

Community Update, Sept. 25 - BHS/BTC & K-5 Update

3 messages

BSD Superintendent <superintendent@bsdvt.org>

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 5:42 PM

Bcc:



September 25, 2020

Hello BSD Families and Staff,

Thank you all for your engagement this week. We are continuing to explore options for BHS/BTC, and there is progress on alternative sites and on further testing at the high school. We have a major decision to make on the path forward for the school. Do we secure space for in-person learning outside of BHS in order to start the renovation now? Or do we try to quickly remediate the issues and bring students back to the building next semester? We need to better understand the possibilities for alternative spaces and start additional tests at BHS/BTC to finalize this decision. We are starting testing on Tuesday and are moving quickly with the possibilities on alternative spaces. Even so, with more than 1,000 students, this process is going to take some time. If you want to learn more about where we are in our plans and thinking, and how we got to this point, please join us Tuesday at 6 PM for a **Special Board Meeting and Virtual BHS/BTC Town Hall**, with special guest Commissioner Levine and others from the Department of Health, Department of Conservation, and EPA.

For our students in K-8, the Agency of Education announced it will move to Step III on September 26. This loosens the restrictions on physical distancing and opens cafeterias and gyms to more use. The details are in the AOE's "**Strong and Healthy Start**" guidance. If our factors in BSD stay strong, we plan to bring K-2 students back four days a week beginning October 19th, and we plan to bring grades 3-5 on October 26. Those who are in the hybrid model now will be expected to join us four days a week, and we will continue to offer the full remote option to students who have chosen that model. Our ReOpening Task Force is meeting regularly again, we will still be very thoughtful in our planning to keep students safe as we bring more students back. Please look for more information next week.

Despite our challenges with the BTC/BHC campus the past two weeks, the start of school PreK-8 has been very smooth and the high school team has adjusted to remote learning incredibly quickly. This week I began meeting 1:1 with principals to do classroom observations, a practice that keeps me grounded in teaching and serves as a reminder of why I love this work. I also met with a number of high school students, and it was encouraging to hear their ideas around in-person learning. I look forward to the day when these students are running our country... we will be in great hands!

There is a lot of information below, please take some time to go through it, and, as always, feel free to reach out to your principals and me with questions and concerns.

Tom



Special Board Meeting and BHS/BTC Virtual Town Hall with Dept. of Health - The BSD leadership team and Board of School Commissioners will host a **Special Board Meeting and BHS/BTC Town Hall** on Tuesday, September 29 at 6:00 pm. We will be joined by Vermont Commissioner of Health Dr. Levine, State Toxicologist Sarah Vose, and other representatives from the Vermont Department of Health, VT Department of Environmental Conservation, and the EPA.

We will begin the meeting with a short presentation and updates from me and the Dept of Health. Then we will move into a public Q&A session, lasting between 90 and 120 minutes. Members of the community will have two minutes each to make statements or ask questions to me, or any of the agency representatives, or board members. Multilingual liaisons will be facilitating a discussion with EL families and the event will be recorded if you cannot make it. More details, including Zoom information, are available on our website.

Athletics - Guidance was also recently issued allowing athletics to begin competition with other schools. Our first games for BHS will be Saturday! If you plan to attend, please be sure to review the [BSD COVID-19 Spectator Policy](#) beforehand. The [BSD COVID-19 Athletics Handbook](#) also contains a number of new updates.

Food Pick-up Location Changes - Beginning Wednesday, we need to change the locations of two of our Free Family Meal Kits pick-up sites:

North Ave Alliance Church site has been moved to Burlington High School (time remains 3-4 PM)

Dealer.com site has been moved to Champlain Elementary (time remains 3-4 PM)

Because our boxes contain premade "suppers," the USDA has asked us to make this move to approved "supper distribution sites" which will allow us to receive more reimbursements for the meals. We are so grateful to our friends at Dealer.com and North Avenue Alliance Church for their support and we look forward to finding more ways to partner together in the future.

Champlain Mural - If you haven't seen it yet, the "Kelis the Afronaught" [mural is complete!](#) This mural seeks to create an anti-racist space a Champlain Elementary, and is what Principal Resteghini calls an "outward expression of the work being done inside the walls of the building." Thank you to all who were involved in this project!

I am from Here - On Thursday night, Vermont PBS aired the video "I am from Here" by Bess O'Brien with a Q & A afterward. The video is a powerful look at race in Vermont. EMS Principal Bonnie Johnson-Aten, who appears in the film, participated in the Q&A along with two young women of color from the film. Here are the links if anyone is interested.

Link to the Q&A: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoi3bNqg4so

"I Am From Here" archived at www.vermontpbs.org/madehere/

Safety Task Force - We are extending the deadline for the acceptance of student applications to the BSD Safety Task Force until October 2. If you know students who would be interested in serving on this task force, [ask them to apply today](#).

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lpalmer@bsdrv.org <lpalmer@bsdrv.org>
To: BSD Superintendent <superintendent@bsdrv.org>

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 10:12 PM

Dear Tom,

I am a 4th grade teacher at EES. I have yet to meet you and you have never been in my classroom. I am very interested to hear how you plan to maintain social distancing requirements to keep students "safe" given that I have 22-24 students (depending on what some remote option parents decide to ultimately do) in my classroom. In addition I have a student teacher, an autistic child with an EA (who doesn't understand distancing) and other staff members who move in and out of the room regularly. Distancing will be completely out the window- not remotely possible. In addition, the "deep cleaning" that the public has been told is happening is not happening. Our custodians are doing the best they can, but are understaffed. I think parents and the public at large believe there is something akin to spraying all surfaces and thorough disinfecting happening on Wednesdays (after both pods have spread germs throughout the room). The reality is that the only table cleaning that is happening ever is what my 4th graders can do with wipes at the end of the day and after eating. Other surfaces such as plexiglass dividers, books, bookcases, chairs (used by multiple people)... remain germ infested with no cleaning in between. Again, our custodial staff is working hard, but remain understaffed and can only do so much. Elementary classrooms are petri dishes, a haven for germs- that is the reality despite masks (which let's be realistic, kids have a very hard time keeping on), and hand sanitizing, which will be all the harder for me to try to monitor with 22-24 students in my room, plus staff). Let's also talk about the staggering amount of work many of us have done to get a reasonable hybrid plan up and running with almost no time in the day without students. The entire system will need to be changed again to meet the near full time agenda that you are proposing in a few short weeks. I have been an elementary teacher since 1984 and don't believe I've ever worked so hard and have been so exhausted, overwhelmed and discouraged. I realize that ultimately the goal is to get students back into the classroom full time, but I fully believe that this decision is being made prematurely and without consideration for student safety and respect and understanding of the work that classroom teachers are doing (especially those of us with large classes). I will plan to be fully transparent with parents if asked about safety in a 4 day a week whole class environment. Again, too much, too soon.

Respectfully,

Lori Palmer
EES

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 25, 2020, at 5:43 PM, BSD Superintendent <superintendent@bsdvt.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

BSD Superintendent <superintendent@bsdvt.org>
To: Tom Flanagan <tflanagan@bsdvt.org>

Sat, Sep 26, 2020 at 8:58 AM

Tom, you want to take this?

[Quoted text hidden]