



# 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

October 9, 2020

Dear Berlin Families,

I hope this communication finds you and your family safe and healthy. I am writing to update you on the current status of our reopening and our plans moving forward.

## **Current Status**

Since schools opened on September 8, we have been operating with two models of instruction at both the elementary and the secondary levels. At the elementary level, we have the majority of students (~85%) participating in full, in-person learning, and about 15% of students participating in remote learning. At the secondary level, the majority of students are participating in a hybrid model, with two cohorts of students attending school in-person one week, and at home the following week. A small percentage of students (~15%) are participating in instruction fully remotely.

A significant strength of the hybrid model that we put in place at McGee and at BHS is that our students are able to access instruction directly from their content area certified teachers whether they are learning at home or in school. This is a contrast to the model of instruction that many students are receiving in hybrid models, in which students participate in class in-person 2 days a week, and have posted lessons or assignments on other days. While teaching both in-school and at-home learners at the same time does present some challenges, most teachers are reporting high levels of participation and attendance in classes. We are very pleased that the investment in the technology needed for this approach is paying off!

## **Moving Forward**

In our reopening plan, we indicated that the hybrid model would be in place for the first six weeks of school and that we would reassess a return to full, in-person instruction at the secondary level following that. This week, we have completed 5 weeks of the hybrid model. Recent statistics from the Department of Public Health show fewer than 5 new cases in Berlin in a seven-day period, with a positivity rate of 0.6%. At the state level, while trends were generally headed downward when we were formulating the reopening plan, there continue to be concerning indicators, with the most recent statewide positivity rate of 1.7%, and 1.8% for Hartford County. A number of Connecticut communities have seen a spike in cases, including a number of cases in young people.

Given the current situation, and in an abundance of concern for the safety of our students and staff members, we are now planning to remain in a hybrid model at the secondary level (McGee and BHS) through the end of the winter recess. Additional information regarding the transition back to full, in-person instruction will be provided prior to the winter recess. At the elementary level, our classroom cohorting model allows us tighter control of student and staff interactions, and we plan to remain in the full, in-person instruction model. ***In both scenarios, we will be closely monitoring the community health statistics and responding to concerns as they arise to protect the safety of our students and staff. We take the protection of our students and staff very seriously.***

Sincerely,  
Brian J. Benigni  
Superintendent of Schools