



Binghamton City School District

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Dear Binghamton Families;

This month marks one year since the world around us changed in ways none of us could have ever imagined. While the COVID-19 pandemic has created huge challenges for our students, families, and staff, it has also afforded us with opportunities to navigate those challenges by exploring new teaching and learning tools and adapting to a new social, emotional, and educational environment. We look forward to the days when the pandemic is under control, when the vaccine program has accomplished its objective, and we can all return to our buildings. I would like to share some of the highlights of the changes we anticipate occurring as our county and city infection rates trend downward and our days get warmer.

Athletics Return...and More Events to Come

Our Winter sports season has come to a close and I want to thank everyone that helped to make it possible. Our Fall season is underway, soon to be followed by Spring sports. You can view all JV and Varsity home events on our [Binghamton Athletic Department YouTube Page](#).

I am pleased to share that, with vigilance and solid safety protocols in place, the weekly COVID-19 infection rate continues to decline allowing us to explore additional ways for our students to return to live, in-person events across the district. For example, we have reserved NYSEG stadium this year for our graduation ceremony in June. We are also in discussions with students and staff to explore the possibility of holding a traditional, in-person Prom this year. These events, along with extracurricular group functions and musical performances involving our arts and theatre students, are vitally important to our ability to share successes and build community, so we welcome this important step as we redefine opportunities for our students and families.

In-person Learning

We are also pleased to announce that we are actively pursuing the expansion of in-person learning opportunities for our students in the months ahead. The six-foot social distancing between desks, combined with the capacity of our classrooms and buildings has limited our ability to accommodate in-person instruction for all. Remote learning has allowed us to connect with students and families like never before, but when used as a primary mode of instruction it creates gaps in our educational success due to our inability to provide in the moment support and encourage regular engagement. BCSD is working closely with other districts in the region and across the state to learn from our shared experiences to provide “best practices” for teaching and learning opportunities moving forward. We have also received and incorporated valuable input regarding this effort from several ongoing committees and task forces comprised of administrators, teachers, and support staff. The topics of attendance and the essential need to return our students to our buildings, while maintaining a healthy and safe environment are a top priority for the district. The Board of Education wishes to express its thanks to faculty, staff, parents and caregivers who have worked diligently to ensure that our students continue to stay focused on engaging with their education, attending classes and being

active partners in the educational experience during the past year.

Steady progress has also been made in terms of reducing the risk of COVID 19 exposure through vaccination. A recent in-house survey suggests that approximately 88% of the BCSD staff and faculty have participated in or are awaiting the opportunity to participate in the broader vaccination effort and we will continue to make information regarding vaccination opportunities available to every member of our BCSD family.

It is extremely important to remain vigilant in our safety protocols so we can continue to experience a safe and healthy environment. Please continue to take appropriate precautions regarding gatherings outside of school, wear face masks and maintain social distancing. As always, please keep your child home if they are sick. We appreciate your support.

Budget Work Underway

The board and administration are also committed to providing district stakeholders and taxpayers with a fiscally responsible budget for the 2021-22 school year. In building the proposed budget, the board carefully considered the input received through our online budget-survey process and ongoing discussions with stakeholder groups and individuals. We believe that the proposed 2021-22 budget will blend state, federal and local resources to provide an effective and efficient educational experience for all involved, while recognizing the need to be especially prudent with taxpayer resources during this time of resource scarcity. In meeting this objective in both the short and long term, the board has not only sought to recognize the unique challenges of educating children during the COVID-19 crisis, but to look ahead to the long-term viability and effectiveness of our various school buildings and related facilities. As such, we are working now to draft a vision for capital improvements that we believe will be vital in achieving cost-related efficiencies that will enable us to serve our students responsibly in the years ahead. More information regarding this vision will be forthcoming in the next few months.

In closing, I want to express my personal thanks to the BCSD community; our faculty, staff, parents and students for the commitments and sacrifices you have each made this past year to ensure that we continue to provide our students with an education that empowers and challenges them. I feel blessed to have such a committed community around me and I am truly proud to be a part of BCSD as we plot a course forward together!

With Patriot Pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tonia Thompson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools