



Highwood Hills Elementary School

Website: highwoodhills.spps.org

Dear Families:

Thank you again for a good start of the year. I appreciate all those who, by words or deeds, contributed to the successful beginning, despite the staffing changes and some necessary modifications. I have always believed that in as much as it takes two to tango, it always takes more than two to make peace and create a sound, warm and welcoming learning environment for our students. I also appreciate all those who volunteer every day to help in the classrooms, other areas of the school, and accompany their students to school and help them set a good tone for the day every morning!

As we continue this journey together as a school. I would like to remind you that we must always remain positive about our children's education. At Highwood Hills, the staff and I are committed to providing the best possible elementary education to all of our students, while at the same time doing what it takes to adhere to State and District standards, policies and procedures as we are required to do! Paramount among our mission in this work is the safety, security and well being of all. Sometimes this may involve a change in long term practices that are unsafe, as well as modifying some that need improvement. Through all this, our goal will be to offer the safest learning environment and a rigorous educational opportunity for all of our students regardless of socio-economic status or other factors.

As is the case every start of the school year when rituals and routines are being established, proper conduct is very important in promoting and maintaining a healthy school environment. I am imploring families to please work with us in reminding students of proper etiquette, and the need to work with their teachers/adults in building a collaborative, peaceful learning environment. Please refer to the *Rights & Responsibilities Handbook* to give you an idea of the guidelines that principals use to impose consequences following an infraction. Please check your child's backpack for any item that may be deemed dangerous and do not allow him/her to bring it to school. For your information, a knife with a total blade length (tip to hilt) of 2.5 inches or greater is a level 5 offense and a mandatory expulsion referral. If the blade length is shorter, but the student makes a threat to harm another person, that is also a level 5 offense. When such infractions occur, the school is required to submit the expulsion referral to the District office and then the Student Transfer Committee will make the decision on next steps. Sometimes, by simply asking them whether they have such items in their possession before they leave for school will help. It will serve as a reminder for those who may forget that they have such items in their backpacks.

Calendar of Events

October

- 15 Common Ground
Conversations for families
- 17-18 Education MN (MEA)
Days
NO SCHOOL
- 25 Conference Prep Day
NO SCHOOL
- 31 Halloween

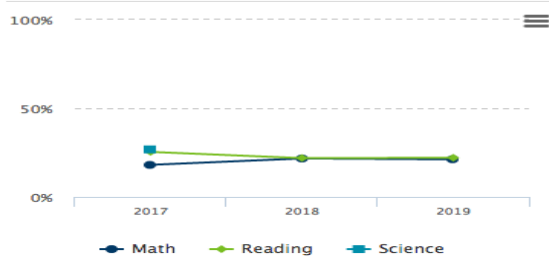
November

- 5 Election Day- No evening
events after 6:00 PM
- 12 Evening Conferences-3:45
-6:45
- 14 Evening Conferences-3:34
- 6:45
Pre-K - NO SCHOOL
- 15 Conferences - 8:15 - 3:15
NO SCHOOL



I would also like to share our MCA Report cards from MDE with our families. From all indication, we stayed pretty much the same as last year, with a slight increase in reading and a slight decrease in math, both by less than one percentage point. Nonetheless, I would like to reassure you that we are aware of our shortcomings and are working very hard to overcome them, and implementing our School Comprehensive Improvement Plan (SCIP) goals to address these needs. Despite these results, our students are showing growth in major areas, and we will continue to push for rigor and excellence in teaching and learning.

The number of students meeting standards in math, reading, and science over time



Subject	2017	2018	2019
Math	18.1%	21.7% (25)	21.2% (22)
Reading	25.4% (32)	21.9% (25)	22.1% (23)

Halloween

Halloween is a cultural celebration for some, and also for some newcomers to the country who are excited about this American tradition that is generally recognized as an acceptable cultural event in our society by a majority of people in the larger community. As such, we will honor the need to recognize the day for those who want to celebrate it. Therefore, it will be an **optional** uniform day to allow those who celebrate it to come to school in their costumes with the exceptions below. Note that the school as a whole **does not celebrate it**, but those **who feel the need** to celebrate it may come to school costumed on Thursday, October 31st. We will also seize the opportunity to emphasize the educational and enrichment benefits that this event may present to our predominantly immigrant students for the following reasons:

- It could be a motivating theme in social studies or reading for students
- It could trigger higher order thinking and creativity as student design or choose their costumes
- Cooperation and social skills are practiced in preparation for and during class activities
- It gives us another opportunity to work together as we help students to expand their cultural and environmental horizons by learning about other cultures and costumes.

Due to the safety of your child and others, **students may not wear masks** or other things that disguise their identity markedly. For instance, the school bus driver will like to know who gets in and out of the bus even on Halloween Day! There will be NO SCHOOL-WIDE parades or celebrations of any sort, however, wearing uniforms on this day will be optional.

For those going to send their students in costumes, please note also that teachers have been working in their classrooms to establish an environment in which children feel secure and relate to one another positively. We would like to encourage you to help us by keeping this in mind when helping your child to choose a costume. Please avoid costumes that are scary or gory, or those that reflect a message of violence of any kind. We would like to remind parents that weapons, including toys, such as fake knives, swords, or guns are not allowed in school, even if they are part of the costume. This is only for those who celebrate Halloween, and those not celebrating it should not be pressured by their children to participate. We respect your decision in this matter. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration. Please remember to access this newsletter in our website, as well at www.highwoodhills.spps.org.

Sincerely,
 Fatima Lawson
 Dr. Fatima Lawson, Principal