

Message from Superintendent Jim Murray

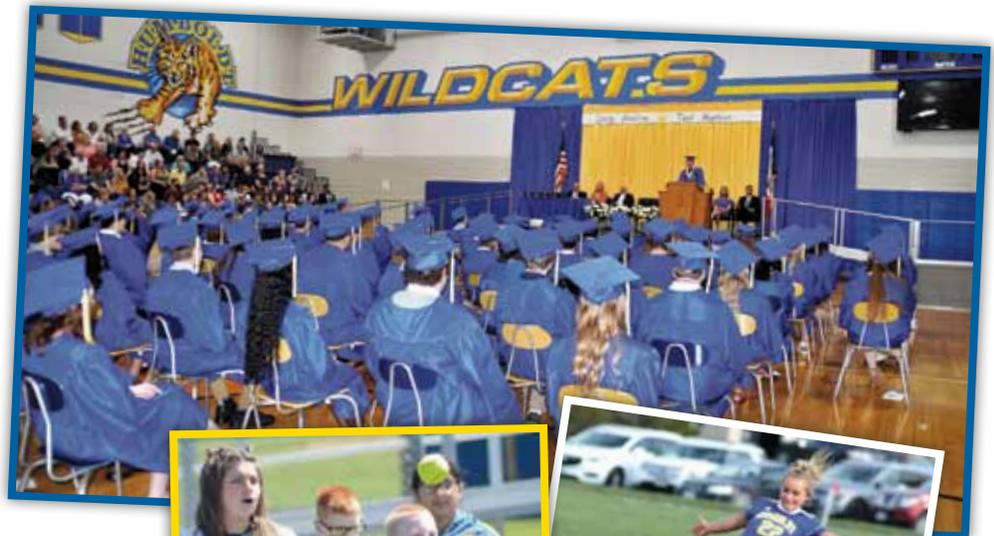


Our historic school year has concluded. We accomplished in-person learning for the entire year. Reflecting on it, I recall the teamwork of teacher leaders, directors, nurses, and health care specialists as we designed a Return to Learn plan and established mitigation strategies to keep our students safe. We received fantastic support from our families and the community as we have maneuvered our way through this pandemic. On May 17, masks became optional for students. We finished the year feeling a sense of normalcy. Through a community effort, we provided our students with opportunities to learn in person and activities to enjoy. On May 23, I experienced my first graduation ceremony. It was hard to hold back emotions related to my daughter graduating and the sense of pride I felt as we achieved our top goal, graduation with so many seniors. Thank you all for your contribution to our year.

“THE REAL DEAL”

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

- Meeting the socio-emotional needs of our students needs to be our highest priority next year. Many of our students are displaying challenging behavior and making choices that could cause harm to themselves or others. We are utilizing our COVID funding and grant opportunities to provide staff with ongoing training throughout next year. If you see Michelle Sleiter, Chief Executive Officer of Humboldt County Memorial Hospital, please thank her. The hospital is providing a full-time licensed independent social worker, Nolan Vitzhum.
- We are having difficulty hiring bus drivers, custodians, food service workers, and some teacher shortage areas. We are doing our best to raise the rate of pay to a competitive wage. Interested folks can apply online or in-person at the Administrative Office.
- Our district received approximately \$1.5 million in COVID money. A minimum of 20% set aside is the requirement for closing the achievement gap from the loss of learning last spring. We will likely use more than the 20% set aside to address academic and social-emotional needs. The funds also support mitigation efforts for improving our facilities. The district is contracting with The Iowa Construction Advocate Team partnered with Estes Construction to do a facilities study to prioritize needs. We have a lot of facility work ahead of us. I welcome stakeholder representatives to participate in committee meetings. Let me know if you are interested.



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



@OfficialHCSD



@humboldt_csd

Mark Wenzel

Twin Rivers Elementary
Principal

Hello Twin Rivers Elementary and Humboldt Community!

As this year draws to a close, I would like to take a moment to share a few thoughts and sentiments about this school year. The beginning of the year looked much different than it had in previous years with masks, social distancing, remote learning, quarantine, cleaning practices, and everything else which required flexibility. It was a year in which everyone explored ways to move forward and address the educational, social emotional, and overall well-being as we adapted and coped with the challenges. I think everyone, at one point or another, felt a little crazy and was sick of all that is COVID-19. For me, this year's priorities were how to help the students and families get into a routine that somewhat resembled a normal school year, while also using the experience to build resilience. We may not have reached all the academic goals we set to accomplish, but I believe we accomplished a much greater threshold of grit. We tried new things in our teaching, some that worked and some that didn't, but all was not lost as we learned from those experiences.

Currently, I plan to enjoy my summer and to reflect on this year, but it is with renewed optimism. The mask mandates are being relaxed. Sports, concerts, and school activities have resumed. Our school schedule has been restructured to resemble what is was before COVID. We will be adopting Core Knowledge of Language Arts (CKLA) next year. CKLA focuses on the science of learning and scores high in EdReports (a resource for evaluating curriculum). Some of these changes should help us make up for lost time and bridge the gap toward academic progress. I am optimistic that students will be able to enrich their face-to-face relationships with their facial expressions and conversations. Relationships are critical to development and resilience. I am happy to see our students finish the year with those experiences and memories. If you have been at Twin Rivers for one of our events, I know you witness the smiles and expressions of our students. They are reconnecting and it is a good thing.

With that, I will end with WE MADE IT!! Thank you students, families, school board, staff and community members. It has been a team effort. Enjoy your summer and recharge as next year is right around the corner.



Abby Horbach

Director of Safety and Mental Health
& High School Assistant Principal

Wow! How is it already the end of the 2020-2021 school year? This was definitely a year of flexibility and change (which isn't always a bad thing!) The kids persevered through everything that was thrown at them! There have been so many great things to celebrate!

Just to recap, all cameras at the high school are up and running including the fiber ones in the parking lot. I was able to get a 55" TV screen hung in my office that displays 35+ cameras up at once! This allows me to monitor multiple areas at a time for student safety and to help address issues as they arise! Being proactive is always our main goal!

The Drug Dogs are fully trained and are ready in full force. We had five dogs make a sweep through the Middle School and High School in late April. Only one point person in the district is aware of when this may be occurring, and other administrators are not alerted until five minutes before the dogs arrive. In the future, the dogs could be making sweeps daily, weekly, or monthly! No one knows!

As I had mentioned in previous articles, our district focus is social emotional learning (SEL) and mental health. HCSD has the opportunity to partner with Humboldt County Memorial Hospital to bring on a School Based Therapist (SBT) who will help address our students' mental health needs. Nolan Vitzthum started the first week of May, and she will be working with students K-12 on individual therapy and their mental health needs. We are so grateful to have this opportunity! Thank you to Michelle Sleiter and team!

Looking into next year's professional development, we will have staff working through the Trauma Informed Online Learning Academy that aligns with Jim Sporleder and Heather Forbes' work around the brain and the impact trauma has. We will also be training two staff members at the High School to present Teen Mental Health First Aid to our 10th-12th grade students. Teachers will also be doing weekly SEL lessons during our Cats time. The anonymous reporting system, the Safe School Helpline, is up and running smoothly. So many positives happening and to look forward to!

With this crazy year coming to a close, I would like to thank everyone for their support this school year! We have had many ups and downs, but we made it!! It is GREAT to be a Wildcat!!!!!! Have a great summer!



Creighton Jenness

Director of Special Education
& Middle School Assistant
Principal

This year has flown by! After reflecting on how I thought that the year would go and how it went, a few things were different. I did not anticipate the number of office referrals for student's challenging behavior. This could be

for many reasons, with one of the biggest being the Social-Emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I've talked with other middle school educators from around the state, and they have stated that they have experienced a higher rate of student behavior with greater intensity. We are researching how best to meet these students' needs through teacher professional development, grant opportunities, and intervention teams.

Another difference that I've reflected on, my communication. I plan to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of my internal and external communication next year. There have been many things that did not go the way that I envisioned them to go this year.

I've had a great experience here at Humboldt and am looking forward to working with everyone again next year.

Brenda Geitzenauer

Middle School Principal

As we wind up the year, it is so exciting to look back and see how far our middle school students have come this past school year. While things have not been easy, the year has flown by and we have had many ups and downs. Looking back at the pictures from the beginning of the year, some students have grown over 5 inches and now look more mature than ever.

Humboldt Middle School students have all experienced a transition day to learn about what next year has to offer. Many students have worked hard and are ready to move up! The 4th graders from Taft got to see what the middle school is all about and our 8th graders spread their wings and went for a visit to the high school.

There are still some areas we need to work on to help kids build some skills that fell behind last year but we will be ready to work with them as soon as school starts next year and hope to see some great improvements. Social and emotional health continues to be a struggle for middle school aged students. Any time parents are able to just let their child talk about what is bothering them, will help them understand their feelings and help them regulate their emotions. Please take time over the summer to devote to having those conversations, it can be a big pay out in the end.

As everyone looks forward to a break, teachers would encourage students to keep reading for enjoyment and finding games or activities to challenge themselves over the summer. We look forward to recharging and coming back strong in the fall!





Paul Numedahl High School Principal

Hello Wildcat Nation! I hope this message finds you all well and looking forward to the start of summer. As I am sure you are aware, the end of second semester and students' last day of school was Friday, May 28. Seniors last day of school was Wednesday, May 19. There are still a multitude of activities and events happening. Be sure to check out the activities calendar at our district website.

Spring is an interesting time at high school.

Looking forward, there are new efforts and innovations that we will be implementing next school year. Each focuses on improving instruction and the school environment to better support the learning of all students. The first includes the formation of content area teams into Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These teams will meet regularly and use real time learning data to improve teaching. Additionally, the high school will be implementing a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to enhance, scaffold, and support student learning and classroom achievement. Part of this support system will include a different use for homeroom time. The new homeroom configuration is called CATs time. This will be a time when students can work directly with teachers to get help with certain skills or concepts. CATs time will also be used to extend skills and content that was learned during regular classroom instruction.

This is also a bittersweet time of year when it comes to staff changes. We bid a fond farewell to staff who are retiring or are looking for professional growth opportunities with other school districts. We are grateful to all for the time and support they have given our high school students. Please be sure to thank them for their service. As we bid farewell to those leaving our school system, we also look forward to meeting new staff who will be joining our Wildcat family. Look for those new faces this fall.

In closing, I wish all of you a wonderful summer. Have fun, relax, and spend time with family and friends. Before you know it, we will be back here in August ready for another school year. We are Wildcats!



Lora Kester Mease Elementary Principal

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of the 2021-22 school year. This was a year for the record books. We are proud that even our youngest students were successful at wearing masks and following safety protocols so that we could be in school all year!

Mease Elementary is looking forward to some new things for next year. We are scheduled to

have new lockers installed in July. Thanks to receiving a grant from the Humboldt County Community Foundation, new playground equipment will be installed for our preschool students. We will share space and equipment with Kiddie Cats Daycare. What a great partnership! We continue to face the challenge of storage and the need for updated furniture and classrooms. We work to develop a plan to address both of these needs.

At the district level we are excited to have purchased a new Language Arts curriculum. We will implement Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA/Amplify) in grades Kindergarten through 8th beginning this fall. This came after hours of committee work to determine the best curriculum for our students. It is strong in building foundational skills, writing, and background knowledge and so much more! Teachers are already gearing up for training in June so they are ready to go in August when students return. Next fall, we will begin to study the potential need for a new math curriculum. Also next fall, teachers across the district will be collaborating in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). We are bringing in experts to help us learn this new process where we focus on student needs in order to adjust instruction so that all students can be successful with our priority standards. Through the Teacher Leadership program, we have identified teachers to lead this work.

Ryan Fedders Taft Elementary Principal



The staff at Taft have gone above and beyond to meet our students' academic, social, and behavioral needs in an unprecedented school year. They have shown flexibility, kindness, and a growth mindset to incorporate new and sometimes challenging components into their teaching/daily routines. This hasn't been the easiest year in education, but our staff members have embraced a positive attitude to make the year the most successful that it could possibly be. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for our students!

It's hard to believe we're at the end of our year already! I again want to thank our staff members for all of their hard work and dedication in a truly unprecedented school year. Thanks to our parents as well for their help throughout the entire year; we had a great year at Taft due to both of these groups! Our playground committee met for the third time at the end of April. We gave feedback from the committee and surveys to three playground companies, and we were able to look at initial drafts from them. We had split into sub-groups and created checklists for different components of the playground, so we spent the majority of our meeting using these checklists to provide feedback and develop questions for companies. This feedback was then sent back to the companies to update designs. The process is running smoothly up to this point; our next step will be to meet with a representative from each company to ask any questions that we may have as well as to see an updated draft of their plan.

As I mentioned in our previous update, we will have a few new teachers joining us at Taft for the 2021-22 school year. **Amberly Smith** will teach special education next year. She is joining us from Alabama, where she has taught 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, along with holding a Master's degree in special education. **Amanda Altman** will join our 2nd grade team. Amanda is originally from Algona and has been teaching Kindergarten in the Galva-Holstein School District for the past two years. **Danielle Buhs** will also join our 2nd grade team. Danielle currently lives in Dakota City and has taught multiple grade levels - from PreK-4th grade - in Gilmore City Bradgate over the past few years. **Morgan Weydert** will join our 4th grade team. Morgan grew up in Humboldt and is graduating this spring from Iowa State. She student taught in Eagle Grove and in Clarion. Please join me in welcoming these outstanding educators to Taft; they will be great additions to our team!

I hope that everyone is able to take some time to enjoy this summer. A lot of hard work went into our year, and everyone is deserving of a break as a result! As always, feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have over the coming months. Have a great summer and Go Cats!



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

The District's School Improvement Advisory Committee, SIAC, met on March 31. We had stakeholder representatives from all groups. We were pleased to hear that we had the most stakeholders present in many years. Administrators shared the teacher professional development focus for next year. Groups of stakeholders discussed and prioritized needs related to Culture, Facilities, Safety, and Communication. Here are the results of the input shared by each group.



SAFETY

- Regular positive communication teachers-parents
- Stronger Social Media Presence
- Streamline District Communication/Announcements

- Entrances-Office/locations
- Restroom maintenance and privacy
- Safety Drills/Lockdown to see issues

COMMUNICATION



- Consistency PK-12 - Expectations/Conduct
- Activities - "Celebration of Students"
- Pep Assemblies
- Academic Assemblies in all buildings
- More Celebrating Success
- Citizenship/Community Involvement



CULTURE

- Aesthetic Improvement
- Branding and Culture
- Middle School Classrooms Space / Locker Rooms
- Future of the Old Middle School

FACILITIES

