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**Community Update, Oct 14 - BHS/BTC, K-5 Return, Health Screenings, 100 Day Report**

2 messages

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**BSD Superintendent** <superintendent@bsdvt.org>

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 11:18 AM

Cc: Tom Flanagan &lt;tflanagan@bsdvt.org&gt;

Bcc:



October 14, 2020

Hello Burlington staff and families,

On Monday our schools were closed in observance of Indigenous People's Day, a day dedicated to honoring the contributions, history, and culture of indigenous Americans. I hope you were able to take a few minutes this weekend to process the day and the importance of acknowledging our Nation's indigenous people. In Burlington, our schools, which sit on Abenaki ancestral land, have spent the last few years working to do a better job of acknowledging and celebrating our area's indigenous people; I am grateful to be a Superintendent of a school system that takes seriously issues of representation, acknowledgment, and inclusion.

Speaking of being Superintendent, I have officially been on the job for 100+ days! Last night I presented my [100 Entry Plan Report](#) to the BSD Board of School Commissioners. I am grateful to all who helped complete the activities centered around our shared priorities of **equity, engagement, and deep learning**. There is work to be done in our District, and there are also wonderful opportunities for our students that exist right now that we can build on. I look forward to engaging in the next step of this process, working to create the District's next five-year strategic plan with the deep student, family, staff, and community input.

The community outreach to state officials, the school board, and me advocating to get back in-person at BHS continues to grow. I asked for your advocacy and am happy to see that you have stepped up. While we work to get support at the State and Federal level, the District is also working as hard as we can to achieve in-person learning as soon as possible. We are increasing current opportunities and also planning for long-term solutions for the current building and for alternative spaces. I have been meeting regularly with Principal Green and a group of students who have been helping us understand how the current situation is impacting them. I have included an update on BHS below.

Next week, we are also heading back to school four days a week in K-5. With the State's move to Step III, with our current staffing, and with the health in our city, I think we are ready to move safely to four days. This will mean more students in classes in K-5, so health screenings will be increasingly important (see below). It is a result of the collaboration of families, city government, and higher ed, and the hard work and diligence of our staff that we are able to get back to in-person. Thank you for your commitment to our schools and our students!

Please take a few minutes to read the updates below and feel free to reach out to your principals or me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Tom

**Return to 4 Days in K-5\*** - We are less than a week away from shifting out of our two-day-a-week hybrid model and welcoming back students in-person four days a week. Our Reopening Taskforce continues to meet regularly to prepare for the increase to four days

beginning with grades K-2 on October 19, followed by grades 3-5 on October 26. We will be keeping a close eye on updated AOE guidance (expected out this week) and plan to release BSD's updated guidance by the end of Friday.

*\*As a reminder, those families who selected the option to enroll in "Full-remote Learning" will be able to continue in the full-remote model for the year.*

**Change to Health Screening Protocol** - Instead of completing a daily health check in PowerSchool each morning, we are now asking families to [commit to completing health screenings at home](#) before school each day. Two copies of the Health Contracts will be sent home in each child's book bag this week, one for you to keep and one to sign and return. Thank you for helping us keep our schools safe!

**GMT Bus Reminder** - While we have increased our capacity for students in our schools, Green Mountain Transit has not increased the number of passengers their busses can take at this time. Families are encouraged to find alternative ways to get to school and use the busses as a last resort. We know there are some routes that will be full and we will be working to provide additional bussing capacity in those areas. If your student runs into issues with bus capacities, please let your principal know so that we can help you identify alternative routes or modes of transportation.

**BHS PCB and Space Update** - It is proving to be a complex process to understand the source of PCB contamination and our options for remediation. Our consultants from Fuss & O'Neill returned to the BHS campus to inventory potential PCB contributors in the spaces where air testing was conducted. This is the first step in developing a pilot program to remediate building materials in specific rooms. Once this is complete, they will conduct follow-up air testing to determine a baseline for moving forward. The final stage of the pilot project will be to remove PCB materials in some rooms and then retest to determine if removing such products has an impact on the PCB levels found in the air. After the pilot project, we will be able to better assess our next steps to remediate the PCBs throughout the building.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work hard to find an alternate location for the high school. We have promising options for alternative spaces. Additionally, there is significant energy to return to BHS in buildings A-E based on the argument that the screening levels fall under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) screening values. We will have a board meeting next Tuesday, October 20, to discuss in more detail.

**BTC Space Update** - Students in a number of programs began returning to in-person last week, and last night the board approved funding for our plans to secure two more spaces which will allow students to meet in-person in the two-day hybrid model for the rest of the school year. *Please join me in thanking our community partners who really came together to allow us to move back to in-person learning for all BTC students... check out [the story on our website](#) to learn more!*

**Number of Required School Days Reduced** - The Vermont General Assembly recently passed H.969. The law officially reduced the number of required school days from 175 to 170 this year, *ensuring we will not need to make up student days missed due to the late start of school this fall*. The bill also makes changes to education finance law that should ensure that BSD receives reimbursement for all Coronavirus Relief Fund expenses, and should reduce some pressure on school budgets for next year.

**School Safety Task Force and Superintendent Advisory Groups** - Applications have been reviewed and members have been selected to join the Task Force and the three superintendent advisory groups. Those who were and were not selected will be notified in the next few days. We are on pace to begin holding meetings with all these groups this month. Thank you to everyone who applied and helped support these initiatives!

**Student Support Services** - We are pleased to announce a new parent engagement opportunity. Please join us for a monthly [Student Support Services Parent Connection](#) meeting to be held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 4:30 – 5:30 PM beginning October 14th on Zoom. As a group, we will discuss parent needs for information and supports, and work to develop our own plan for providing information for parents to understand what supports and services are available to students with disabilities and how to access opportunities for children. Meetings will also be recorded and shared on our [Youtube Channel](#) and our [Student Support Services](#) for those who cannot make it.

**Tent Chats with Superintendent Flanagan at Boys and Girls Club** - As part of my 100 Day Entry Plan, I made a commitment to hosting a number of "Living Room Chats" with constituents. Because of COVID, we've turned these into "Tent Chats." I've met with Seahorse Pride and other groups of City and minority leaders, and am hosting another "Tent Chat" on October 21st outside of the Boys and Girls Club just down the road from IAA. We will have proper physical distancing in place and everyone is asked to wear a mask; [all are welcome to join me](#).

**Kelis the Afronaught** - Champlain Elementary students and staff joined together last week for the dedication and celebration of "Kelis the Afronaut," a big, beautiful mural that serves as an expression of hope and welcoming on the north-facing wall of Champlain Elementary. More than a mural, the art project serves as one more way BSD is working to create anti-racist and inclusive spaces.

The mural was created by Juniper Creative, LLC, and includes student art through Kelis' butterfly wings. It is what Champlain Principal Joe Resteghini calls an "outward expression of the work being done inside the walls of the building." [Thank you RETN for capturing the celebration!](#)

**Student Success**- Burlington High School senior Alex Wick has been recognized as a semifinalist in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program. BHS is one of only 16 schools in the state to have a student recognized as a semifinalist. Check out the story on the BHS and [District websites](#) and [social media](#)... Congrats Alex!

**Parent University** - Parent U was recently awarded the [Outstanding Program Award](#) at the Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community's Annual Roots of Prevention Awards. The award was given in part because of the program's work to support Burlington parents and caregivers with access to information and resources to meet the educational needs and goals they have for their children. ([Learn more about this free program.](#))

**Voya Unsung Hero** - BTC teacher Jason Raymond, was [named a finalist for Voya "Unsung Hero" award](#) for his afterschool program "Electro Hip Hop." Raymond will receive \$2,000 to support the afterschool program and will compete against 50 finalists for prizes of up to \$25,000.... congratulations and great job Jason!

**Rising Star** - We have in our midst a Rising Star! Congratulations to Christy Gallese, Director of Expanded Learning Opportunities, who was recently named a 2020 Rising Star by [Vermont Business Magazine](#). The "40 under 40" award recognizes individuals in the state who support the economy and give back through service. Great job Christy!

**Principals Month** - Last but not least! Thank you Governor Scott who has [proclaimed October](#) to be Principal's Month. Please join us in thanking BSD principals for working to close the achievement gap and raise the bar for all BSD students!

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**Monika Ivancic** <mivancic@bsdrv.org>  
To: BSD Superintendent <superintendent@bsdrv.org>, Tom Flanagan <tflanagan@bsdrv.org>  
Cc: Clare Wool <cwool@bsdrv.org>

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 2:33 PM

Hi Tom,

Thank you for keeping us abreast of all the goings on in the district. There sure is A LOT, even without the extra challenge of maneuvering the pandemic AND BHS being shut down.

I just have two easy questions from your community update:

1. You keep saying to not ride the bus, and that GMT has not increased their capacity. If they're running with the same capacity as last year, then I would think there are A LOT of empty buses. Most students in the district who take the bus are either middle or high school, and not many elementary kids take the bus. BHS is shut, so those kids aren't busing, and the middle schools are at about half capacity, maybe a little more with the SpEd and EL kids. So... with so many fewer kids taking the bus (compared with a year ago), why are we still discouraging kids from riding the bus?
2. A couple of moms I know didn't make your parent advisory group. Could you explain your criteria for parent selection? How about student selection or teacher selection? I heard that 90 parents requested to be on the advisory group, which is great!

Thank you and have a nice weekend!  
Cheers,  
Monika

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