

Updates from the District Office

October 15, 2021

Dear BSCSD Parents and Caregivers –

A few items for your information today, some of which follow up from events this week. Allow me to begin by again expressing our thanks to those of you who wrote in or called in with suggestions for how we can improve our approach to managing days where we have bus driver shortages in such a way that we can still meet our overall goal of having students in person five days a week. As a result of these suggestions, internal discussions, and feedback from our Board of Education leadership team, we have developed an in-person plan that is currently under review that we will share with you next week. With each such situation this year, we will continue to work as quickly as possible to provide better solutions that serve our students in the best possible ways.

1. **Quarantining and Exclusion:** As of this afternoon we have 21 students across K-12 on quarantine or exclusion. We anticipate that this pattern will continue although the number of students being vaccinated continues to go up and we are told that the vaccine for 5-11 year olds will be released very shortly which will also help. Our County Health Commissioner continues to advocate for adjustments to our quarantining protocols with the state and we are hopeful that we will see some changes in the coming weeks that will further limit the number of students who are impacted by this.
2. **Students Being Sent Home:** While we continue to make adjustments to our operational plans each week, there are some areas though where we cannot make changes including the requirements to send students home who have COVID symptoms (that includes “typical” seasonal symptoms such as runny noses, etc.). This is a NYS Department of Health rule (see section 4 [HERE](#)) and our nurses are tasked with delivering this information to parents. While we fully understand how frustrating this news can be especially when it happens more than once, our nurses are simply delivering the message and do not have the ability to offer flexibility. Because of this, I respectfully request that you *please* treat them kindly and understand the tremendous pressure they are under each day. As we currently have a shortage of nurses as well, we cannot afford to have any of them leave due to the way they are being treated. Your help, support, and understanding is appreciated.
3. **What do you think? Let us know!** We asked the school community for input on our second *ThoughtExchange* and many of you have responded with the highest ranking having to do with access to remote instruction for students who are home awaiting a PCR test or the test results. Please be sure to review the information that was sent out from the middle and high school earlier this week which addresses this.

If you did not get a chance to share a thought or to rate others, please visit via the link at <https://tejoin.com/scroll/145064069>. If you did already submit a response, please revisit and help rate the other thoughts as well. It will be open throughout the coming week. Thank you!

4. **The BSCSD Fall Newsletter is now online:** The latest copy of the district newsletter, The Reader, is now available online and will be mailed to area residents in the coming weeks. The newsletter contains a message from the Superintendent and BOE President, with the latest district information including new staff, accomplishments, new programs, athletics and upcoming events. Click [HERE](#) to read the latest from the district.
5. **Board of Education Meeting Livestreaming:** For next week's meeting we anticipate that our new camera system will be ready to go and our broadcast will now be able to be viewed through our District YouTube channel. Please check our website early next week for the link for what we expect will be a much easier viewing experience.
6. **October Celebrations and Awareness:** This month highlights a number of celebration and awareness events including National Principals Month. Our six building principals as well as our associate principal and assistant principals are a remarkable and committed group of educators who work hard each day to improve the teaching, learning, and overall school experience for our students and staff. Please take a look at our [Facebook page](#) for highlights of each principal in the coming weeks.

School Board recognition week is next week, October 18-22 and is an opportunity to recognize our community members who have volunteered for the difficult work of steering the district forward during these difficult times. Each of [our Board members](#) is also a parent of BSCSD students and they live the experiences that each of you do which is an invaluable perspective given the decisions that they are asked to make at each meeting. Please be sure to thank these individuals for the work and their commitment to our collective task of providing our students with the best possible educational opportunities and experiences.

This month is also Dyslexia Awareness month. According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, dyslexia affects approximately 20% of the population. Knowing this, the many challenges of dyslexia, and the impact that dyslexia can have on our students, the International Dyslexia Association states that *"Evidence is strong that the majority of students learn to read better with structured teaching of basic language skills, and that the components and methods of [Structured Literacy](#) are critical for students with reading disabilities including dyslexia."* Structured literacy is the approach that our district has utilized for the past two years and we are well on our way in year three of implementation thanks to the hard work of our students, classroom and intervention teachers, teaching assistants, coaches, principals, and directors!

Should you have any question on any of this information or questions in general, please connect with us at schoolopening@bscsd.org.

Thanks very much and enjoy the weekend!

Ken Slentz
Superintendent of Schools
Ballston Spa Central School District