

Danville High School

July 23, 2025

Dear Viking Families,

Welcome back to the 2025-26 school year. I apologize in advance, this letter is a bit longer than those of year's past.

As we enter another year together I am again overcome with gratitude for the opportunity to be your principal. I am unworthy of the grace you have extended to me the past two years. Thank you for the patience and trust you have shown through the inevitable ups and downs. DHS is truly a wonderful place. As I enter my 19th year in education, all spent at DHS, I have never felt stronger about my commitment and affection for this school.

I am proud to say that last year we continued our growth in relation to key traditional school improvement metrics. When the state releases school report cards in October we will, once again, see improvements such as lowered chronic absenteeism, a higher rate of freshmen on track after their 9th grade year, and an increased graduation rate. The staff and students have worked tirelessly the last two years and we are seeing results.

However, while these goals are laudable and our improvement is worthy of celebration, they are simply numbers. Behind those numbers are the stories of your students. While hard to measure, my vision for DHS has always been that we are a school where students, staff, and parents feel seen, heard, and safe. A place where human value and dignity come before quantifiable accomplishments.

I attended a conference this summer and in one of the sessions the presenter engaged us in an exercise of identifying our core values. Long story short, we had to continually narrow down our core values from a long list. At the end of the exercise the following values remained on my paper (grace, gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, and love). My greatest hope for DHS is that we continually grow to embody these values. To give of ourselves to others with these principles in mind is the greatest gift we can give each other and they will create a school environment that our students deserve.

Mr. Jacob Bretz – Principal

Mr. DeMarko Wright – Associate Principal

Mrs. Elizabeth Cosat – Assistant Principal

Mrs. Betsy Porter – Assistant Principal

Mr. Scot Vogel – Assistant Principal

202 E. Fairchild Street – Danville, Illinois 61832 – (217) 444-1500

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With that said, this is the foundation from which I have decided to make a major change at DHS this year regarding cell phones and personal telecommunication devices. Cell phones in particular have improved our lives and provide tremendous utility. However, they do not provide usefulness, foster academic engagement, or cultivate meaningful relationships in a school setting. In fact, a phone based life generally pulls us downward. It changes the way we think, feel, judge, and relate to others. While cell phones have provided convenience in many areas of life, I strongly believe they are incompatible with the core values I outlined above, and they are especially counterproductive to academic focus and engagement.

Social media companies traffic in the monetization and monopolization of our attention, especially with our young people. We can no longer allow this to take place during school hours and force educators to compete against a daily tidal wave of stimulation and distractions. This has been a very difficult decision but one I've never felt more convicted to make. I do not view this as a punishment, but rather an opportunity for DHS staff and parents to stand together and assert our collective duty to care for our children.

Accompanying my letter are informational documents outlining the Yondr system, logistical processes, expectations, consequences, and other ways you can stay in contact with your student during the school day. While this is the hard decision, I believe it is the right decision. It will not be easy, but most things worth doing aren't.

I have also included a QR code that will give you access to relevant back to school and freshmen orientation information.



Thank you for reading, I am grateful for you.

Jacob Bretz

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