

BBSD Frequently Asked Questions

July 29, 2020

Will school buildings reopen in the fall?

We are planning to be back in our school buildings to begin classes on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Staff will return on Thursday, August 27, Friday, August 28 and Monday, August 31. The district has developed a **Health & Safety Plan** which will guide the safe return of students, staff and community as we resume educating our children onsite (face to face instruction). The plan was approved by the elected Board on Thursday, July 23, 2020. The plan will be updated and modified as needed throughout the year as conditions change and improvements can be implemented. The plan is posted on the district website. Also posted, is a PowerPoint presentation which provides more specific information regarding safety protocols in place throughout the day and a description of learning choices. Parents, community and staff were surveyed to gather input which guided the development of the plan. Thanks to all who provided input.

Are there other learning options that the district is considering?

The district has considered a hybrid schedule for return to school. The hybrid schedule considered would split the student body in half. Students in the alphabet range from A-L would attend school on Monday/Thursday. Students from M-Z would attend school on Tuesday/Friday. Wednesday would be an office day for teachers to plan and communicate with students/parents. It would also be an extensive cleaning day for custodial staff. This schedule would allow for additional social distancing in classrooms and the cafeteria. It would also enable some face to face time with teachers/staff which we believe is critical to effective teaching and learning. Students would be in school two days per week on this schedule.

What options do I have if I am not comfortable sending my child/children to school in a face to face learning environment based on my review of the Health & Safety?

1. Berlin Cyber School – WaterFront (Provided by Intermediate Unit 3)

We have been utilizing WaterFront to provide instruction for students who need another option outside of our instructional programs for a variety of reasons. Students in K-12 are able to access instruction online through this program. Two teachers in the

district are assigned to assist parents/students register for classes and monitor student progress in the program. They do not teach the students but provide managerial oversight of student progress. WaterFront provides PA certified teachers for all their courses. Information regarding WaterFront can be obtained by contacting your child's principal or by visiting www.waterfrontlearning.com

2. Home Schooling – Parents Teach Their Children

Some families take ownership of their children's learning and become their teacher at home. The school district does not provide any instruction for students in this format. Information regarding the requirements for home schooling are available in district administration office.

If we are forced to move to distance learning as we did during marking period 4 this past year, how would it be handled?

We have evaluated our distance learning program over the course of the fourth marking period and have received feedback on how we could make the process more consistent and easier to manage from Kindergarten through grade 12. The district has selected a **Learning Management System (LMS)** called **Schoology**, which will make it easier to access and manage student learning for everyone. This system will help us maximize learning in any environment. The LMS provides a common platform which will enable students/parents to easily access instructional information, student assignments and deadlines to manage student learning.

Will the district have access to more technology and better internet connectivity?

The CARES Act is providing funding to school districts in the form of a grant to assist districts adjust to an uncertain educational environment. We submitted and were successful in securing approximately \$178,000 which will provide technology for every student K-12. This technology will maximize the use of Schoology and standardize access to learning tools across the district whatever our learning situation. We will also work to increase the stability of our internet service in our buildings as well as advocate for stable broadband service across our district and county. We have been in contact with our County Commissioners and local representatives who are also working to increase broadband internet across Somerset County.

What will the schedule be for student learning if we are forced off campus and learning at home?

Teachers will be in their classrooms facilitating learning from 8:00 AM through 3:30 PM Monday – Friday. Student schedules may be modified to simplify the schedules

and streamline the learning process. The district will provide a timeline when teachers will be teaching their class online. Teachers will have office hours for planning and communication with students/parents throughout the week. Details of student schedules are in development in case this option is required to educate students outside our educational facilities.

What is the latest information from the Governor's Office regarding the wearing of masks?

All citizen's in Pennsylvania are required to wear masks when leaving their homes if they will be interacting with the public. If this mandate remains in place through the opening of school on September 1, 2020, it will necessitate the use of masks in our schools.

In addition, it is mandated that we are not able to have groups of over 25 for assemblies in our buildings. This does not apply to classes within the buildings. The mandate also stipulates that the number of people permitted in outdoor venues (stadiums/athletic facilities/etc.) cannot exceed 250 people.

When will a definite decision be made regarding how we will return to school?

We have made a definite decision to return to school face to face with all our students on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. We know that this could change at "the drop of a hat" and we will need to "turn on a dime" to adjust. If we are forced out of our buildings for some reason, we will deliver online instruction using our 1:1 technology and Schoology to manage the process.

How will we get the technology we need to learn in this environment?

We have all the technology ordered for students and are still waiting for the delivery. We are also waiting for delivery of some of the software which will need to be loaded onto student devices. Our plan is to use August 27, 28 and 31 to distribute computers and offer training for parents in how to use the technology and Schoology to continue learning from home. While this is not the optimum learning environment, it would be the best option for the situation.

What technology will be provided for students?

Students in grades K-2 will be provided with iPads and students in grades 3-12 will be provided with Chromebooks.

How can I make a decision which is best for my child based on information which may change so radically?

There are no assurances regarding how education may be delivered during the 2020-2021 school year but be assured that there are learning options available. Based on the information currently provided parents will need to make choices that meet the safety and learning needs of their children. There are no easy answers and many opinions regarding the return to face to face instruction and the parameters which will govern the face to face return of students and staff.

We are living in an unprecedented era which involves volatility, unpredictability, chaos and ambiguity. All of these adjectives cause anxiety, tension, and continual problem solving.

We will do our best to provide as much information and guidance as possible moving through these uncharted waters.