



Script of Dr. Block's November 1, 2021 Video Message

Hello Livingston Public Schools Community. This is Matt Block, Superintendent of Schools.

As we begin the third month of the 2021-2022 school year, I could not be more proud of the extraordinary efforts of our students and staff who have made the opening of this school year amazing, and have worked incredibly hard to transition us back to full time school. After last year, a year of hybrid learning and shifting schedules, we thought education could not get any harder, but we have now learned that building back the stamina of full days of in-person school is not easy. While energy and excitement has been high overall, we have also found that there is a lot of work, effort, and adjustment that goes along with getting back to “normal” in our schools.

Our team of educators, once again deserve the highest praise. They have welcomed our students back full time in person with open arms, creativity, caring, and energy. Nonetheless, like in all industries right now, education has a major staffing shortage. Like other districts, we have struggled to find substitute teachers. As a result, over the past month our teachers have been regularly taking on extra teaching time as substitutes. Additionally, as a result of a shortage of qualified teaching candidates, some of our teachers have already taken on teaching extra classes, allowing us to ensure we have excellent teachers in every classroom. Simultaneously, we have asked our staff to tend to social emotional learning, implement a fall State-mandated standardized test, and facilitate students' adjustment back to in-person school. Of course, as has been true in every phase of the pandemic, our teachers have risen to the occasion and are putting in incredible amounts of effort and energy in order to keep us moving forward. We are so fortunate to have educators of Livingston's caliber working with us, and I appreciate their efforts.

Our students and families are also acclimating back to in-person school. Once again getting used to long full days, stressful commutes, after school activities, and homework. We have heard from many students and families that this has not been easy, and the transition has been the source of anxiety and frustration. In comparison to last year, the day is longer, the academic expectations are higher, and social pressures that go along with being in person are back.

While the solutions to this are elusive, it is clear to me that we need to be focused on working to find more balance for the members of our school community. Throughout the district, our professionals are discussing ways to do this. We hope you are also having discussions about balance at home. Solutions will not be easy to find, but awareness and reflection are a good beginning.

In order to take what we hope will be a step in a positive direction, The Livingston Public Schools will make Teachers Convention Weekend, Thanksgiving Weekend, and Winter Break, “Homework & Schoolwork Free” times district-wide. We are encouraging students AND staff to take a break during these times, not do any work related to school, and to relax and decompress. These upcoming “times off” are for everyone whether you are Lancers, Junior Lancers, Bobcats, Cougars, Lions, Hawks, Rams, or Huskies.

So many great things are happening in the Livingston Public Schools. There is a lot to celebrate. We just need to remember to take care of ourselves as we continue to navigate this unprecedented time together.

Thank you.