

August 11, 2021

Dear SLMS Titan Families,

This is a note from SLMS to you to let you know we had a great first day today. It certainly was not problem-free, but it was a great day nonetheless!

The students were smiling with their eyes (most students were wearing masks), and they were eager to see one another and to meet their new teachers. They navigated their class changes well, something that I am particularly proud of with our sixth graders, as well as those seventh graders who have not attended in person since March 2020. They asked questions, were polite, and managed their time well, and they were making clear attempts to follow our health and wellness protocols. We are going to work on what it means to be in a group setting again, as that is a skill in and of itself. Being in a large space, such as the cafeteria or gymnasium, and giving attention to the adult who is speaking and remembering what it is like to be an audience member are muscles that students have not flexed in a long time, so we are going to wake those muscles up and relearn those skills this week. :-)

We started off with a very long car-rider line (there is always excitement with parents when dropping their children off at school for the first day), but we got students into classes quickly, only after a short delay. As sometimes happens at the beginning of the year, there are hiccups with bus transportation, and this morning and this afternoon there were some issues that occurred, but which FBISD Transportation is working on. They are short a significant number of drivers, and they are working to consolidate routes this week as a result. The transportation supervisors are working hard and being creative to get kids to/from school, and this afternoon, while it took quite a while to get many kids home on the bus, my hat goes off to the FBISD Transportation team for their problem-solving. It just means that for this week, it could take a significantly longer time for bus-riding students to get home. And construction in the TowneWest subdivision added to that challenge. Therefore, patience and understanding are important virtues for everyone this week.

We will continue to monitor the length/time of the car rider line both before and after school as we move forward, and if we need to make adjustments, we will process through them with our stakeholders and determine what we can do to improve it. It has been 17 months since we have had a full car rider line (March 2020), so I think it gets better as we all grow accustomed to being back in school.

A few things to take note of as we move forward (in no specific order):

- Car riders - please get into/out of your car on the passenger side of the vehicle
- Car riders - pick up/drop off ONLY on the front circle drive, and not in any parking lot (we had several parents to park in our west parking lot today to pick up their

children, and this blocks our special education bus transportation; please do not park in any SLMS parking lot to wait for your children)

- Car riders - be ready to get out of the car the moment it pulls up on the car rider line. At the end of the day, students need to be vigilant and keep an eye out for their parent's vehicle. This will help the line move much more quickly.
- Transportation in general - ensure your child knows how he/she is going to get home, that they know their bus route number, and that they are actively listening at the end of the day when we are calling bus routes over the PA at dismissal so they do not miss hearing their route called

Thank you for entrusting your children with us. They did well today, and we are already looking forward to seeing them tomorrow. Be sure to partner with us in your child's education. While our campus is not perfect, we strive to improve every day, and you will always get our 100% best effort, because your children deserve nothing less. We appreciate your grace if we drop the ball in some way by allowing us to find a way to make it better. We strive to do the same with your children and with one another.

In closing, I would love it if you would let me know of any highlights of your children's day today. Please feel free to email me at keith.fickel@fortbendisd.com with any stories your kids came home to tell you today. I love hearing stories from our SLMS students and parents! Congratulations to you and your children on a great first day!

Sincerely,

Keith Fickel

SLMS Principal