

September 2022



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

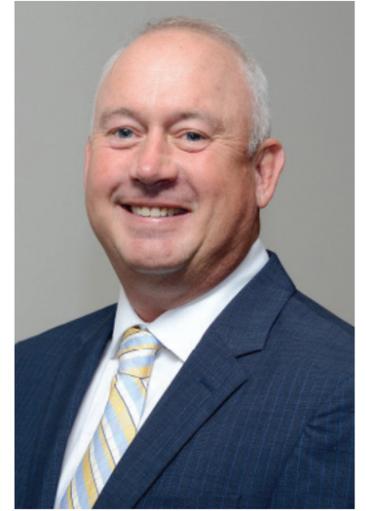
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 @OfficialHCSD

 @humboldt_csd

Message from Superintendent Jim Murray



The new school year is rolling, and routines are in place. It seems we are "business as usual," and the summer was long ago. My favorite activity in August was the new teacher reception with the school board members. Our school board members host the new teachers and spouses in a reception format that allows all to get to know each other and establish a relationship. I am very proud of our school board member's willingness to donate time and resources to this. I think the activity sets our district apart from others and can only help us in our district goal of attracting and retaining the best teachers. I am also proud of the improvements made to our buildings. We painted updated flooring and added new lighting, ceilings, and cabinetry in several classrooms and common spaces. The construction projects that are in process are exciting. Still, I appreciate that our principals continue to advocate for improving their facilities. Our board recognizes the importance of ensuring our current facilities are updated and well maintained. I had the privilege of cofacilitating professional development for our very talented paraeducators. Unsurprisingly, that group taught me more than I taught them. They all have a great toolbox of strategies that help develop positive student relationships. As a team, we all learned about de-escalating challenging student behavior. We also learned about the importance of fading paraeducator services so students can be more independent. Finding the "just right" service for students is different for everyone. There is much to be excited about regarding our district's continuous improvement initiatives. Please approach me anytime to share input to better our school district. I welcome the opportunity to share our district initiatives and show our facilities to any guests. It continues to be my privilege to serve you as Superintendent.

Sincerely,
Jim Murray, Superintendent

"THE REAL DEAL"

I continue to get great feedback from this portion of the newsletter. Our community members don't want to hear that everything is well, as they know education is a challenging profession.

- The transition to our food service management company, Opaal!, has provided more choices and better food for all students. I've been eating regularly in the lunchrooms. The high school students were pleased with the options and quality of the food. They also commented about the friendly service and cafeteria environment. I have received feedback from high school and junior high students and parents that they wish there were more food and question the amount served. There is a fruits and vegetable bar in all buildings with unlimited portions, but that may not be a favorite choice for many. The Opaal! staff have been easy to work with and receptive to suggestions. They are close to full staffing and are excited about offering the entire program when that happens. I invite parents or community members to visit the school and lunch program. The adult lunch fee is \$4.13. Please make sure to call ahead and check in as a visitor in the office.
- The loss of the Midas transportation bus and route caught us all by surprise. Many preschool parents and our district staff were counting on that transportation. It was stressful for many. In the end, all worked together and made sure preschool students could make it to and from school. I am going to communicate our district transportation opportunities more clearly to preschool parents during the roundup this spring. I am going meet with Midas directors to see what can be done to strengthen our partnership, efficiency, and communication with parents.
- We are very challenged with finding custodians, yet we offer great benefits and wage. We need to explore other recruitment services like Indeed and employment agencies. We plan to post and advertise in both English and Spanish throughout the community.
- We continue to see individuals post their school issues ranging from lunch to classrooms to coaching on social media like Facebook. Often, they are uniformed or misinformed. We are challenged with students who do the same to each other. We need our adults to model the right uses for social media. School staff are defenseless on social media and there is always two sides or more to the story. I appreciate when parents go to the person closest to the problem first when there is an issue. It is so much faster to resolve. Our administrators and directors pride ourselves on approachability and service. I think social media scrutiny may be one of the factors that drives people out of education, law enforcement, and healthcare.



Paul Numedahl High School Principal

Hello Wildcat Families! Welcome to the start of the 22-23 school year. As a high school staff, we are excited and look forward to working with your students this year. I would like to use this opportunity to highlight some things we are implementing at the high school to improve the high school experience for all students.

As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, the high school is an organization of and for learning. Staying true to this commitment, we are implementing grade level teacher teams to support both our MTSS and PLC processes. Both the MTSS and PLC processes focus on the acquisition of academic standards and are driven by four questions:

1. What do we want our students to know and/or be able to do?
2. How will we know if students know and/or are able to do it?
3. What do we do if students don't know and/or are unable to do it?
4. What do we do if students know and/or are able to do it?

This year, our grade level teacher teams are focusing on Question 3, "What do we do if students don't know and/or unable to do it". Grade level teams will meet once a month to analyze student academic data. Students who are struggling to pass courses will be identified with accompanying interventions put in place. Interventions and support strategies are varied and can include extra help during CATs Time to regular academic check-ins with a specific teacher. Such interventions directly support both our MTSS and PLC process and ultimately improve student learning.

Lastly, our Cat Cafe is open on Friday mornings from 7:30AM-8:10AM and we welcome members of the community. The cafe provides a unique hands-on lab environment where students learn what it is like to operate a small beverage-based business. Our Cafe serves coffee, frappes, smoothies, and flavored seltzers. If you are interested in a good Cup o'Joe and Friday morning conversation, come on over to the high school through the auditorium entrance. The Cat Cafe is located in the auditorium lobby. Go Blue and Gold! Go Wildcats!



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

Happy fall! This is my favorite time of the school year with fall sports and the excitement of back to school! We are in full swing at the high school! Getting kids back in a routine definitely takes time, consistency, and a village of support with the transition from summer. We hit the ground running with the vape detectors going off before 9:00 am on the first day. Talking with other districts, we are not the only ones struggling with this issue. To be honest, it's a national pandemic. Addiction is a real thing. The Humboldt Community School District (HCSD) is talking with outside providers such as Rolling Hills Community Services Region, Community & Family Resources (CFR) and Athletics for Education and Success (AFES) to assist in providing necessary support and resources to our students, families, and the community. More information will be coming out as we get things in place.

In my previous article, I mentioned Governor Reynolds' vulnerability risk assessments for schools to receive the \$50,000 grant money per building for safety enhancements. The district had our assessments on September 16th at the High School, Middle School, and Mease, and Taft and Twin Rivers on September 19th. School officials, the Sheriff's Department, Police Department, and the new Emergency Management Director were all in attendance. We are awaiting their final report of the assessment and the feedback they provide to move forward with next steps for enhancing our safety/security. Once main topic discussed was an updated Emergency Management Plan, and the role each entity plays if a crisis were to occur, adding more cameras in specific areas/buildings, identification check in systems, locks/doors/key fobs, and safe/secure entrances. Mr. Murray, Officer Susan Rutz, and myself are still attending the Safe and Secure Schools - Empowering Staff to Plan and Respond Effectively in an Emergency which will connect our with our vulnerability assessment.

Again, a positive, safe, and drug-free environment is always our number one priority! We will keep updating you as we progress through these processes in the HCSD. **GO CATS!**



Mark Wenzel
Twin Rivers Elementary Principal

Hello Twin Rivers and Humboldt Community!

This year has been off to a great start! I am so excited about the effort our teachers and paras have put in to make the beginning of the year successful. They have been willing to help one another and go above and beyond with the new learning and challenges this year. We are excited about the outstanding new additions to our team. We welcomed Taylor Smith as our 3rd grade Reading and Math teacher, as well as our school interventionist and instructional coach. We appreciate Lu Verne Elementary for sharing Karen Roman with us to serve as our Special Education teacher.

We are continuing to improve in the areas of MTSS and Social Emotional Learning through professional development and continuous learning opportunities. Our staff have been trained in using i-Ready to assist with our Tier 2 intervention system. i-Ready utilizes a diagnostic to identify students' current reading and math levels. Students will follow a personalized plan online to address skills gaps. They will also receive individualized teacher-led lessons to intensify their learning. Our staff have continued learning within the Trauma Informed Online Academy. The teachers are taking what they learn and putting it into practice in their classrooms. To promote PBIS and SEL in our building, we have implemented a new character recognition program to recognize students who are demonstrating positive character. The students have really enjoyed being recognized in front of the entire school to receive their awards.

It has been fun to see new faces and get to know the new students in our building. They have been a great addition to our school family. I have enjoyed hearing the stories about summer adventures from all of our students. I am so proud of them for coming in with a positive attitude and willingness to learn. Our staff continues to work hard and improve in order to meet the various needs and provide an excellent educational experience for all. We appreciate the support from our students, families, school board, staff and community for getting the year off to a great start!



Ryan Fedders
Taft Elementary Principal

It has been a great first month back at Taft with staff and students! As I reflect back upon the start of the year, I wanted to give a huge shout-out to our building leadership team. They were instrumental in planning desired outcomes for our back-to-school PD in August; we were able to engage in learning centered around meeting the social-emotional needs of our students, along with first steps in providing aligned math interventions. Our teaching staff also provided great feedback on the learning these days, which gives our team concrete next steps to work on.

Students seemed to transition smoothly back into the building over the first few weeks. Our lunch lines and dismissal routines needed some work after the first few days, but students picked up on these quickly. There have been a lot of positive reviews from students about having lunch choices this year - they've enjoyed both the choice and the quality of food that OPAA is providing! We've also continued to receive positive feedback from staff and parents on our beginning of the year conferences. This is a great time to connect with families in a 1:1 setting before the year begins.

The greatest challenge we've had (and will continue to work through) is ensuring everyone is where they need to be schedule-wise with so many moving parts. When looking at our MTSS/intervention system, we are working to ensure that students receive access to all levels of intervention, which will take some balancing and flexibility from our staff at Taft as the year progresses.

I'm looking forward to continuing to get back into the routine of the school year; adjusting off of summer mode can take a few weeks! Weekends have been filled with Iowa Hawkeyes football and time spent with my wife and son, which have helped to balance out the busyness of a start to a new year.

As always, please contact me at rfedders@humboldt.k12.ia.us or 515-332-3216 with any questions or concerns that you may have.

CAT CAFE

Located in the High School Auditorium Lobby

- Open every Friday from 7:20am-8:30am
- Serving both hot and cold specialty drinks including coffee, hot chocolate, cappuccino, lattes, frappes, and smoothies.

• **FRIENDLIEST STAFF IN TOWN!**



All money goes back into funding Friends Club activities including building and supporting the positive culture of HHS. This includes birthday drinks, bingo games, and other student activities. The support from staff and students across the district is appreciated and has been overwhelming.



Lora Kester
Director of Curriculum & Instruction,
Mease Elementary Principal

The 2022-23 school year is off to a great start! Our theme at Mease this year is to focus on making connections, with each other and with our students and their families. Our staff faced some challenges at the beginning of the year as our rooms were still partially "under construction" from a new cabinet install. The new cabinetry will be worth the wait and everyone went above and beyond to help prepare the building. Our youngest students have settled into the routines of school.

This year, we have added more play to the schedule and teachers are learning more about teaching academics and social skills through play. All year, we will continue to learn more about social-emotional learning through our play initiative and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). Our most recent focus has been on how the brain reacts to stress and how we can recognize that in ourselves and our students.

Our new lunches, provided through Opaa, have been a big hit. Parents have been a great help in working with their children on lunch choices and the students are enjoying the food. Teachers are also benefiting from the variety of selections.

We learned some lessons as we started preschool home visits again after a two-year hiatus. Scheduling changed due to online registration procedures and we had quite a mess. Teachers and parents worked together to reschedule as needed. We are already discussing how that can look different for next year. The beginning of the year conferences did go very well. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss bus routes, lunch routines, and much more. It is a great way to start building relationships between our school and families.

Creighton Jenness

Director of Special Education & Middle School Assistant Principal

So far the year has started off on the right foot. We had numerous people who worked diligently to help get things programs set in place, like PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Support), Team information, etc. These things have proven to have a significant impact; one piece of exciting data to share is that, to date, we have 56% fewer office referrals than last year. These office referrals are also less intense than what we have had previously. A lot of hard work was put in by staff during the summer and right before school began.

One of the critical areas that we are working on is aligning essential learning standards to our MTSS, Multi-tiered System of Support structures. Providing student intervention is the driving force behind all of our school improvement work. MTSS is the help and support for students that do not understand a concept. So, right now, if there is a student who does not understand one of the concepts that is being taught in a class, or general area of the building (behaviors), the typical course of action would be to try and help the student before or after school. We are putting structures in place during the school day so that any student, whether they understand the concept or not, will have time to have reteaching, or extended learning, to help them in their educational process. With this, we are digging deeper into what our standards say our students need to know and how we teach them.



Cassie Smith
Middle School Principal

Can I just tell you the energy that middle school students (and teachers) bring every day? It is contagious, which is good, because with two little ones at home, some days I am running on very little sleep and need their energy! We had a fun and engaging Welcome Back for students in the auditorium, complete with music and hand clapping, an introduction to PBIS and Minute To Win It games, and cheers with high-fives at the end! All of the students have completed PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) lessons around the building and all of our staff involved, from teachers to office staff, cooks and janitors, we are all on the same page which helps students know and understand the expectations.

We are working out some of the lunchroom kinks with the new OPAA program and hopefully will be fully staffed so we can provide more meal options. In the meantime, we have had different staff step in to help during lunch.

We are in the process of completing FAST Assessments which are given three times per year and provide us with data around reading, math, and social-emotional skills. From this data, we will be able to provide intervention support for those students who are struggling, as well as look at extension opportunities for students who are above grade level. These interventions are all a part of our MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) that we are working on to ensure that every student has what they need to be successful.

Overall, things have gone really well to kick off the year at Humboldt Middle School - are there things we can (and will) improve upon? Yes - we will get there, but I'm excited to see the work we are doing is heading in the right direction and we are seeing the positive changes in our building. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

