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Dear W.A. Olmsted Families,

I hope this letter finds you well and the beginning of the new school year has been outstanding for your family! It's been fantastic to have the students back in our classrooms and we are looking forward to the great school year that lies ahead for our elementary hornets. Everyone has been working diligently to do their very best, especially ensuring that we are connecting with each other as a school community and members of a classroom community. We have an exciting intervention to strengthen the home-school connection this year!

Our school district has had the great fortune of working with researchers from Harvard University, the National Center for Rural Education Research Network, and other selected rural school districts from across New York State to gain a deeper understanding of students' attendance and to develop strategies for improving our students' attendance. It has been highly informative and motivating work. More importantly, we know that implementing what we have learned can have a positive impact on our students and their academic achievement. *Did you know that each day of absence is actually equivalent to about three days of lost learning for the student?* Therefore, it is critical that our students are in attendance every day or that absences are kept to a minimum.

The school will maintain its existing notifications and practices regarding student attendance but will be adding a new "postcard" intervention too. First, we will "test" the new intervention out with select grade levels of students to see if it is having an impact. If it helps, then we will be expanding the intervention to all grades in the second half of the school year. Here is some important information about the postcard intervention:

- The postcard intervention will begin with students in grade 1, grade 3, and grade 5 (these grades were randomly chosen by Harvard)
- The postcard will be directly mailed to your home each week
- *The attendance postcards will be put in the mail every Tuesday, beginning on Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>*
- Any absence, whether excused or unexcused, will result in a postcard being sent

You might be wondering what information will be contained on the postcard. Each postcard will:

- Make sure families are aware of the number of absences their student has for the quarter
- Show the impact of the absences
- Indicate the valuable learning that was missed due to the absences, and
- Make sure that every parent/guardian has the information and opportunity to connect with the classroom teacher for support and assistance. The parent-teacher relationship is an important part of making sure our students are successful!

Thank you for partnering with us to implement this attendance improvement strategy. Please contact me, the building principal, Mr. DiMaria, or director of instruction, Mrs. Horton, with any questions.

Yours in education,

Michael J. Rullo