

August 19, 2019

Dear Washoe County School District Family,

I hope you had an excellent first week of school and that you are excited about all the promise this year holds! Last week, our three new schools opened successfully and on time. Staff and administrators helped students navigate new hallways, classrooms, libraries, and more. It is rewarding to know these schools are now filled with students, staff, books, and furniture. Our Transportation Department is working diligently on a few hot spot issues and continues to analyze routes and student needs to provide the best service possible for our more than 20,000 daily bus riders. We know there have been concerns at Sky Ranch Middle School, North Valleys High School, and a handful of other schools and our School Police and Safe Routes Officers are assisting in these areas as well.

I was happy to visit several schools to check in on how the first week was going and our Leadership Team was able to reach every school. We met together on the afternoon of August 12 to debrief, troubleshoot, and collaborate on problem areas. The Area Superintendents continued to meet throughout the week to address individual school concerns. From most accounts, this was one of the smoothest opening days we have had in the WCSD, and that is with three new schools opening. I am extremely proud of the teamwork of our principals and Central Services to get issues resolved as quickly as possible to meet the needs of our students and staff.

I also received some feedback from parents and employees in our district on the messaging that went out regarding the Code Red at Galena High School on Friday. Thanks to these important suggestions, we are more fully aware of the fear and panic that this situation created at the school, and in the future our messages will be more fully understanding of the experiences of our students, families, and staff. I very much appreciate when we can work together to make these types of changes.

Additionally, the staff and students at Desert Skies Middle School had to evacuate on Friday due to a suspected hazardous materials spill on the second level of the building. After investigating, it was confirmed it was non-hazardous material resulting from a small leak in a door fixture. The item was immediately repaired by the contractor without issue. I want to compliment the entire school community for handling the situation according to emergency protocols.

On a lighter note, I am also very excited to share with you that I have set the dates for my next set of Casual Conversation meetings with employees. Thanks again to all you who stopped by during the summer meetings. If you didn't have a chance to attend, or even if you would like to come again, I'd be happy to see you there.

The meetings include:

- **Thursday, August 29**, noon to 1 p.m., Administrative Building in the Board Room
- **Monday, Sept. 9**, 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., North Valleys High School Career Center

- **Tuesday, Sept. 17**, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Reed High School Library
- **Wednesday, Sept. 25**, 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., Incline High School Theater
- **Thursday, Sept. 26**, 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., in the Reno High School Library

In the meetings, I would love to answer any questions and of course hear your feedback on my "[Pathway to Positive Progress](#)" plan. Also, please remember that you can provide feedback to me anonymously [here](#).

Last week we also had a Board of Trustees meeting and there are several important updates I want to share with you:

- As you saw in an email earlier this week from our Human Resources Department, the Board approved changes to employee health insurance beginning in January 2020, which included a 5 percent rate increase. This change also includes reductions to co-pays for certain medical specialists, and increases in co-pays for urgent care and generic prescriptions. The changes were necessary because of expected increases in District health insurance costs.
- The Board allocated \$42 million for construction of the new elementary school in Cold Springs. That project will now go out to bid for a contractor. The Trustees also approved \$12 million for initial costs associated with the design of a new high school at Wildcreek and the re-purposing of Hug High School into a Career & Technical Academy.
- Thirty-nine of our schools will now receive free breakfasts and lunches for all students regardless of their family income, thanks to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This program will help dramatically reduce school lunch debt in our system, as well as ease the administrative burden on schools and Nutrition Services, decrease the stigma of receiving free meals, and help more students succeed. This is a great win for our District.
- One of my favorite parts of the Board meeting was when we had presentation from students sharing their first day back to school experiences. Thank you to the principals, students, and parents from Whitehead, Winnemucca, and Warner elementary schools; Desert Skies, Pine, and O'Brien Middle Schools; and Wooster and Reno High Schools, North Star Online School, and Washoe Inspire Academy.

This week will again be a busy one as we welcome more than 4,600 kindergarteners to our schools and help their parents know they are in very good hands!

I hope you have a fulfilling week.

Take care,
Kristen