



July 31, 2024

Dear Kennedy Parents and Students,

It is hard to believe but we are just weeks away from the start of a new school year. As always, we consider it an honor and privilege that you have chosen Kennedy for your (or your child's) education. We take great pride in the consistent accolades our school receives, including recognition from The Belin-Blank Center, *US News and World Report* Best High Schools, Niche.com and more. But most importantly, our work in creating a welcoming, supportive environment continues to produce results, with 90% of Kennedy students reporting that they feel their teachers care about them (*Conditions for Learning Survey, 2024*). This past year we saw our largest gains ever in students feeling safe and cared for by the adults at our school, even after two consecutive previous years of growth. We now stand well ahead of the state average. All the while, our reading and math schools continue to return to pre-Pandemic levels, while our AP Scores pushed to their highest level of success since 2018. We have much to celebrate and still much more work to be done.

The most noticeable change in our classrooms this year will be the new [Newline Interactive Panels](#) that are replacing the old SMART Boards. Our SMART Boards are surprisingly more than 12 years old and their software is no longer compatible with modern operating systems. These new boards provide a much better image quality and can connect directly with student's chromebooks in the classroom, allowing for much greater interactivity. We are looking forward to these. Another improvement in our building is an addition of an ADA Accessible lift that allows for wheelchair access to our woodshop.

This year will bring some changes in our Parent/Student Handbook, which will be available via the Kennedy website, and sent home as well. Notable changes will surround attendance and cell phone/electronics. Since the pandemic, our attendance numbers have significantly worsened. The state identifies a student as Chronically Absent if they miss more than 10% of school, excused or unexcused. Research shows that those students who fall into Chronic Absenteeism perform much lower than students with 90% or better attendance in school. In turn, there will be significantly tighter limitations on students being granted excused absences. In addition, students will not be allowed to make up any work, tests, projects, etc. if they miss class unexcused. We will also roll out a recognition process for students who remain above the 90% attendance mark. Bottom line: We need students in class, present and ready to learn every day.

Regarding cell phones and other personal electronic devices, wording in the handbook will not change. We continue to strongly recommend students NOT bring these devices to school. What will change is how we will enforce this policy. The expectation remains that every student will turn their phones off during class and place them in a pocket holder in the classroom. Students may not take their phones with them to the bathroom during class. Students who



refuse will be sent to the office and suspended from school for the remainder of the day. We will no longer ask a second time for the cell phone to be turned over. And repeated violations will result in longer suspensions from school. Students may access their phones and other personal devices during passing times and lunch.

| Accountability | Consideration | Integrity | Perseverance |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Be responsible for my actions | Be mindful of my words and actions | Positively influence others | Keep trying to do my best |
| Be prepared | Show empathy towards others | Make good choices | Learn from my failures |

This year we will also introduce our new Cougar Commitments. These are our guiding principles for student and staff engagement with one another in the line of keeping Kennedy a kind, welcoming and growth-oriented community.

Student schedules will be released in Infinite Campus on August 16th at approximately 9 AM. Students wishing to request changes to their schedules must [complete the appropriate forms on the Kennedy website](#). Members of the Class of 2028 are reminded that they must

maintain a minimum of seven classes per semester. Requests that do not meet the established criteria for schedule changes will not be considered.

Our **Annual Community Open House** will take place on Monday, August 26 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM. Come meet the teachers, visit dozens of college, career and community organization booths, and enjoy a free dinner courtesy of the Cougar Corner Food Pantry. It is always a wonderful evening!

Freshman Welcome is on Monday, August 19 starting at 8:00 AM until noon. Students will learn the ropes, walk their schedules and meet their teachers, take their Class Photo and much much more. Please make sure this is on your calendars.

The **first day of school** is Friday, August 23. It is an early dismissal day. Please keep in mind that we no longer have regular Friday early dismissals any more and this, and the last day of school (June 3) are the only ones. We will dismiss at 1:20 on those days, but 2:50 on every other day. Be sure to go through the entire [Back to School checklist](#) on the Kennedy website to prepare for the school year. Enjoy the rest of your summer and we will see you all soon!

Sincerely,

Jason Kline, Principal