

November 24, 2020

Dear Berlin Brothersvalley Families,

The challenges we face as a learning community require all of us to continue to work together for the benefit of our children. The rapid increase of the COVID-19 cases in the last couple weeks has prompted a review of many of the same questions we have addressed since March. The purpose of this communication is to share updates on the **mitigation strategies** we continue to implement in our schools, the approach we are taking to **monitor individual cases**, and the criteria used to decide when to pivot our instructional **delivery model**.

### **Mitigation Strategies:**

Masks/face shields, social distancing, hygiene, and individual monitoring of health continue to be highly effective as methods for reducing the spread of the virus in our schools. In fact, we still have no direct evidence of spread being caused by our face-to-face instructional model. Indicators show that schools, when compared to most other areas in our community, are places that have effectively mitigated the spread of the virus.

### **Changes to Mask and Travel Requirements**

The Department of Health increased restrictions regarding mask wearing and quarantining after travel.

- All students and staff at all times, including sports, gym class, and outside play must wear masks.
- Any individual who leaves the state of Pennsylvania must obtain a negative COVID-19 test with results dated after leaving PA and not more than 3 days prior to returning to Pennsylvania. If the individual does not produce a negative COVID-19 test, they are required to quarantine for 14 days. Test results can be obtained during the 14-day quarantine.
- **Please contact Mrs. Ritchey, School Nurse, or your principal if your child will need to quarantine due to issues over the holiday. It is critical for all of us to protect our learning community!!**

### **Monitoring Individual Cases:**

Since the beginning of the school year, the Berlin Brothersvalley School District has had a total of 6 staff and 5 students who tested positive for COVID-19. When we return on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 we will have 1 staff member on quarantine and 4 students. In all of these situations, we work with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to ensure safety protocols are followed and contact tracing is completed. Currently, we track all positive cases of COVID-19 plus monitor individuals who experience symptoms and have been exposed to cases of the disease.

### **Delivery Model Pivot**

A guiding principle of our plan from the beginning was to have the ability to pivot our delivery model if circumstances warranted such a change. We continue to monitor

cases of COVID-19 in consultation with medical professionals, including the Department of Health. In the event that a delivery model pivot is necessary, our decision will be made on a building by building basis. The move to an entire district virtual model occurs if it is impossible to conduct regular functions as was evidenced with the closure of our cafeteria which made it impossible to provide lunches for large numbers of students with limited staffing.

The reasons for change in delivery model in the district were explained on our website and in a School Messenger alert last week.

I want to assure you; we are monitoring cases on an hour by hour basis in each of our buildings. We will continue to consult with medical professionals on the criteria used to make decisions about the delivery model in each individual building. Our approach is a measured effort that uses what we continue to learn about the virus and how it spreads while honoring the partnerships we have as a learning community.

### **Breakfast/Lunch and Take Home Meals**

Every child in the school district, Pre-K through 18, is permitted and encouraged to participate in this meal program free of charge. Please know that you are helping us keep our food service program operating by having your child take advantage of the Berlin Brothersvalley Free meals. Your child's participation does not take meals from someone who needs them. There is plenty for everyone!

SCTC Students, Full Time Remote and other students within the community parents/guardians of students learning full-time remotely or students within the community who are not attending school in person may request free Pick Up Meals. All children age Pre-K through 18 are eligible for meals. Please contact Mrs. Cathy Berkebile at 267 – 6950 by 9:00 AM to reserve a meal.

### **Thanksgiving Break**

Just a reminder that school will be closed from Wednesday, November 25, 2020 through Tuesday, December 1, 2020 for the Thanksgiving Holiday. We will reopen all buildings for in-person instruction on Wednesday, December 2, 2020.

I cannot think of a time in my life when the sentiment of Thanksgiving was so important. The emotions elicited by these last several months have caused an intensity in behavior that can be exhausting for all of us. Even though the traditions of the holidays may look very different this year, I truly hope you and your family can find time to appreciate the sentiment of giving thanks and expressing gratitude for the things we have.