



# 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

May 8, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We hope that this communication finds you and your family healthy. Our leadership team continues to work with the Berlin Board of Education, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and with our talented staff to plan for the continuation of distance learning, for closing out this school year, and for the expected reopening of schools in the fall. As you can imagine, the plans need to be flexible in response to the current health situation and the guidelines that we receive that impact expectations and processes as we move forward.

## School Closure

- **Per Tuesday's announcement by the Governor and the Commissioner of Education, Berlin Schools will remain closed through the end of the school year. We expect additional guidance in the next week or so regarding summer programming.**
- The CIAC has confirmed that all spring sports schedules are canceled. We have just received new guidance from the CIAC regarding virtual training and coaching for spring sports and will release additional information shortly.
- In order to support the Governor's order to #StaySafe, #StayHome, school offices and the Board of Education office will remain closed to the public. Please call ahead and make an appointment.

## Graduation

- At the Board of Education meeting this week, the Board set Friday, August 7, as the date for the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020. This was done after much discussion and following surveys of students, parents, and focus groups with members of the senior class. We remain hopeful that social distancing guidelines will be eased by August, which would allow us to hold an in-person graduation ceremony. We are looking forward to gathering to celebrate our seniors!

## Student Belongings/Return of School Materials

- Our administrative team is hard at work making plans for students and families to be able to retrieve items left at school when schools were closed down in March.
- Each school principal will communicate directly with families to let you know the process for picking up items that your child may have left at school, including cleaning out desks, lockers, gym lockers, band lockers, and picking up medicine from the nursing offices.
- At this time, we anticipate that students in Grades K-11 will keep their school issued devices (iPads and Chromebooks) over the summer months. We want to ensure that we are continuing to provide access to digital learning opportunities through the summer months.

## Transition Events

- The end of the school year typically brings a range of activities that are designed to celebrate the end of a successful school year, and, at certain grades, to prepare students for the transition to a new school.

- Building principals are working on plans for end-of-year events in light of the recent decision to close school buildings for the remainder of the year. Principals are working with staff members and with parent clubs/PTOs where appropriate, to make plans for end-of-year events and celebrations.
- The elementary principals will hold a virtual kindergarten orientation for each school in June. Kindergarten welcome is postponed in hopes that health guidelines will allow us to hold this activity in August.

### **Distance/At Home Learning**

- In the last two weeks, we have increased the number of live instructional sessions offered to students at all grade levels. We will continue to refine our distance learning model over the coming weeks.
- Our schedule was adjusted to include instructional days on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. We have reserved Wednesdays for teachers to provide additional support for students and to allow time for the collaboration that is critical during this time period.
- The district is currently working to create a website link to bring summer learning resources into a common location for ease of access by parents and students.
- Math packets are being created and will be available to pick up at the schools, date TBD.

### **Budget Update:**

- The Berlin Board of Education is monitoring the budget situation closely to ensure that adequate funding is available to support the technology demands of continued distance learning, as well as to anticipate safety expenditures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are carefully analyzing expenses and any potential savings in the spirit of continuing to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

This week marks both Teacher Appreciation Week and Nurse Appreciation Week. I would be remiss if I failed to take this opportunity to share my gratitude for the dedicated professionals who serve our school community and who have stepped up in so many ways during this challenging time. We are certainly lucky to work with such talented, caring individuals.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Benigni  
Superintendent of Schools