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August 22, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians & Staff,

Three days into the 20-21 school year, but I must admit it feels like 3 weeks to some of us! We had a very productive and safe start and there were many, many positives! Smiles evident on little faces that masks can not hide, little ones shouting, "Yay!" as they stepped off the bus, affirming comments from teenage students, and comforting words of teachers dissipated the apprehensions and made the sacrifices all the more worth it.

The key to continued success will be consistent adherence to safety protocol. With this in mind, I want to update all involved on one element of our protocol (that we are likely the only district in the state attempting) a 3-sided Plexiglas shield for every child. It has, by far, been the most challenging part of our protocol.

We have spent half a million dollars thus far and have been continually promised delivery by reliable vendors that have never missed deadlines before only to receive insufficient deliveries.

Our leadership team has worked all hours of the day and night on these, and all of us have stopped what we are doing when shipments arrive to assemble the shields. Many more are to be delivered this weekend, and we just placed an additional order with a different vendor for delivery early next week. Evidently the culprit is a sudden shortage of materials, and it would appear to be a good time to be in the plastics business.

The saving grace is that even the CDC didn't require schools to have a protective guard for every student, and the wearing of a mask and distancing where possible still is deemed sufficient for safety. Still, using the shields is a top priority and we will achieve our goal of 100%! We will continue to constantly monitor COVID-19-related issues and diligently seek the best practices.

I do want to comment on gaiters, the sleeve-like masks that are typically used for athletics and band. They are needed where breathing from vigorous activity is more essential. And when worn outside, they are sufficient as masks. However, their breathability makes them less than ideal for indoor masks. We are not disallowing them but want to pass along all info we can for parents to make decisions.

One last comment on what has caused a number of concerns from parents: the fact that we are not offering AP courses for our online students. We are always seeking to increase our AP participation and it was not an easy decision to not offer it. The primary issue is the lack of an offsite testing protocol that staff and leadership feel equals the security of onsite testing. Additionally, GPAs are impacted by AP course work, and inconsistencies in testing platforms is not something we're willing to take a chance on. However, we are determined to find an answer acceptable to all parties.

Our overall goal has and will continue to be two-fold. We will provide the quality of education BH is synonymous with, AND we will do so in the absolute safest way possible. Success is only achieved when both parts of the goal are met.

We certainly would not be accused of taking an easy path, and there are hurdles and obstacles we have still to face. Yet, if any District in the state can safely educate in the midst of a pandemic...we can and we will!

Post Script: We are actively monitoring the disturbances in the gulf, and we will communicate any school closures/delays with families using Remind. In addition, we will post any updates or closures to the district website as well.

Greg Poole

A Tradition of Excellence