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!

I hope that you have all received the information about Highwood Hills closing starting next school year. As the school is becoming smaller and smaller with declining enrollment, it is becoming challenging to provide all the necessary resources and enrichment activities that our students deserve. We need to ensure that we are providing every student a well-rounded education, hence the decision to close smaller schools and maximize enrollment in other settings. The district and Board of Education will be holding some informational and listening sessions in the coming weeks. We advise you to attend those meetings to learn more or have your questions answered. We as a school community will be holding an informational session as well. We will inform you of the meeting date, time and place as soon as this is set. Please bear with us. I hope that I have better news for you, but would like to seize this opportunity to thank all those who have stuck with us all these years!

As we continue this journey together as a school this year, 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 continue to provide the best possible educational experience 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 the circumstances. You have our word and commitment to that!

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. Also, please remind them to wear their masks at all times while at school and not eating or drinking.
We are still awaiting the results of our 2021 MCA report cards. I would not hesitate to share that with you as soon as the results are released. Please stay tuned!

**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 that cover the face/identity completely**, 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](http://www.highwoodhills.spps.org).

Sincerely,

Fatima Lawson
Dr. Fatima Lawson, Principal

- ***NOTE: Please contact us at 651-744-3290 if you need this newsletter or portions of it explained or translated for you.

Respectfully,

Fatima Lawson

Fatima Lawson, Ph.D.
Principal