



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

Dear Administration, Faculty, Staff and Parents/Guardians,

Well, we have “arrived” (in a manner of speaking). We are ending the last full week of the 2019-2020 school year. It has been a school year unlike any other we have lived through and, for obvious reasons, one we would not have chosen. But the “seismic” challenges we are facing, one that is unprecedented and one that is horribly and perennially “precedented”, can and must push us to change and to grow.

Today is Juneteenth, which commemorates the date in 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger led Union soldiers to Galveston, Texas to tell enslaved African Americans that the Civil War was over and they were free. Unlike today, when information speeds into our eyes and ears instantly, it took two and a half years after President Lincoln delivered his Emancipation Proclamation, and the final surrender of the Confederate Army to the Union, for this news to spread throughout the country.

This year the Juneteenth holiday is seeing greater awareness and meaning throughout our society as we mourn the tragic deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and too many other Black Americans across too many years. It is a day to clearly and unequivocally proclaim that racial injustice is reprehensible and unacceptable. Juneteenth also celebrates our country’s commitment to progress toward respect, for African Americans and for all races and cultures. In our communities, our workplaces, and our personal lives, there is much to be done for us to fully realize our nation’s high ideals of justice and equity for all — and a great deal of that is work each of us must do ourselves.

Positive change is driven by knowledge, and the insight that comes from it. The Juneteenth holiday has a long and rich history, which I encourage everyone to learn or revisit. Here is one online resource: <https://www.juneteenth.com/history.htm>. There are also many events today and this weekend celebrating Juneteenth for those who may want to attend or participate (<https://www.nj.com/where-you-can-celebrate-juneteenth-in-nj.html>).

Next week will be a short week of school for our students and staff. Classes will end, classrooms and lockers will be cleaned out, and our 12th graders will say “good-bye”. We are excited about the “virtual” graduation ceremonies our Principals have planned for their graduating seniors next week; and we hope they provide cherished memories to look back on for years to come. We are also finishing the plans for on-site celebrations the week after the Independence Day holiday for any graduating seniors who want to participate. Details about our “virtual” graduations have been sent out by our Principals, and any questions can be addressed to them. Principals will be sharing details about our on-site July graduation celebrations as they are finalized.



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My emails to the school community will probably not be a weekly event throughout the summer. So, I want to take one more opportunity to say “thank you” to each and every one of you for the work we have done together this school year. The disruption of almost every norm and routine in our lives was unanticipated and sudden. “On the fly” I saw our administrators, teachers and specialists, support staff, parents/guardians and students find depths of energy, creativity, patience, flexibility and commonality of purpose that had never been tapped before. With almost no loss of momentum we adjusted, planned and on many days improvised in order to keep teaching and learning robust for our students. It has been a bravura performance by everyone. I am grateful and proud to have been a part of such a fine group, and such a fine achievement. We don’t yet know what school will look like in September. In all likelihood it will not be what anyone would consider “back to normal”, but I have no doubt that the team we have and the teamwork we have experienced will keep our schools and our students thriving no matter what.

To all, have a great Father’s Day weekend.

Stay safe, be well and enjoy your summer!

Howard Lerner, Ed.D.
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