



BERLIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

238 KENSINGTON ROAD □ BERLIN, CONNECTICUT 06037-2648
OFFICE (860) 828-6581 □ FAX (860) 829-0832

BRIAN J. BENIGNI
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS

ERIN K. McGURK, Ed.D.
ASSISTANT
SUPERINTENDENT

LINDA HOLIAN
DIRECTOR OF PUPIL
PERSONNEL SERVICES

JEFFREY P. CUGNO
DIRECTOR OF
BUSINESS OPERATIONS

DENISE M. PARSONS
DIRECTOR OF
HUMAN RESOURCES

June 26, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you had a great first week of summer and were able to enjoy the beautiful weather that we have been experiencing. I am very pleased to announce that yesterday, based on the current health data in Connecticut, Governor Lamont and Commissioner of Education Cardona announced that the state will engage in a full in-person return to school for the 2020-2021 school year. The plan for reopening includes five mitigation strategies or conditions that all school districts are required to follow.

The CSDE shared an executive summary and presentation materials that outline the guiding principles that will be utilized for a full in-person return to school. A more detailed plan is expected to be released on Monday, June 29th from the CSDE. The Berlin School Reopening Committee, which currently consists of 32 members, including parents, teachers, students, nurses, and administrators, will utilize this information to further develop our district-level plan. The first day of the 2020-2021 school year for students remains August 27th.

The five mitigation strategies were developed by the CSDE in collaboration with the Department of Public Health. Our efforts in Berlin will be focused on meeting the state-level guidelines in a manner that provides the greatest safety to students and staff while also maximizing educational opportunities and learning.

Hand Washing & Hand Sanitizer: Frequent hand washing throughout the day will be required. We have purchased additional hand sanitizing stations and equipment in an effort to increase the level of good hygiene and decrease the spread of illness in all schools. We have also posted additional signage in bathrooms and throughout the school to remind students and staff of the importance of washing their hands.

Cleaning & Disinfecting in Schools: All schools will continue to clean frequently touched surfaces and occupied locations during the school day. Custodians will also continue doing thorough cleanings after school hours. The normal cleaning schedule will include more frequent cleaning of flat surfaces and restrooms.

Cohorting: The state plan asks each school to make efforts to keep students in cohorts in grades PreK-8 to the greatest extent possible for the return to school. Our K-8 students are currently arranged in classroom and team cohorts, but additional precautions may impact class movements, schedules and teacher assignments. Typically our 9-12 students are not organized in a cohort model, as there is great variability in student schedules based on their selected course. We will continue to consider a range of options for addressing this at the high school level.

Social Distancing: The guidelines include maximizing social distancing for the return to school, which includes bus and van transportation. The statewide plan allows for buses to operate near to maximum capacity. In order to increase safety, students and the driver will be required to wear a mask.

Face Coverings: All members of the school district community must wear masks inside the school building and during bus travel when we return to school. Breaks from wearing masks will be allowed during the school day under certain conditions. Our intention is to work with families should concerns or considerations while we also ensure the safety of all students and staff.

It is important to recognize that the return to school is contingent on the current positive health data continuing throughout the summer. Should concerns arise and the conditions change the CSDE has specified three potential scenarios for providing education.

1. Full in-person return to school
2. Hybrid with a combination of remote/distance learning and in-person learning
3. Full remote/distance learning.

Decisions about instructional arrangements will be determined by a health assessment that will review the local, state and national data at any given time. Please know our first priority is safety and we will make every effort to adhere to the recommended guidelines as we work collaboratively to provide the highest quality instruction in a learning environment that is most appropriate to our students.

Please note that this communication is not intended to answer all of the questions our families, students, and staff may have about the return to school. We will provide additional information across the summer as we receive additional information from the CSDE and develop our own Berlin plan.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Benigni
Superintendent of Schools