her role as At-Risk Interventionist, Megan takes a team approach to help identify the lagging skills and unsolved problems of students in the district. Megan works to develop a problem-solving plan that the entire team can apply to the students' needs. The process of ensuring that all students graduate high school begins at an early age, working to establish that all students have the skills they need to be successful. Megan helps students set achievable goals to build up the skills they need to be successful in the classroom.

As Homeless Liaison, Megan identifies students and families who are experiencing transitions in their living environments. Once identified, Megan ensures that the student(s) are enrolled and have an equal opportunity to succeed in school. Megan also assists the family in accessing services, including health care, dental services, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services.

In both roles, Megan provides coordination and continuity of care and education for students and their families. Megan also acts as a liaison between the student's care and education experiences to promote consistency, collaboration, and communication amongst all providers and the family. **Megan can be reached at 515-332-9745.**

We have so many positive things going on right now in our district. Thank you again for all of your support! GO CATS!



# Humboldt & Twin Rivers CSD RETURN TO LEARN UPDATE

## THINGS ARE DIFFERENT... NOT ALL OF IT IN A BAD WAY

Who would have thought that my first Superintendency would provide me the opportunity to help lead educational reform? COVID-19 has allowed us to reflect on our current practices and better personalize the students' learning experience. Regardless of the service model, our team is considering ways to ensure an equitable education for all students. Staff's professional development is focused on determining essential standards that all students must proficiently demonstrate. Students utilize technology platforms in everyday face-to-face instruction to seamlessly transition into the Hybrid or Remote models of learning. We continue to monitor and support the emotional health and well-being of our students.



### Be proud of your children.

Students have done a fantastic job transitioning back to school and have complied with all of the mitigation strategies in place. All of us have come to appreciate the opportunities that In-Person instruction provides. Strong personal relationships are critical to our mental health and well-being. I am incredibly proud of our kids.

### How will the district continue to communicate COVID positive cases?

Our practice has been to communicate to all building parents when we have confirmed a student or staff case. Unfortunately, the "New Normal" is that we likely continue the pattern of a few cases per building per week. We will discontinue the building-wide form letters and make personal calls for families most impacted.

### Can we still expect to see the school switch to Hybrid or Remote Learning?

We are working in partnership with the Humboldt County Department of Public Health. We monitor Humboldt County's positivity rate. The other important factor to consider is student and staff daily attendance. Suppose the current rate of spread continues as it is now. In that case, we will stay with In-Person instruction and exhaust all possible resources and mitigation strategies before pivoting to Hybrid or Remote.



## Help Wanted:

**Food Service Workers needed.** We have positions available with a starting wage of \$10.10 per hour with no experience. Single insurance is included.

We are also in great need of **substitutes in all areas**, including custodians, food service, associates, bus drivers, and teachers.

Please contact Rhi Lange at  
(515)332-1330 or [rlange@humboldt.k12.ia.us](mailto:rlange@humboldt.k12.ia.us)