It is so great to have a building full of kids! I am so pleased to report that our return to in-person learning has been really smooth and very successful. Everyone has been extremely good about wearing their masks and doing their best to social distance. Presently, about 75% of our students are in-person, and 25% are learning online in our Virtual Learning School. Our VLS students are continuing to do well and are working hard from home. Thank you all for your support in preparing your children for their return to school, and thank you to all of you supporting your children who are learning at home.

Although we can’t do as much as we usually do in person, we were still able to hold the school spelling bee online, complete with Star Tribune judges. All of the contestants did a fantastic job. This year’s winner was Hermela, a fifth grader in Ms. Ryder’s VLS class, who spelled every one of her words correctly. She is advancing to the Regional Spelling Bee, which is also being held online this year.

While we have the staff and students in person, we really miss seeing our families at school – at the fun family events, joining us on field trips, conferences, and volunteering in so many ways. And speaking of conferences, again this year, all of our conferences will be held online on Tuesday evening, March 23, Thursday evening, March 25, or Friday morning, March 26, from 8:00 AM until noon. I will send out an all-school email on Sunday evening, March 21 with all of the teachers’ conference platforms and codes. Please look for that email on Sunday evening. Remember, there is no school on Friday, March 26 due to conferences.

I would like to thank the PTA for purchasing amplifiers for teachers and staff. These amplifiers allow teachers to be easily heard through a mask and face shield. We’d have a lot of staff with laryngitis by now without them.

Please stop by and see me online during conferences using the code HPE principal on google meet.

Happy Spring!
Sincerely,
Nancy Flynn, Principal
Family Involvement News

**PTA Meeting** - Thursday, March 18 from 7:00 – 8:00 PM on Zoom. All families are invited to attend. Translation will be available in Somali, Amharic, Oromo and Spanish. PTA meetings give parents/guardians an opportunity to connect and work together with teachers and school administrators to discuss school events, fundraising efforts, and other important school issues. In addition to regular PTA business, this month’s meeting will include the following:

1. Midyear check-in on HPE’s School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP)
2. Opportunity for families to provide suggestions for staff professional development about working with families.

Join PTA Zoom Meeting [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81332865284](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81332865284)
Meeting ID: 813 3286 5284

**Parent Teacher Conferences** – Tuesday, March 23, Thursday, March 25 and Friday, March 26. All families should have received an email with information about how to sign up for a virtual conference with your child’s teacher. Please let the teacher know if you will need an interpreter for your conference. If you did not receive an email about conferences from your child’s teacher, please call the school office at 651-293-8770. Conferences are a great opportunity to check in with your child’s teacher and see your child’s work. This is also an excellent time to ask the teacher any questions you may have about your child’s progress and develop goals for finishing out this school year to prepare your child for the next grade level.

**School Picture Day** – Save the date for Monday, April 12 and watch for order forms that will be coming home in backpacks soon. More info will also be coming soon about how picture day will work for VLS students.
Highland Park Elementary was authorized as an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme in 2003. We were the first PYP school in the upper midwest. Every five years we get reevaluated. Highland Park Elementary staff prepared for our revaluation last year by completing a “Self Study” (reflecting on our PYP program).

In a non pandemic year, the evaluation visit would be in person. This fall, we had a virtual visit from our IB evaluators. The evaluators interviewed administrators, staff, parents, and students. The evaluators joined classroom Google Meets to observe lessons and discussions.

HPE received our official evaluation report. Our evaluation went extremely well with 22 commendations. Our feedback was positive. The evaluators were impressed with our passion for the program. Inquiry was observed, along with students being responsible for their own learning. Our two recommendations centered around assessment. As a staff, we will use the feedback from IB to strengthen our implementation of the PYP program at Highland Park Elementary.

Part of being the best IB PYP school we can be involves community and family support. We welcome feedback and questions at any time. Your continued support of our program and students is appreciated!

Thank you!

Students are doing a great job learning to understand and speak in Spanish. Virtual learning and In-person classes are both receiving synchronous learning times to practice the language.

Students began the year by learning colors, greetings, shapes, and the numbers 1-10. Since winter break, students have studied the weather, the seasons, the months of the year, days of the week, and family members.

The remaining units of study for this year include body parts, food, and clothing. Instruction has included songs, stories, games, dialogues, and class Google Meets.

The goal is for students to increase their proficiency in Spanish by practicing vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. By watching the videos, completing the assignments, and practicing with the class on Google Meets students will progress more quickly. So, keep up the good work and have fun!

Thanks,

Kristi Papenfuss, Spanish Teacher
Ms. Sunny’s Counselor Corner

As many of you may know, each week I teach a social emotional learning lesson in every K-5 classroom. I use the research based Second Step Curriculum which teaches children important skills for getting along with others and doing well in school. It also helps our school be a safe, respectful place where everyone can learn. To further help our school be a safe and respectful place, I also teach the Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit. In this unit, your child learns specific skills to help stop bullying. Students learn how to:

- Recognize when bullying is happening,
- Report bullying to a caring adult,
- Refuse to let bullying happen
- Be a bystander who helps stop bullying
- Support someone being bullied by standing up for that person and being kind and inclusive
- Recognize, report, and refuse cyber bullying when they see or know about it happening

Here are examples of lessons:

- K/1 grade sample lesson
- 2/3 grade Bystander lesson
- 4/5 grade Cyberbullying lesson

And we need your help, too! Get involved in making our school a safe and respectful place by making sure your child knows to tell you or someone at school if he or she knows about someone being bullied. Give your child the clear message that it is never okay to be mean to others. Students should use a strong, respectful voice, use words that mean “stop”, and get help from an adult if it doesn’t stop. If you have any questions about the Bullying Prevention Unit or the Second Step program, please contact me. Thank you for helping us make our school a safe, respectful place where everyone can learn.