

October 5, 2020

Dear SLMS Titan Parents,

Today was a terrific day for our Titan students. I know that our teachers, staff members, and students have been looking forward to this week and the chance to once again engage with staff and their peers in-person. Our teachers, counselors, and administrators have spent countless hours preparing for our students' return. We expect this work will continue throughout the coming days and weeks, as we all adjust to new health and safety protocols and the new routines that come with the start of any new school year, and also as we work to tweak the master schedule to best meet students' needs.

Our student arrival this morning went extremely well, and we are grateful to all the students and parents who completed the required Wellness Check prior to arrival on campus. Only a small number of students had not yet completed it, but we helped them get it done quickly. We know that tomorrow will be even better, and when our 7th graders join us Wednesday and the 8th graders join us Friday, they will have the Wellness Check completed, too. It was clear that as the day went along, the students felt more confident in their ability to navigate the building on their own and get to class. You could see it in how they carried themselves and how they did not hesitate to ask adults for assistance.

We do have some work to do to make our lunch procedure go a little more quickly and smoothly, however. Our first lunch, which had the majority of our sixth graders in it, took longer than expected. But we have a plan tomorrow to make that better. Please remember to send a snack along with your child each day, so that they may "top off their tank" at the start of 4th or 8th period (the last class of the day) since the lunch schedule starts so early.

We also know that some of our online students today had schedules where there was a teacher name missing from the schedule. That is because we, like all middle school campuses, are working with other district middle schools to fill gaps in teaching loads where we need help. Some teachers at Hodges Bend, Dulles, Crockett, Fort Settlement, Christa McAuliffe, and Bowie Middle Schools are helping us with some Art, Computer Science, Robotics, Teen Leadership, Science 6 PAP, and Basic Reading classes. Of course, where we can help other campuses with their needs, we are returning the favor, as well. This afternoon we sent the teachers at these other campuses the information they needed to invite your children to their online classes for tomorrow and beyond. Some students may have missed that class for today, and we apologize. It was not their fault; it was ours. We have already credited their attendance if this affected them.

Transitioning our students into dual learning models has been a challenging task. Our awesome counselors Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Seright, and Ms. Brinson, along with our Associate Principal, Monika Martin and our Campus Assessment Coordinator, Becky White, along with district schedulers have had to create each student's schedule manually, requiring much more time and effort than our typical summer scheduling efforts. What ordinarily takes months to do with the aid of a computer, only had two weeks by hand. For Sugar Land MS, that means that we have tried to solve 1,144 puzzles, each with 8 possible combinations—all by hand. Please know we are doing all we can to ensure a successful transition for our students.

As we progress through the coming weeks, your child may be assigned some asynchronous learning to better facilitate the balancing of classes. We hope that it will not be needed, but we wanted you to know it is a possibility. If we need to utilize further asynchronous learning, we will communicate well ahead of time. I apologize to our 8th grade students and parents who found out only yesterday about the need to do asynchronous work today and tomorrow. Please know that our entire team is working together to ensure a successful transition to the dual learning models, keeping the health and well-being of our students as our priority.

I will continue to keep you updated as we navigate through this journey together. Eighth grade parents and students should expect communication from us tomorrow about their schedules, and parents of seventh grade students who transition to face to face instruction Wednesday will also receive a special, focused communication to meet their needs. We appreciate your continued partnership and support, and we look forward to seeing our sixth graders again tomorrow, followed by our seventh graders on Wednesday, and our eighth graders on Friday.

Sincerely,

Keith Fickel, Principal
Sugar Land MS