



NKC Schools' Community and Staff,

Another milestone is yet upon us. Tuesday, we will open in the most non-traditional manner in our 107 year history. For the first time, we will welcome 28% of our students virtually in an attempt to provide each student with the rigorous learning experience they deserve while accommodating family choice. Please accept my gratitude for work well done. From the boardroom to the classroom, to the many classified staff who have worked tirelessly to get us to this point; I thank you. You have truly brought new meaning to our motto of serving as "Champions for All Students". We are providing a level of individualized instruction unprecedented in public education. Many staff members have completely changed their job responsibilities to meet the needs of our learners. Thank you for stepping up to the challenge.

This pandemic has thrown school systems some big punches, putting us back on our heels from time to time. Despite the challenge, NKC Schools continues to get back up and fight for our 21,000 students and 3,600 employees. There is no doubt this pandemic will persist. NKC Schools stands ready to take the best it can throw, adjusting our game plan to stand victorious in the end. Our students, staff, and community deserve nothing less. Thank you for understanding that we have a singular enemy in COVID-19. We can rise above budget shortfalls, adhering to guidelines from health departments and differing political views to come together on behalf of the students we serve. Having already conducted summer school, year-round schools, athletics and activities, we have seen a few cases of COVID-19. Our contact tracing indicates that the virus has not transferred to others within our schools, however, thanks to the careful precautions being taken. We can be successfully fight this pandemic if we do four things: wash our hands, wear our masks, stay home when we are sick and socially distance to the extent possible.

This milestone of opening school for the first time since March 13 is often minimalized as an attempt to get closer to normalcy. To me, it's much greater than seeking normalcy. It's good for our souls to see our kids again. It's what we all live to do and why we chose this profession. It's also about providing for some of our most marginalized populations. In a large district such as ours, varied needs exist. We can rise to meet them! There is no other way to say it: **we miss our kids desperately**. Staff, as I have traveled throughout the district to check on you, I see the eagerness and the revived passion in preparing to do what you love. Your attitude has been amazing! Comments like, "I can't wait to see our kids!", "What else can I do to help?", and "We got this!" are welcome as they build confidence in the families and students who still have anxiety. It has been a long haul for our entire community. Parents/Guardians, thank you for continuing to trust NKC Schools, adjusting to the constant change this pandemic has produced for all of us. If your family chose to start the year virtually, we will be there for your student, anxiously awaiting your return when you feel the time is right.

Legendary North Kansas City Superintendent and friend, Dr. Tom Cummings, used to remind us "This, too, shall pass," when hard times would come our way. Tom, with all due respect, this one has felt more like a huge kidney stone! I am confident it will pass and I am confident people will look back on this time appreciating the hard decisions made in an effort to support our learners and better our community. If

there is a bright spot in all that has happened, COVID-19 has forced education to evolve in its use of technology, expanding classrooms beyond our four walls.

Staff, today is it! Our final work day before September 8! You have certainly earned your four-day Labor Day weekend. New staff has been hired, lessons have been created, computers have been distributed, food has been delivered, bus routes have been practiced...now, we just need kids! Please take care of yourselves. It has been 25 weeks since some of you have been face-to-face with our kids. It will be exhausting for both you and your students. It is important to build our stamina together both physically and emotionally. My final ask is that you be careful this weekend! Make wise choices, socially distancing when you can. We need each and every one of you to make this fall work!

It's hard to believe I am saying this: We will have kids in all of our buildings Tuesday! Give them a big smile under your mask! Believe me, they will see it and more importantly feel it.

Your partner in education,
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