

Updates from the District Office

March 19, 2021

Dear BSCSD Parents and Caregivers – A number of updates for your attention from what has been a very busy week:

1. **UPDATE: Changes to Social Distancing Requirements in Schools** – Today the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued the much anticipated revised guidance on social distancing in schools. While the distances in classrooms was reduced from six feet to three feet, there are a number of qualifying statements which limit the actual effect of this change including:
 - a. Students in grades 6-12 must maintain distancing of six feet when the risk for community transmission of the virus is rated [High](#) by the CDC as is currently the case for Saratoga County.
 - b. The six feet distance remains in place whenever students are eating.
 - c. When on buses, the language remains largely unchanged from what is currently in place. Please understand that there are many layers to this guidance and a number of steps that have to be taken before any significant changes can be made in our schools (few of any of which will take place prior to the spring recess which starts Friday, April 1.) We will have more information on this in the days and weeks ahead.

The guidance contains a number of “as possible”, “when feasible”, and “may” clauses that will require interpretations first by the NYS Department of Health as they have to consider revising their guidance to schools based on the new CDC language and then by our attorneys and health experts. With these steps in mind, I do not anticipate any changes resulting from the new guidance any time soon. We will, however, continue to work on reducing the number of split classrooms at the elementary level, increasing attendance and services for those students with academic and mental health concerns, putting them at risk, while also seeking to expand opportunities for our music students in parallel to what has been done for athletics. Much more to come on this as we have more information.

2. **American Recovery Plan monies** – This week Senator Schumer’s office announced the projected funding allocations for New York State School Districts under the American Recovery Plan. The allocation slated for our district is \$3,353,000. That is all we know at this point as there is not yet guidance which tells us how long the funding is available, what the monies can be used for, or, perhaps, if these monies may be used to offset some of the state aid that has been projected for us. Until we know these details and are able to analyze the fine print that tends to come with federal funding, we are very limited as to how we might apply these funds to the 2021-22 District budget. It is worth noting that there are two areas of caution that we exercise with any such funding. The first is in regards to student programming and support. If we utilize this funding to sponsor new staff, new programs, and new student initiatives in general, there is risk that these programs would have to be eliminated at the end of the funding cycle (anticipated to be three years), that other programs would have to be cut to allow for them to continue, or that we would have to ask the taxpayers to take on the additional burden of the funding. None of these scenarios are responsible or desirable. All of that said, we will keep you closely updated on this and our [budget development process](#) as we move towards the May 18 budget vote.

3. **Travel Guidance** – If you missed it in prior *Updates* and communications, please see our [summary of the revised NYS travel guidance](#) that is in currently place and how this will change again effective April 1. Based on the change in guidance, we will be updating our Pinpoint screener questions which will be in effect beginning Monday, April 12.
4. **Special Board of Education Meeting** – The Board of Education will hold a special meeting at 6:00pm on Wednesday, March 24. The meeting agenda will be posted by Monday of next week. Although the Governor has now extended the rules for allowing Boards of Education to meet remotely through April 16th, the BSCSD Board of Education is meeting in-person with virus mitigation rules in place. Members of the public may attend under these rules or may view the meetings via livestream. For those attending remotely, public comment may be submitted through our dedicated BOE@bscsd.org email box. More information on this can be found [HERE](#).
5. **Passing Stopped School Buses** – *Please pay attention to our stopped school buses.* This week we have again seen incidents of drivers passing our buses when they have their red lights on and *very* visible stop signs extended. We as the adult drivers can and must do better. Our deputy sheriff partners are committed to help remind offenders with tickets and all of the inconveniences that comes with them. There simply is ***no*** excuse for putting our students at risk and in danger by not following this law.
6. **COVID-19 Positive Cases** – As many of you are aware, this has been a very busy week for us with thirteen (13) positive cases (as of this writing) amongst our students and staff, with many others being placed into mandatory quarantine per the rules of the Saratoga County Department of Public Health Services. Again, this is but one reminder of the fact that the virus is still alive and well despite the significant number of vaccinations that have been administered to our staff and in the community and why the CDC still lists Saratoga County at [High Risk](#) for community transmission.

Thanks very much.

Ken

Ken Slentz
Superintendent of Schools
Ballston Spa CSD