



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

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Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Dear BCSS Administration, Faculty, Staff and Parents/Guardians,

We have reached the finish line! Another school year is "in the books", and I am sure everyone is looking forward to the summer break. Even if some of us will still be working during the recess, summer is a time when things get a little more casual and relaxed. I know I, for one, am very ready for that!

In some ways, what we lived through as a school district due to the COVID-19 pandemic this past year are things I hope we never see again. The worry about dangers to our health, the extended disruption to how our faculty and support staff engage with students to help them learn, and the uncertainty about whether, how and to what degree we were making progress back toward "normal" all blended together to make this school year often feel like it was twice the effort for everyone.

In other ways, though, the experiences we have had, and lessons we have learned, this past year are ones I know we will value forever. The prolonged need to try new things, to work through problems, and to collaborate in new ways with new teams have all truly made us wiser, more nimble and creative in our thinking, and better able to function in ways that lead to genuine, effective results. The public health circumstances that forced us into this have been horrible. They have led to loss for some and lasting impairment for others, and we cannot lose sight of that. But we must also recognize and value the positive changes that we made in response to this adversity. As I have before, I want to recognize and thank everyone in our school community for their continued energy, teamwork, and commitment to our mission. I would not be able to talk about positive "by-products" of this terrible situation without each and every one of you "leaning in" the way you have.

While we are all counting the days until summer recess begins, I want to talk for a moment about September. The information we see in the news shows sustained positive trends in the numbers we use to assess the severity of the pandemic. The public health authorities our district relies on for more detailed data and expert guidance are advising that these apparent trends are genuine. To quote Yogi Berra, "it ain't over till it's over", but this pandemic being "over" is something we will only get to in incremental steps. After a first half that mostly involved fully remote instruction, the second half of this school year allowed us to open our



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school buildings back up for students with schedules that still included remote instruction as an element. As it stands right now, this progress toward a return to pre-pandemic operation will culminate in fully on-site instruction for all students when our schools re-open in September. Governor Murphy has made it clear that all schools are expected to plan for this and will be required to operate fully on-site unless we see significant negative changes in public health information. Many of us will be involved in the planning and the work required over the summer for our schools to do this. Whether you are part of the district's "summer team" or not, everyone in our school community should take the summer to prepare themselves and their families for a return to "normal operation" in the fall.

We all know that students should be in school. We also know that the disruptions to learning, mental health and family needs that come from remote instruction are substantial. Between now and September, we will do what we need to do to open our doors for everyone when the new school year starts, and to do so safely.

I hope everyone finds opportunities this summer to rest, relax and recharge. Stay safe and be well!

Sincerely,
Howard Lerner, Ed.D
Superintendent