

Updates from the District Office

March 26, 2021

Dear BSCSD Parents and Caregivers – We have the following six updates/reminders for you this week:

1. **UPDATE: Changes to Social Distancing Requirements in Schools** – While we have been told that the NYS Department of Health is reviewing the new CDC guidance noted in last week's *Updates*, no changes have been made at this time. Under the current guidance, schools may allow students to be seated closer if approved barriers are placed between students. We have utilized this option in a few of our elementary classrooms where the classes have been split between two rooms. This split model has presented a number of challenges this year, but the faculty, staff, and students have made the best of it. With the barriers in place, our classes are now in one classroom location instead of two, which students and teachers seem to be fully enjoying. We will continue to work to reduce these split classrooms in the days and weeks ahead as we await changes in the guidance from NYS.
2. **Newsletter** – Our District Newsletter, *The Reader*, will be arriving to your homes in the upcoming days. An early preview of this which includes an insightful “A Day in the Life of...” section can be found [HERE](#).
3. **NYS End-of-Year Testing** – Of the many changes that we all have experienced this year, end-of-year testing is but one more that we are navigating our way through. While the NYS Education Department (NYSED) has submitted an appeal to the United States Education Department to waive these federally required tests, no decision has been made at this time. Therefore, we are currently operating under the model that is in place from NYSED which requires us to administer English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments to students in grades 3-8 and four (4) required Regents Exams as described on the attached letter. As noted, this model may change if a waiver is granted and we will communicate with families if that is to occur.
4. **Sports, Prom, and Graduation** – New guidance was issued this week regarding Sports and Recreation (including high school sports) and specifically the number of spectators that are allowed at each of our athletic events [where the District allows for them](#). There are open questions on some of the limitations that we are working through at this time and we will update our spectator procedures where appropriate once we have answers to these questions. As always, we appreciate your patience with these decisions.

Although we are currently awaiting additional guidance for hosting prom and graduation this year, a great deal of planning is happening at the high school where safety plans and multiple options are being considered. This planning will allow us to act more quickly once we receive the guidance from the state. We will communicate our plans with you as soon as we are able.

5. **Travel Guidance** – If you missed it in prior *Updates* and communications, please see our [summary of the revised NYS travel guidance](#) that is currently in place and how this will change again effective April 1. Based on the change in guidance, we will be updating our Pinpoint Health screener questions which will be in effect beginning Monday, April 12. Unless otherwise directed by NYS, students who are traveling out of state during the spring recess (April 2 – April 11) will be allowed to return to school upon their return from travel destinations without quarantining. At this time, we do not anticipate a change in this rule.
6. **COVID-19 Positive Cases** – For those who are tracing the number of positive cases in the District and in the county, you have noticed that we have had an increase over the past few weeks that continues to be of concern to us. This week we have had twelve (12) positive cases (as of this writing) between students and staff, with (far too) many students being placed into mandatory quarantine per the rules of the Saratoga County Department of Public Health Services. As noted last week, 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



NYS Testing 2021 Update

Updated March 26, 2021

Earlier this year the NYS Education Department (NYSED) applied to the United States Education Department (USED) for a waiver for required testing for this year. That application was denied. Although NYSED has submitted a second waiver application, a decision has yet not yet been provided by USED and therefore, we must proceed with planning for those tests that will still be required, specifically certain Regents Exams and 3-8 English Language Arts and Math assessments. The following changes were approved by NYSED to be responsive to hardships impacting students during the pandemic:

- Math and English Language Arts (ELA) tests in Grades 3 through 8 are still being given, although the length of the tests has been significantly reduced. As has always been the case, the results of these assessments are used as an objective measure to see how our teaching and learning match up against the expectations of the NYS Learning Standards.
- Schools must administer the grades 3-8 tests in person, at school. Remote testing will not be allowed. **However**, “Schools are **not** expected to bring students into the building to participate in the tests **if the students are receiving entirely remote instruction during the testing windows.**” This means any student in the “all remote” instructional model during testing will not be required to come to school on testing day. However, if parents of fully remote learners are interested in having their child participate in the ELA and Math assessments, please contact your building principal by **Thursday, April 1st.**
- Districts are also required to administer the Regents tests in Algebra I, Living Environment, Physical Setting/Earth Science, and English Language Arts. Like the tests for grades 3-8, these tests must be administered in person, at school. Students who are learning remotely are not required to come to school for these tests. All other Regents tests are canceled. Every student in a Regents course with a cancelled test is exempt from the graduation requirements for that exam. Please contact your child’s school counselor for more information.
- For parents of in-person learners, our district procedure for refusal of the **3-8 ELA and/or math** exams remains the same: parents or guardians should contact their child’s principal **in advance** to discuss the specific needs of their child. Families who submit a refusal should plan to have their student(s) attend remotely for asynchronous learning

on the days of assessment. More information will be provided by classroom teachers for these students.

Testing days are as follows:

- Grades 3-5 English Language Arts: April 19th - Session 1 only
- Grades 6—8 English Language Arts: As per cohort schedule, April 19-21, 2021
- Grades 3-5 Math: May 4th - Session 1 only
- Grades 6—8 Math: As per cohort schedule, May 11-13, 2021
- Grade 4: June 7th Written
- Grade 8: As per cohort schedule, June 8-9 Written
- English Language Arts Regents: Thursday, June 17 at 8:00 a.m.
- Living Environment Regents: Tuesday, June 22 at 8:00 a.m.
- Algebra I Regents: Wednesday, June 23 at 8:00 a.m.
- Physical Setting/Earth Science Regents: Thursday, June 24 at 8:00 a.m.

Should the second waiver request from NYSED be approved by the federal government, we will notify you of what this means for graduation purposes and for the end of year schedule.