

**Updates from the District Office**

May 17, 2021

Dear BSCSD Parents and Caregivers – Good afternoon to you all. We have six updates for you today as follows:

1. **Budget Vote and Board Election** – Please remember that tomorrow, Tuesday, May 18, is the statewide [Budget Vote](#) and Board Election. The outcome of the budget vote is something that we study each year and consider as a form of the community's voice. Therefore, every vote matters, so we encourage you to please make time to vote at the your designated polling place which is Ballston Spa High School Library for residents of the Towns of Ballston, Milton, and Charlton; and the Malta Town Hall for residents of Malta.

For the Board Election, we have a bit of a unique situation this year as we have [two candidates](#) on the ballot and three seats available. There are, however, a number of individuals who missed the deadline to be on the ballot who have contacted the District to inform us that they are now running campaigns as a “write in”. To vote for one of these individuals the voter will need to hand write the person's formal name onto the ballot in the available blank space(s). A voter is not obligated to vote for one or both candidates who are listed on the ballot and may instead write in one, two, or even three names on the ballot if they are aware that these individuals are interested in a seat on the Board.

2. **Mask Update** – This weekend the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued an [update](#) regarding masks in schools recommending that mask wearing continues “for at least the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.” This was reinforced by Governor Cuomo at today's news conference where he stated that masks must still be worn in schools, in health care facilities, on buses, and on other public transportation. Accordingly, *please continue to wear masks when on school grounds at all times including when you are at the school and the Malta Town Hall for tomorrow's vote.*
3. **Guidance Confusion** – It is understandable why many of you have written or called with questioning why certain activities can now take place (e.g., increasing the number of spectators for sports) but other activities are still restricted (e.g., spacing in classrooms, graduation, prom, etc.). The answer is that we have three current guidance documents that we are to follow (see below) in addition to the [CDC Community Transmission Rate](#) (to determine what actions we can take in our middle and high schools for social distancing) and various Executive Orders that are still in place from the Governor.
  - a. The guidance for classrooms (including music classrooms) which includes transportation and cafeteria spacing was updated on April 9 and can be found [HERE](#).
  - b. The guidance for end of year celebrations (including prom and graduation) can be found [HERE](#).
  - c. The guidance for sports and recreation can be found [HERE](#). Based on recent updates for spectators at athletic events found [HERE](#), we anticipate that the DOH document will be updated again.

Changes to these guidance documents typically happens with little to no notice to school districts or county departments of health. As a result, we are often learning new information at the same time as the media. As headlines rarely are able to catch all of the nuances of the changes, we are often having to act quickly to explain the details involved and then put in place any changes that are warranted. I apologize that this has been a confusing process throughout the year and please know that we will continue to work on acting as quickly and as smartly as the details allow while keeping as much consistency as we can.

4. **Fall Reopening** – In all of the changes that we are managing on a near daily basis, the most common question we are now receiving is what the fall will look like. While all forecasts are suggesting that we will be fully reopened, we have not received guidance on that yet. We have written to our state legislators asking them to intervene on our behalf in both clarifying the current DOH guidance on middle and high schools while also getting us guidance for the fall as soon as possible.
5. **Current COVID Data** – We continue to make progress as a district, region, and state in managing the virus as the information below suggests.
  - a. *District* – We had 2 positive cases reported this past week, one of which required tracing. This led to 20 students from Wood Road being quarantined until 5/22. All adults involved have been fully vaccinated.
  - b. *Saratoga County* – The 7-day rolling average of positive cases is 1.5%.
  - c. *Capital Region* (8 counties) – The 7-day rolling average of positive cases is 1.4%.
  - d. *CDC* – Saratoga County remains categorized as at *Substantial Risk* for Community Transmission (see <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>). Last week, the distribution of the 62 counties in NYS was as follows:
    - i. High Risk – 35
    - ii. Substantial Risk – 26
    - iii. Moderate Risk – 1
    - iv. Low Risk – 0This week the distribution is:
    - i. High Risk – 18
    - ii. Substantial Risk – 33
    - iii. Moderate Risk – 11
    - iv. Low Risk – 0
  - e. *Vaccination of Students* – We are now at 46% of our students who are 16 years old or older who have received at least their first vaccination. The three county clinics for 12-15 year olds this past week filled very quickly and more are being scheduled.

***Please continue to follow the masking and spacing rules that remain in effect so that we can continue in this positive direction!***

6. **District Calendar Update** – Based on concerns expressed from both staff and community members regarding the calendar for next year and the fact that we do not acknowledge the holidays for those of the Jewish faith and Rosh Hashanah in particular, we reconvened the District Calendar Committee last week to determine what if any changes could be made to accommodate the request. Based on the Committee's feedback and the various obstacles that next year's calendar presents, I will be updating the Board at this week's meeting on recommended changes.

Our ongoing and sincere thanks for your support of our students and staff this year in what has been an incredibly trying time for us all. I am truly hopeful that we will have a much more settled fall reopening.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [schoolopenings@bscsd.org](mailto:schoolopenings@bscsd.org).

Thanks very much.

Ken

Ken Slentz  
Superintendent of Schools  
Ballston Spa CSD