



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

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Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent

COVID-19 Educational Update 6/5/20

Dear Administration, Faculty, Staff and Parents/Guardians,

I hope you and your loved ones are well. Almost three months ago the novel coronavirus that led to the COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down in ways that jeopardized our lives, our livelihoods and our relationships with each other. For the last week and a half, the awful consequences of an “illness” in our society that is decidedly not “novel” have hammered us all in many of the same ways.

There is not much new COVID-19 news. Rates of new infections and deaths in New Jersey still appear to be declining. This gives us hope that there may be a “return to normal” on our horizon. This “return to normal” will be sequential, however, and slower than any of us would like. It will not happen at all unless our individual and institutional behaviors are deliberate and thought-out.

Toward that end, our BCTS Re-Entry Task Force continues to meet each week to share information, discuss various aspects of what our own “return to normal” may require, and develop plans for now and for the future that can move us ahead as safely as possible:

* The Task Force developed a schedule for this week and next that allows individual staff members to visit their schools if they want to, in order to collect personal items, drop off and pick up school-related items they need to continue working, and/or close out their classrooms or offices for the summer. It is also working on a similar plan for students to visit to their schools later in June to pick up personal items and return school property before the summer.

*In addition to the virtual high school graduation ceremonies we will conduct later this month, the Re-Entry Task Force and our school administrators (with input from students and parents) are discussing possible parameters for an on-site outdoor celebration in the summer.

* The district will be offering online academic instruction over the summer for students who require credit recovery or additional preparation before the next school year starts.



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* Our Athletics Department is monitoring guidance from the NJDOE and the NJSIAA about the resumption of organized sports allowed pursuant to Governor Murphy's Executive Order No. 149.

* The Re-Entry Task Force is also developing procedures and supply lists that will support some level of on-site re-opening of our schools and other buildings in preparation for a state authorization to do so. As has been the case from the start, our planning is fluid and reliant on state authorization and guidance that are developed methodically and based on evolving data.

Separate from our conversation about COVID-19 and its impacts on our lives since March, I also want to speak to the civil unrest communities throughout our nation have experienced over the last week and a half. The death of George Floyd on May 25th was senseless, tragic and unacceptable. It was also a flashpoint for frustration and anger across our country about bigotry and intolerance that are centuries old for us. This past week I worked with other members of the Bergen County Superintendents Association to deliver a statement from that organization to the public sharing our thoughts about our current civil unrest, what led to it and what we will do to help fix it for the future. Please take a moment to read the statement, which was posted on our district website this past Tuesday: [BCASA Public Statement - Civil Unrest](#)

The violence we have seen be done to individual citizens, as well as the violence we have seen in reaction to it, can be traumatizing even to those not physically involved with it. I have been in discussion with my central office and building administrators about our need for vigilance and sensitivity to this among our staff, students and families. Principals have sent out messages to their school communities to let people know our school counselors have been and will remain available to provide support and assistance to students who may need it.

These are difficult times. The only way through both of our current crises is to acknowledge them for what they are, and do the hard work of behaving responsibly and charitably towards each other. If your circumstances (and the weather) permit it, take time this weekend to go out somewhere and be around other people; people who you don't know or who are different than you. Stay more than six feet apart and wear a face covering, but look at those people. Every one of them is a human being. We are brothers and sisters to each other. We are a community together; we share New Jersey together; and we share this country together. Spend exactly as much time in your life thinking about how you can treat other people well as you spend thinking about yourself, whether you know those



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other people and agree with them, or whether you don't. When we don't spend that time thinking of our responsibility to others, our selfishness leads to mistrust, intolerance and division. We cannot come through any of this and be better on the other side unless we see and treat every other person in our world with the respect, value and charity of heart that we want for ourselves. We control our own thoughts and deeds; and we are all capable of learning and growth. Let each of us commit to improving our world by improving ourselves.

Be well and stay safe!

Sincerely,

Howard Lerner, Ed.D.

Superintendent