



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

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Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent

COVID-19 Educational Update 5/1/20

Dear Administration, Faculty, Staff and Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to May! We are now about halfway through the most recent period of school closure and remote operation directed by Governor Murphy. As with last week, we have no new information from the Governor's Office or the NJ Department of Education to share or discuss. We have all seen comments starting to appear in the news about COVID-19 infection statistics "flattening" in our state. Please remember that Governor Murphy's next decisions about how schools in New Jersey move forward will not be made until the week after next; and the Governor has repeatedly emphasized that his decisions on this issue will be made in consultation with educators and school districts based on information and advice he receives from public health and safety experts. The Governor and the NJ Commissioner of Education have also repeatedly emphasized that school districts must not speculate about school reopening dates unless and until the Governor specifically communicates that information. We will continue to honor this request.

On Tuesday April 28th, 2020, the Board of Education approved two changes I recommended to the 2019-2020 school calendar that: a) make the typical "reconciliation" of the school year to reach the state-mandated 180 school days for students; and b) address the elevated levels of isolation and stress we see many students feeling as we continue to live under this unprecedented "remote instruction" framework.

First, on May 21, 2020 (Thursday) and May 22, 2020 (Friday) we have scheduled online/virtual "Social-Emotional Learning" activities for all district students. School administrators, district counselors and outside experts will be creating presentations and exercises to engage, support and strengthen our students on both of these days. There will be no academic instruction on either day, and our teachers will be entirely "off-line", to ensure that our students' time and attention is completely focused on these important efforts. We will implement this virtual program whether our school buildings reopen or remain closed.

Second, our schools will be closed for all students and teachers on Friday, June 12, 2020. This day off will also stay in place whether our school buildings are open or closed.



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Board of Education President, Dr. Meyerson, and the entire Board of Education specifically asked me to thank every one of you for the dedication, positivity and tremendous effort you invest in the work we do together each day to keep our schools operating for our students, even if our buildings cannot be a part of that right now. The Board is amazed and grateful every day when they see how extraordinarily well our programs, our faculty and staff, and our families at home have met the challenges that we have faced during this most difficult time.

We continue to flourish. We have capitalized on opportunities to do new things, and do “old things” in new ways, as we work our way through this crisis. We will be better, individually and as a school district, on the other side of it. Thank you, once again!!

I extend to you my continued hope that you, your families and your friends are safe and well. As I have encouraged before, please take a moment to reach out to someone you care about to offer support, and remember that there are people you can reach out to for support if you are struggling at all. If we learn anything from all of this, it should be that we are without a doubt “stronger together”.

Stay safe, be well and enjoy the weekend.

Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Bergen County Technical Schools/Special Services