



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

540 Farview Avenue, Paramus, New Jersey 07652-2915 • Tel. (201) 343-6000 ext. 4069 • Fax (201) 996-7249 • email: howler@bergen.org

Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent

BCSS Educational Update 08/18/2020

Dear Bergen County Special Services School District Community,

I hope the summer has treated you well and that you have found some opportunity for rest, reflection and rejuvenation. This has certainly not been a typical “summer recess” for any of us.

This is a follow-up to my August 3, 2020 Educational Update ([BCSS Educational Update 08/03/2020](#)). Our goal since June has been, and remains, to reopen our schools and have students and staff return safely for on-site instruction this school year. Our district’s Restart Committee and our school-level Pandemic Response Teams have been working non-stop for the last month and a half to ensure that we have procedures and facilities ready for everyone’s return. The challenges have been daunting for all NJ school districts. Not surprisingly, the special instructional focus of BCSS, and the student population it serves, have presented us with additional, unique complexities to address.

On August 13, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 175, which allowed school districts to delay the resumption of in-person instruction, and start the 2020-2021 school year on full remote instruction, in order to fully implement the health and safety components of their “re-opening plans”. The BCSS school district will utilize this flexibility and delay the start of in-person instruction in our schools until October 19, 2020 for the following reasons:

Staffing

Information from the CDC indicates that people with certain preexisting medical conditions are, or may be, at higher risk from COVID-19 infection. Our school district needs additional time to complete an interactive process with individual staff members who are seeking job accommodations based on such preexisting conditions. Staff members with school-age children of their own will also face unavoidable conflicts between their BCSS work schedules and the remote learning schedules of their children’s schools. Absences resulting from staff members who are unable to return to on-site assignments, or unable to return full-time, when our schools reopen will then require the recruitment and employment of coverage staffing.



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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The availability of various types of PPE fluctuates, with some that our schools require being scarce and difficult to acquire. Depending on circumstances, gloves, gowns, head coverings, face shields or other eye protection and/or enhanced face coverings may be required. Our district ordered much of the PPE we will need for the new school year towards the end of last school year, and many items are still on back order. We will continue to locate and purchase these items in quantities that will allow our schools to operate safely and continuously once they reopen for in-person instruction.

Indoor Air Quality

The district's operations and maintenance staff have worked to meet the requirements of the Department of Education's *The Road Back, Restart and Recovery Plan for Education*. In an effort to promote a higher level of safety for our students and staff, the district engaged licensed HVAC engineers for further guidance. Upon their recommendation, the district instituted a plan to install needlepoint bipolar ionization to district buildings capable of handling such systems. Needlepoint bipolar ionization is a proven technology used to eliminate viruses and improve air quality. Its popularity, and thus the demand for these systems, has created a delay in their shipment to our district. The district's virtual start will give us additional time to receive and install these units to our facilities.

Our schools will be better positioned to reopen for in-person instruction, and remain open, if we start the 2020-2021 school year on fully remote instruction and take additional time to make sure our staffing, PPE inventories and indoor air quality protection are as complete as possible.

BCSS Calendar Revisions – We will revise the 2020-2021 BCSS school calendar to the following:

- September 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th are full days for school staff only. Professional development will be remote/virtual.
- September 4th will be an early dismissal day for staff.
- September 8th through October 16th will be fully remote, full-length instruction days for students.
- September 8th through October 2nd will be fully remote work days for 10-month school staff.



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- October 5th through October 9th will be a 50%/50% hybrid schedule of on-site and remote work attendance for 10-month school staff.
- October 12th through October 16th will be full-time on-site work attendance for 10-month school staff.
- October 19th will begin the hybrid schedule of in-person/remote instruction for students set forth in the district's original BCSS Restart and Recovery Plan, along with the specific details determined by your school Pandemic Response Team. (Please contact your Principal/Supervisor with any questions about this.)
- October 19th through October 23rd will be minimum session days for students.
- **Host site and consultant model programs will continue to follow their host site district calendars.**

Remote Instruction Option

The NJDOE has issued guidance allowing parents to choose all-remote learning for their students when their schools resume in-person learning schedules. The BCSS procedures for families opting for full-time remote learning beyond October 16th are as follows:

- Notify the administrator of your child's school that you require remote learning for your child.
- Your child's school will maintain close communication with you throughout the remote learning period.
- When you decide that you would like your child to return to in-person instruction, you must notify your school's administrator by the 15th of the month prior to first Monday of the following month (e.g. November 15th for a December 7th start).
- It is advisable that you notify your home district along the same timeline to give the district time to put in place related services, such as transportation.
- The first day of attendance for students returning to in-person instruction will be the Monday closest to the first of the month.
- These procedures are necessary in order to ensure a safe and smooth transition to in-person learning for your child.



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Next Steps for You at Home

As I discussed in my August 3rd Educational Update, we need the help of parent/guardians to ensure safeguards and virus mitigation strategies in place and practiced every day:

- All parents are required to ensure that the student does not have a temperature above 100° F, or any of the COVID-19 symptoms.
- All students' temperatures will be read before entry into the building.
- All students must wear face coverings when entering their schools and during their entire time in the buildings unless conditions exist that make the wearing of a mask impossible.
- Please find reusable/washable face coverings that your child is comfortable wearing and gradually build up the amount of time they can tolerate wearing them.
- Please ensure that you have a working thermometer in your home, personal supplies of hand sanitizer (alcohol-based) that your child can carry to school, and any other personal effects that you think will help your child feel comfortable returning to the school environment. We will have hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and appropriate PPE in all rooms.

Transportation

Please remember that BCSS does not transport students to and from school. This is a local district responsibility. Therefore, any questions regarding transportation to and from school must be directed to the local school district transportation department or the assigned bus company.

Once again, I thank you for your patience and support as we have developed our plans for the fall, including this latest revision. We will provide additional information if and as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact your child's building administration. Be safe and well.

Sincerely,
Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent
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