

Update – 08/27/2021

Parents and Patrons,

WOW!!! What a week! I have never been so excited and nervous for the start of school as I have been this past week. I am pleased to say that it was truly amazing. As I work to type this update, I must say that I am relieved yet exhausted. I really couldn't understand why I was feeling this way, but then it hit. It has been two years since we have had a "traditional" start for the school year. Seriously, two years. Last year, we started with the "soft opening" and worked our way into a full schedule. Well, we did it! The first week of the 2021-22 school year is in the books.

Throughout the week, it has been invigorating to see the smiling faces of our students and staff. I must admit, it has been a long time since we have seen this many students on our campuses. As a matter of fact, preliminary numbers are showing almost all schools with an increase in enrollment. In fact, Blackfoot High School has not been anywhere close to this many students since the 1996-97 school year (and we are still about 25 students higher than that year). Independence High School this year has also seen the highest number of students in the past decade. In summary, we are excited that we are seeing our second consecutive year of enrollment growth in the Blackfoot School District.

I want to take a moment to share a couple of specifics regarding our "Safe Return to School" plan. Even though we held in-person school all year last year, in order to receive the most recent federal stimulus money we are required to have a plan. The plan is very similar to last year's plan, with a few adjustments. Face coverings are encouraged when social distancing is not possible, but there is not a face covering mandate for our schools or buses at this time. To my knowledge, we do not have any classrooms in the district that are requiring the use of face coverings. The quarantine process will only be implemented if a school reaches the "high-risk" level. Last year, I felt the quarantine process was not effective and may have hindered student progress, both academically and socially, more than being a benefit. Risk levels will be determined on a school-by-school basis. We will be monitoring the cases at each school. This information will be used to make recommendations to the school board. I will do my best to both work with our school board and be transparent with our community and patrons regarding any changes to risk levels that may occur throughout the year. This summarizes the main adjustments that have been made to our plan for the 2021-22 school year.

I wish I could say that this will never need to be revisited or adjusted. I wish there was a "COVID" crystal ball that would give me a glimpse of what may come. Unfortunately, that just isn't the case. Luckily, we are BLACKFOOT, and I know we will find a way to overcome any challenges laid in our path. Dang, I had hoped this would be shorter, but hey it's ME. In conclusion, dear if you read this whole letter, dinner is on me tomorrow night (sorry, had to do it). Seriously, it is going to be a GREAT YEAR. Once again, I believe Blackfoot will set itself apart from other places. Remember, BLACKFOOT STRONG!!!!!! GO BRONCOS!!!!!!!

God Bless,

Brian Kress

Superintendent of Schools

Blackfoot School District #55