

Go Big Blue!

Let me start off the year by reminding everyone that, "It's a great day to be a Panther"! I am so excited to kick off another school year as our Panther Pride strives for academic excellence once again. Last year our school motto was, "Your road to success begins here", and I truly believe positive habits and life-long characteristics start in high school and we achieved that goal last year. So this year our school motto will be ---"The prowl starts now". I feel this slogan embodies the spirit of our students and staff as we recognize each year brings new hope and dreams for all.

Whew! What happened to the summer? The last thing I remember was telling my students on the last day of school to be safe and enjoy their summer! Now I am getting ready to kick-off an exciting year at school again. Wow, time flies when you are in education especially as a parent kids at home in the summer. Therefore, I suspect many of you are looking forward to school starting again as are many of our kids. I imagine many of your children feel, they can't wait to get back to school and see their friends and teachers. Yes, the anticipation of a new school year can be exhilarating for all.

Returning after our first ever school grade of an "A" last year in 2013-14 is marvelous way to continue our winning tradition. We were the only "A" high school in Palm Bay and I know we all have high expectations again for the 2014-15 school grade results too. The preliminary scores are in and we have had early mixed results. I am very proud of our students and staff because we had a 16% increase in our algebra 1 scores last year matching the largest improvement of any high school in the district. Our US. History and English LART scores had a slight decrease compared to the year before yet our Biology scores dipped more than I would like as they did with almost every school in the district. Nevertheless, most of these preliminary scores were from the new FSA test which of course replaced the old FCAT. This NEW FSA test is not exactly aligned with the old FCAT testing reports so we are not able to compare apples with apples quite yet. Nevertheless, without fully understanding completely how the state will calculate school grading formula this year with the recent changes in legislation, I do expect us to continue to strive for academic excellence as we enhance our high performing learning culture at Heritage High School.

Next, I would like to take a moment to once again reinforce with you a little about my vision and mission as I begin my 3rd year as principal of Heritage High School. I am a student centered leader that believes all students should have the opportunity to embrace a positive educational experience filled with school spirit and Panther Pride! I believe in setting high academic expectations for all Panthers, as we prepare our students for a successful launch into adulthood and a global economy. I believe in positive behavior support (PBS), which is a program that celebrates student achievement and rewards academic excellence. I believe that all of our students aspire to achieve lofty academic goals and/or make noticeable personal improvement. We will find avenues to celebrate and provide incentives for their continued pursuit of excellence.

To inspire and motivate students to do the very best every day in every class, we will continue to implement an awards ceremony validating a variety of positive life skills. Examples of student target goals we like to celebrate are perfect attendance to school, all "A's" and "B's" on their report card and students that go above and beyond normal expectations. I will also recommend to our students that they should make a point to get engaged in extracurricular activities that showcase their many talents. Last year our Panther Pride was in full exhibition during the district wide performing fine arts MPA's. All 3 of our programs, band, chorus, and orchestra achieved superior ratings for the first time ever-Go Big Blue! I will also encourage all students to prepare for college and careers by offering a leadership class for underclassman that focuses on character education and setting life goals. In addition, I will support a "Dress for Success" philosophy which establishes a positive expectation for all students to evolve into their best at everything they choose to do.

All and all, I will continue to put the team/your children first by utilizing many of the same effective strategies that have been successful that will drive student achievement to new heights with your continued support. I will engage my students with the belief that what is best for the team is almost always best for you the individual. My continued goal will be to inspire students to explore their personal best by seeking a commitment to improving their education as students at Heritage because together we stand. Furthermore, I would like to challenge each of you to be actively involved in your child's education and all the positive things we do here at Heritage High School. In closing, I would like to invite you to stop by and share your school spirit and Panther Pride all year long as I will continue to build and embrace the heritage of all our students in the 2015-16 school year.

Dr. John Harris



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