



# Country Club Hills School District 160

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To: All District Staff Members

From: Dr. Duane R. Meighan, Superintendent of Schools

Date: August 15, 2023

Re: Welcome Back to School

The beginning of the school year is always an exciting time. I hope that everyone had a great summer and an opportunity to rest, relax, and rejuvenate your spirits as we return to District 160. It is hard to believe that the 1st day of instruction is already here. As you may know, I have been working very closely with staff and year-round employees as we continue to prepare for the opening of the school year. I would like to personally thank them for all of their hard work and highly collaborative efforts.

This summer has been full of conversations, planning, and discussion around the goals of our strategic plan. We will continue to monitor, assess, and adjust based on data and the quarters will be targets as we closely track progress as it relates to each pillar. The primary focus for the school system continues to be staffing and filling classroom vacancies with highly qualified teachers. I have been working closely with the HR Department in terms of identifying and being open to innovative and creative ways to fill positions. We are making great gains and will be in a great position to open the school year with quality staff in front of our students. We are also in phase two of our capital projects. All schools now have brand new LED lighting and new HVAC systems are being installed. Brand new electronic marquis have been installed to bring about a more robust community outreach strategy and innovative brand.

I have recommended the appointment of nine new administrators over the course of the summer. Please welcome Ricardo Johnson, Director of Business Operations and Finance, Zarita Beale, Director of Human Resources and Public Relations, Tamisha Bufford, Director of Student Services, Dr. Lori Holmes, Principal at Sykuta, Katherine Clark, Assistant Principal at Sykuta, Sherri Story, Assistant Principal at Southwood, Michael Akins, Assistant Principal at Southwood, Tirena Gipson-Simmons, Southwood Dean of Students, and Joel Velazquez has returned in a larger role as Network Coordinator of the new Technology Department. I am very excited to have these innovative new administrators on board to help us move the district forward on behalf of student learning. I firmly and continue to believe that CCH 160 can, and will emerge as one of the highest performing school systems in this region and that all of our students can learn at a high level.

I will reiterate that there are many pockets of excellence within the CCH 160 school system which we will continue to improve and build upon. We will be identifying and planning on best approaches to focus our talents on those areas that are in need of improvement, and center our attention on emerging and future focused, progressive instructional systems that prepare our students to be both college and career ready as well as prepare them to be globally competitive through the lens of educational equity. Progressive instructional systems such as enhancing the fine arts programs, improving our accelerated/advanced learning programs, advancing our athletic programs, and new McGraw Hill pilots in English and Math are just a few examples of instructional models where students would benefit.

Again, I am extremely excited to embark on the 2023-24 academic school year! I am certain that this school year will be great and we will continue to commit to focused, rigorous, and meaningful learning opportunities for all students in our efforts to ensure that they are being engaged in the learning process. We will also ensure that there is ongoing, regular and relevant professional learning for staff and parents. I am looking forward to a year filled with innovation, relationships, growth, and high academic achievement for every student.

Lastly, Stephen Covey, who authored *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, coined the phrase, " *The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing*". We must believe that the main thing is high quality teaching and learning. Enjoy the remainder of your break, and I look forward to seeing all of you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

Duane Meighan, PhD  
Superintendent of Schools