



Highland School District #203

P.O. BOX 38 – 17000 SUMMITVIEW RD
COWICHE, WA 98923
509-678-8630 FAX 509-678-4177

Superintendent
Mark Anderson
School Board
Nikki Keller
David Barnes
Lupita Flores
Carlos López
Cindy Reed

Dear Highland Families:

I trust you are enjoying the warm summer days within the Yakima Valley while staying safe and healthy during this time as we are all still navigating COVID-19. As was presented in our HSD reopening plan (available on our school website) on July 14, we were hoping that we could be in a situation that would allow us to implement some version of in-person on-site learning to start this fall. Unfortunately, due to the current status of a modified Phase 1 in Yakima County that is not possible at this time.

This week the Yakima Health District (YHD) verbally informed Yakima Valley school districts that our county is not in any scenario other than **100% distance learning** for the fall. While we were waiting for a written announcement to this effect from YHD, we are not sure when that will be made available. Rather than wait for the announcement, I felt it was better to share this information now as families want to know the plan in order to prepare for what the fall at Highland School District will entail. When we receive the written YHD announcement we will make it available for review on our district website.

Due to this verbal announcement by YHD, **Highland School District will be implementing a 100% distance learning format from the time school starts (August 26) through the end of the first quarter (October 30)**. We chose the first quarter as the timeframe as the current virus metrics by the state of Washington illustrate a potential 2-month period before Yakima County may move into Phase 2. We certainly hope we are able to bring students on site sooner than October 30, but wanted to give families a timeframe to expect as we work with YHD, OSPI and other state agencies to gain guidance as to when we can move into the stages of on-site instruction shared in our reopening plan. Our sincere hope is that we can move to in-person learning as soon as safely possible. In addition, we hope that during the time period of August 26-October 30 we will be able to bring in small groups of students to meet with teachers. At this time, we require additional guidance from the Department of Health and YHD to make that happen. Once we receive that guidance we will communicate what revisions we will make to the learning structure to make this happen.

In order to help HSD better support our families, our secretarial staff will be making calls to families starting August 6 to gather and share information that will help us finalize our distance learning plans. **Please respond and participate in those calls.** We want to be responsive to the needs of our families. Your participation in the process is vital in helping us plan these learning sessions as well as finalizing distance learning schedules.

We also will be offering technology learning sessions for parents/families in our buildings starting very soon to introduce families to our technology platforms. Our hope is these training sessions will be beneficial in supporting work at home. We were given the go-ahead from YHD

“A Quality Education For ALL Students”

to allow small groups of parents on site to conduct this training, provided we follow safety guidelines. Please be watching for upcoming communication and information about these learning sessions.

Highland is committed to delivering a high-quality education to the students of Highland. Our staff has consistently provided that in the traditional on-site learning format. We need to provide the same quality in a distance learning model as well. In preparation of distance learning, our staff has received additional professional development by experts in the field of distance learning. Through a real commitment to this purpose, my sincere belief is that Highland's students will continue to learn, find their passion and thrive in this new learning environment.

Please be watching for information on our website as well as from our school building(s) staff, District personnel and departments as we move forward with planning an improved distance learning format. I am very grateful to the patience and understanding the Highland community has shown HSD as we have attempted to navigate this ever changing and challenging time we are all experiencing. As I mentioned before; we are not all in the same boat but we all continue to battle the same storm. My best to you and yours.

Mark Anderson, Superintendent