

# From The Principal's Pen

When I first walked through the doors at Hazelwood Elementary after being selected as the new principal in June, I was greeted by a blue sign with the school's five core values: Positivity, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Effort. This week, I want to focus on the first of those values. While we all know a positive attitude matters, we have all struggled with it at some point. I will be the first to admit that sometimes I struggle with remaining positive. When things are going good, I fight the voices in my head telling me that this is too good to be true and something bad must be about to happen. If things aren't going well, the voice reminds me that I got myself here, and now I will have to get used to it. It will never be any better. Being positive isn't always easy.

Our students must understand the power of positivity. They must be reminded that their attitude matters. Positive schools can become a powerful force in their communities. It requires principals, teachers, support staff, students, and parents to unite behind an attitude and belief that we can make it better. Positivity keeps us from settling where we are and helps us see and understand that we have the power to make it better.

In the last ten months, I have learned the importance of positivity in keeping students in school and keeping our doors open. While teachers did a fantastic job of maintaining a learning environment that worked while students were at home, most teachers will tell you that the difference in student growth between a virtual environment and a school environment is significant. Not only is it in the best interest of our local economy to keep our school open, but it is also in the best interest of our students. Their future depends on our ability to keep them safe and keep our doors open.

We have been very fortunate that our schools have not been the epicenter of cluster events. Our teachers and support staff have worked incredibly hard to keep rooms clean and sanitized. Our students have done a great job of keeping masks on and maintaining appropriate distancing throughout the day. This couldn't have happened without the hardworking of everyone involved.

As we returned from break and began assessing student reading levels, we realized that our students are making positive, meaningful growth. Some of our students that had fallen below grade level while being out of school during the spring and summer are now reading on grade level and are back on track.

The next three months will be critical to helping all of our students get back on track. Most experienced educators will tell you that the period between the return from Christmas Break and Spring Break is the most important 12-14 weeks of the school year. This is the time when students make the most growth.

We want to encourage our students each and every day to make tomorrow just a little bit better than today. This habit of constant ongoing positive improvement will make a difference. Showing up each day with a better attitude and a willingness to work harder and grow more will help shape your child into the adult they become. As a young boy, I watched my dad get up every morning, pack his lunch and leave before the sun came up for a blue-collar job. He never complained about hard work, and he set the expectation that tomorrow would be better than today. Watching him shaped my work ethic and my attitude. I encourage you to help us shape the next generation, one day and one student at a time.