



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

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Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent

COVID-19 Educational Update 5/5/20

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

As you may already know, yesterday Governor Murphy announced that all New Jersey schools would remain closed, and continue to operate remotely, through the end of this school year. I imagine we were all hoping for some significant change in circumstances that would have allowed for a different decision, but in light of what we are still seeing and hearing in the news I don't think the Governor's decision was a surprise.

The Governor's Office is working in conjunction with the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) and local education leaders to decide whether, and how, school districts might be able to offer summer instructional programs. Our district is planning to operate its Extended School Year program for students who are required by law to receive academic instruction during the summer, continuing our "remote instruction" model in the event on-site options are not allowed by then.

Looking forward, I have created a Re-Entry Planning Task Force for our school district. This group will start identifying the many issues we will need to address when schools re-open and "brainstorming" how our district might handle those issues. There is much we don't know about when or how a "return to normal" might come about, but we will be better prepared to develop answers later on if we have these teams formed and functioning now.

As I have mentioned before, we know that our schools being closed has impacted all students in ways beyond academics. The routines they follow in school, as well as those they follow at home when schools are open, give them structure, stability and a sense of security that are key elements for learning. They also thrive on their interactions at school with administrators, teachers and friends. This social interaction and energy is another vital component to their learning and growth. And, finally, our students who are graduating in 2020 will miss out on traditional milestones and commemorations they have been looking forward to as they leave us for the next steps on their journey. Our administrators, faculties and staffs are putting together virtual graduations and end-of-year ceremonies that will give students who are leaving us in June fond memories to look back on.

I have expressed my admiration and appreciation in the past for the dedication, positive outlook, creativity and extraordinary effort we have seen each and every one of you invest in the work we have



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done together to keep our students healthy and learning. Our administrators, our faculty and staff, and our families at home have met and conquered the challenges that we have faced so far, and I know without question we will continue to do so.

As I have encouraged before, please take a moment to reach out to someone you care about to offer support, encouragement and appreciation. Toward that end, I want to let you know that:

- Today (May 5th) is National Teacher Appreciation Day! Thank you to all of our amazing, talented Teachers for their never-ending commitment to helping every student reach his or her highest potential! (This entire week is actually National Teacher Appreciation Week, so please take a moment to find and thank the Teachers who have had positive impacts on your and your children's lives!)
- This past Friday (May 1st) was National School Principals' Day! Every organization needs energetic, creative, empowering leadership to help its people do their best work, and schools are no different. Our Principals and Supervisors provide this leadership, each in his/her own unique way, but driven by a shared passion for student growth and staff excellence! Please let them know that you see and value all their hard work and dedication!
- Tomorrow (May 6th) is National Nurses Day! Under "normal" circumstances, our schools and programs depend on our Nurses and Healthcare Professionals to promote and protect the health and safety of our students and staff in the face of an infinite variety of challenges! Our current public health risk has put even heavier responsibilities on them to provide vital information, guidance and reassurance. And they have stepped up on a level that is difficult for the rest of us to imagine. This public health crisis is about more than just "schools", though, so please take every opportunity you can to thank every Nurse and Healthcare Professional you know for their expertise, their energy and their courage.

You each have my continued hope that you, your families and your friends are safe and healthy. Remember that there are people you can reach out to for support if you are struggling at all.

Sincerely,
Howard Lerner, Ed.D.