

July 30, 2020

Hello Cougars,

We know the upcoming school year is going to be as different a year as any ever has been. I am very confident that we all, students, teachers, staff, administration and families, will collaborate to make the framework for high schools work. But this year will be one that challenges all of our previous functions and processes, and tests all of our patience.

Our counselors have received a great deal of course change requests over the last week. We recognize that the uncertainty of next year's schedule is likely driving some of this, and we understand why. However, due to the new framework we will be operating under, we have to totally rebuild the master schedule. This process usually takes us from January through June, with counselors, dept chairs, and administration working to make every student's schedule the most accurate to course requests it can be.

We now have about three weeks to do it all over.

Therefore, we will need some grace and understanding through these next few weeks. One thing we will not be able to do is add courses to student requests at this time. Because of the new master schedule, we cannot make any guarantees about where classes will be or who will be teaching them. As well, we do not know which teachers will be in the building or which will be providing instruction remotely, yet. As well, the entire purpose of our COVID plan is to keep classes sizes as small as possible. Students adding classes beyond the regular course load of seven will not allow us to keep class sizes safe.

Drop requests will be honored as long as the student remains on track for graduation. However, replacements for drops cannot be guaranteed, especially when it comes to courses with low numbers of sections (example: most AP classes have 1-3 sections). For example, some courses like LA 9 or World History have many sections and we will not have an issue moving a student into a class like that. However, courses like Perspectives and US Humanities have small numbers of sections and a drop of a Language Arts class for an 11th or 12th grader may result in placement in alternative LA class the student did not request. At this time, we cannot say that we will be offering Early Bird PE as well. That class may need to be moved into the regular day to make the schedule work. We just don't know what the final schedule will look like and we won't for some time.

By August 10, our counselors will communicate to you an online process for schedule change requests. It could come out much earlier than August 10 but depends entirely on how quickly we can rebuild the schedule. Counselors are technically not on contract right now and you may not receive immediate responses to emails to them.

Parking Information

Many have asked if we will allow all students to park in the South lot this year due to the cohort plan. We have reviewed parking for 2021 and concluded that we need to maintain our current system. Even if we are at half capacity all year, the number of spaces we have typically allotted to sophomores and freshmen could, on any given day, create a parking problem for juniors and seniors. And if we are able to go back to the building at full capacity, a revised system would need to be revised again. So the South Lot will remain only for juniors and seniors, the North Lot will be a reservation-only system for Juniors and Seniors who need to arrive late, and Sophomore and Freshmen will be able to purchase reserved spaces at our neighboring churches. The good news is that our church neighbors are expanding their lots for us, and Good Shepherd Lutheran will be joining Lovely Lane and Oakland in offering spaces for our students. Details and instructions for signing up will be coming soon from Mrs. Johnson.

Freshmen Only:

For incoming Freshmen, please note that Mr. Thomsen will be completing your schedules this fall but Mrs. Pladna and Mrs. Mead will be your Freshmen Specialists for the school year. They will be working with Mr. Thomsen as they transition into this role. As well, please mark down August 20 for the Freshmen Welcome event. We anticipate that will do be operating it differently this year, with groups coming in in shifts throughout the day. We also plan to distribute Chromebooks during the Freshmen Welcome. The final schedule will be coming soon (we are waiting on finalized District plans to make sure we do not have to reschedule our events).

Finally...

Thank you all. This past spring and summer have been truly draining on everyone. No one is enjoying the radical changes to what we are all used to. And the stress is very real. We will have details about our schedule, procedures and much more to you soon. As well, we promise that nothing will be perfect, things will require adjustments or possibly total overhauls as we progress through the year. And from our end, we know we have to exercise greater than ever patience with students and families. I think this year's theme will need to "Grace." We all need it!

And....

Congratulations to our summer sports teams! Baseball had a great season, ending on a very hard loss in the regional final to a dark horse Cedar Falls team. And to our Softball team, who plays tomorrow in the State Final game, a first for any Kennedy softball team in school history, BEST OF LUCK! If you cannot make it to Fort Dodge for the 5:00 game, you can watch it on Iowa PBS and stream it from this page: <http://www.iowapbs.org/sports/story/36982/2020-ighsau-girls-state-softball-championships>. I am so proud of our summer athletes, having to practice and play under very restrictive conditions. I am so thankful for the amazing support our parents and other spectators provided, following the masking and distancing rules so well. And I want to thank Mr. Stecker and all of the coaches for turning the state and local health rules into workable procedures and processes.

Well, I have rambled for long enough. Have a great remainder of the week and weekend!

Jason Kline
Principal