

Questions from COVID Town Hall

INSTRUCTION

Q. How is curriculum and instruction being handled while Dr. Byrne is handling COVID situations?

While managing COVID-related matters for the District is time consuming, Dr. Byrne has been working on curriculum and instruction planning. He has worked with administrators and faculty to discuss items such as teaching under the hybrid model, teaching advanced learners and proposed revisions to K-12 curricula. Dr. Byrne has also been assisted with COVID management by administrators and support staff which has enabled him to focus on other areas. He and the administrative team are exploring other options for managing COVID situations.

Q. Why are the live streaming sessions for Specials cancelled so often?

We are reviewing the frequency with which live streaming sessions during Specials classes are being cancelled. Some of these have been a result of limited staff due to quarantines and teacher absences. Regular classrooms have taken priority for substitute teachers. Specials teachers have been directed to post lessons on Google Classroom so that student learning can continue in these classes. Additionally, we will make sure that all teachers have the training that they need to be able to successfully run live Zoom sessions.

Q. Has there been any thought to no longer combining the physical education classes at the Middle School and High School?

The Middle School and High School administration are exploring ways to have all physical education classes in separate spaces.

Q. What curriculum is being followed during hybrid learning?

Starting over the past summer the faculty has worked on modifying their standard curricula in order to meet the needs of the hybrid learning model. Teachers focused on identifying the priority standards in their discipline

Q. Why are we not using substitute teachers or aides to be in classrooms when teachers are unable to be in the building due to quarantine?

Each building has used substitute teachers and teacher aides to fill in for quarantined teachers. Utilizing these personnel has allowed the schools to avoid moving to remote learning many times during the current school year. Even with these resources some of our schools have reached points where there were not sufficient personnel in the school building due to quarantines, illness or other reasons. It is at these points that we have had to shift into remote learning. We have tried to minimize the impact of this where possible by only having a grade level go into remote learning.

Q. What is the value of having a teacher who is quarantined remotely instruct an in-person class?

Having the teacher on quarantine remotely instruct an in-person class allows the teacher and students to connect and continue the learning without the loss of an instructional day in that course. Teachers can continue the learning without having to develop substitute lesson plans.

Q. Under what circumstances would the High School be all remote?

Following the practices done district wide, the High School would switch to all remote instruction if there is not sufficient staffing to cover the in-person classes. In addition, if we have reason to believe that there are a number of students or staff that have tested positive, the school would need to be closed for isolation and cleaning.

Q. Is the District considering extending in-person hours?

The District is constantly reviewing the hybrid model that has been put into place. We have received requests for both more in-person learning as well as shifting entirely to remote learning. We have to balance these requests with the resources that we have available to provide a student learning environment that meets all mandated social distancing requirements. At the current time we do not plan to increase in-person hours. We will continue to monitor the COVID situation in the community as well as the changes in regulations.

Q. Can all classes be live streamed?

We believe it is best to leave the decision to “live stream” classes to the individual teacher based on the instructional goals for that lesson. Many teachers have embraced a student-centered approach to learning where students need to work independently. In this model there may be days when teachers are not live streaming to give students the time to research and prepare their work. It is important to give students and teachers the flexibility needed to most effectively learn.

IN_PERSON/HYBRID/REMOTE LEARNING

Q. Will schools be in remote learning for a week or two before or following the holiday break?

There are currently no plans to have schools in remote learning after the holiday break. Based on a lack of available staff for students, the Blind Brook Middle School and Blind Brook High School will be on remote learning from December 21st to December 23rd. We recognize the importance of having our students in school and want to provide every opportunity for this to happen. However, we are monitoring what is happening in the community in regards to COVID situations.

Q. Has there been any further thought about how Blind Brook could return to full in-person learning again?

Based on the availability of resources available, our schools would not be able to return to full in-person teaching until social distancing regulations are removed and a safe environment can

be provided. It is likely that the District will not be able to return to full in-person instruction during the current school year.

Q. With talk of the vaccine being available for teachers in the late spring at the earliest, should we anticipate the school will be in the hybrid learning model for the remainder of the year?

It is likely that schools will be in the hybrid learning model for the remainder of the year.

Q. What inequities do you see in closing the MS/HS but keeping BMRSS open?

We recognize the value of having students take part in in-person learning and want to give our students every opportunity to take part in this. Decisions to move individual buildings into remote learning are made based on student and staff safety as well as student supervision. Each building is evaluated for these things individually.

Q. Some students are opting into remote learning because of peer pressure of being the only child not in remote learning. What is the District doing to address this?

We can assure everyone in the community that there are many students who are still taking part in in-person learning. Parents should not feel obligated to have their children take part in remote learning although students are welcome to move to remote learning if they wish.

Q. How much advance notice is needed to have a child move into remote learning?

We require 24 hours notice to move into remote learning. There is required stay in remote learning at the High School of one full letter day cycle.

Q. Can you provide more information as to why the 6th and 8th grade had to remain in remote learning on 12/10 and 12/11?

The 6th and 8th grade students had to remain on remote learning due to the Middle School having insufficient personnel available to supervise students. This was caused by multiple possible COVID exposure cases requiring many of our employees to quarantine. The Middle School, as well as our other schools, has used all available personnel, including support staff, to keep in-person running for as long as possible.

Q. Can a community survey be sent out about closing the schools after the holiday break?

We will consider sending out a survey. However, the community has already been actively sharing their thoughts about whether or not to close schools after the holiday break. We have received emails both asking for remote learning and asking for in-person learning. We are using all of the information available to make determinations about the learning model that will be in place following the holidays.

Q. Will the MS/HS be adding in Wednesdays for in-person learning?

A variety of scenarios are being discussed and considered as we examine our school schedule and hybrid schedule. At the current time, no changes have been made to the hybrid schedule.

ATTENDANCE

Q. Can you explain why a student would be marked absent if the student attended a class remotely?

If a parent did not request eLearning, the student is expected to attend school in person. If the student does not attend in person, they are marked absent. To attend class remotely, a parent/guardian must follow the procedures outlined by the specific school. Those procedures can be found [HERE](#). All schools ask for 24 hour advance notice of a student moving into remote learning.

CLEANING

Q. What are the cleaning solutions that are being used to clean and disinfect in the school buildings?

The full details of the solutions being used to clean our buildings can be found in the [District Reopening Plan](#). In brief, the following materials are used:

- Hydrolyte hospital grade disinfectant for electrostatic sprayers
- Clorox Healthcare Cleaning Wipes and disinfecting wipes
- Clorox Cleanup Cleaner with Bleach

COHORTS

Q. Based on the article in the Westmore News that highlights the shortcomings of using an AM/PM cohort model in remote learning, would the BMRSS consider changing its plans to enact an AM/PM remote learning model should remote learning be needed?

The Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School has aligned the planned remote learning model with its hybrid model to enable a seamless transition between the two. All options are regularly reviewed and changes will be implemented if an established need to do so is identified.

Q. There seems to be a growing number of students who have changed their cohort or are coming to school four days a week. Can you verify this and explain?

We have not had any students change cohorts. We do have certain students attending four days a week based on the guidelines set by the NYSED for students with individual learning needs, such as those identified as ENL or with an IEP.

ILLNESS/QUARANTINE

Q. How many student or staff positive COVID cases have been directly exposed at school? How do we know this if we are not doing testing?

We can only speculate as to whether someone who tests positive for COVID was directly exposed at school based on their date of contact with someone else who had tested positive. As of December 15th there is only one student who meets this criteria. However, we cannot confirm that this was the student's only exposure.

Q. When will the District adapt the new CDC recommendations?

The school district is required to follow Department of Health Guidelines and cannot independently adopt the new CDC recommendations. If the new recommendations are adopted by the Department of Health, we will adopt them as well.

Q. Has there been additional discussion about protocols for other students when a student is sent home sick and is waiting for the results of a COVID test?

The protocol that is currently in place requires any siblings of a student who is waiting for a COVID test to stay home until the test results have been received.

Q. Will the District mandate that students and staff get the COVID vaccine when available?

We will take our guidance from the Department of Health and the Department of Education as to whether we can, or are obligated to, require the COVID vaccine once it is generally available.

Q. Will students be required to get the flu vaccination?

Students are not required to get a flu vaccination.

Q. How do you define close contact?

Close contact is within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more (non consecutive). However, the Department of Health has also required people to quarantine when in larger areas (auditoriums, churches) if they have been exposed to an individual who tested positive for a longer period of time.

Q. Can in-school quarantines be limited to only those who eat lunch in the same room with the person who tested positive?

Quarantines are determined in conjunction with the Department of Health and follow their guidelines. The district does not have the ability to change these requirements.

Q. Does the District have a sense as to whether every student who tests positive is informing the school?

Unfortunately we have limited means to determine if all students who are testing positive are being reported to the school. However, the Village and the School District do receive updates from Westchester County about individuals in Rye Brook who they have received notice of testing positive. We cross reference this information with our own and follow up if necessary.

Q. Has the District come across any cases that it was not notified of? If so, is there any different protocol or contact tracing that occurs?

The District and Rye Brook Village do receive information from the Westchester County Department of Health on positive cases in Rye Brook. We have not yet found a case that we have not been notified of. There would not be any additional tracing that would need to be done if this did occur.

Q. If the District goes into remote learning would that restrict its ability to do contact tracing?

If the District was on remote learning we would still have to do contact tracing. However, the process from the District's perspective would be greatly simplified as there would be no contact in our buildings assuming that the exposure time fell within the time that the schools were remote. Otherwise contact tracing would go on as normal.

Q. During contact tracing do you look into out-of-school contacts?

During the contact tracing process we do contact the family of a student who tests positive to ask if the child had any contact with a Blind Brook student or staff member outside of the school day. Beyond that we are limited in what we can do and rely on the Department of Health to further investigate.

Q. During contact tracing do you ask who the student ate lunch with?

Yes. We also ask if the student visited any support staff members, where the student was during free periods and who the student was in contact with at the end of the school day.

Q. Is it correct that students who are in the same classroom that a student who tested positive was in and who have the same teacher as that student will not be identified as a close contact?

Students who were not in the same class with a student who tested positive for COVID but shares the same teacher and learn in the same classroom at a different time during the day will not be identified as a close contact.

Q. If a student needs to quarantine due to being a close contact of a person who tested positive, do that student's siblings need to quarantine as well?

No. They are a contact of a contact. A contact of a contact does not have to be quarantined.

Q. Why have students on the bus been included in quarantines?

All cases involving the quarantine of students on a school bus have been reviewed with the Department of Health. Based on the information that was available at the time, it was determined to quarantine all of the students who were on the bus during the time when the student was on the bus. We are looking at putting a more thorough process in place for determining who was in close contact with a student on a school bus.

MENTAL HEALTH

Q. What are the District's mental health professionals doing to support students during COVID?

Our mental health professionals are meeting with students in person or on zoom to provide support. These professionals are also putting together resources for students, parents and staff to help everyone support their mental health during COVID.

CONSTRUCTION

Q. Has COVID had an impact on the progress of the construction project at BMRSS?

There has been no evidence of COVID having an impact on the construction project at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School.

Q. Is that fact that the BMRSS building is currently under construction hindering the chances to open the school building for full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year?

The Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School has experienced a limitation on available classrooms for the last few years due to the ongoing construction project. However, the addition of the rooms that will be provided with the completion of the construction project would not permit the school to shift into full in-person learning if COVID restrictions are still in place for the 2021-2022 school year.

ASSISTIVE SERVICES

Q. If schools go full remote, how will children who require an aide receive assistance at home?

IEP and 504-mandated aide services will continue to be provided during fully remote instruction through aide participation in whole class Zooms and the use of breakout rooms and the coordination of additional Zoom assistance outside the whole class time, as necessary.

MEDICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Q. Who is on the Medical Advisory Committee and what are their qualifications?

The Medical Advisory Committee is a group of medical professionals who live in Rye Brook and have volunteered to help advise the District on medical issues, in particular in regards to COVID. All participants hold medical degrees.

Q. Can you share any input that the Medical Advisory Committee has provided?

The Medical Advisory Committee has opined on several items throughout the year mostly focusing on how COVID has progressed in our area and how to effectively combat it. Many of their insights have been shared with the community via District emails.

NON-SCHOOL HOURS

Q. How prevalent do you believe are Zoom play dates?

We don't have the capability to assess the frequency in which families are taking part in Zoom play dates.

Q. Do the police report the names of students who attend large gatherings to the District so that those students are forced to take part in remote instruction?

The Police Department notifies the Superintendent if a student has been arrested. We are not notified if students attend parties.

TECHNOLOGY

Q. How can we make sure that the schools have the proper bandwidth to handle remote learning?

The District recently doubled the bandwidth that it uses to allow for the added demand of remote learning. We are actively monitoring the bandwidth usage and will look to increase it if necessary.

COLOR ZONES

Q. How will testing be handled if the District is designated as a Yellow Zone?

The District will be engaging with a COVID testing company to meet the testing requirements if we are designated as a yellow, orange or red zone. We are currently running a pilot of the testing process with District employees to make sure that a solid process is put into place.

Q. What is the District doing to receive more timely information about students being in close contact outside of the school day to an individual who tested positive for COVID?

As part of the contact tracing process, the family of a student who tests positive for COVID is contacted to ask if the student was in contact with any Blind Brook students or staff outside of the school day. The District is limited in the amount of contact tracing that can be done outside of the school day.

SCREENING

Q. Can you confirm that the schools receive a list of students who complete the EZSCRN app every day?

Each staff member monitoring the door has a live EZSCRN app where they can access the submitted information for each child. Administrators also have access to the data from EZSCRN.

Q. Why is the District not taking the temperature of every child as they come into the building?

The District is constantly reviewing our processes for the screening of students and staff. We did not include temperature taking at the entrances in our initial plan to expedite the admittance process for students and staff. As time has passed we are reviewing the processes that are in place and will revisit the idea of temperature taking at the door. We do currently take random temperature checks of both students and staff each day in each building.

Q. Has there been any discussion about using thermal scanning on students and staff as they enter the building?

The District did review the possibility of using thermal scanning technology. During the review the feedback that we received from schools and other institutions that were using thermal imaging was that it was not effective enough in determining individuals with elevated temperatures to make the investment in the technology worthwhile.

SURVEY

Q. Can you share the results of the survey that was sent out earlier this year?

Dr. Brimstein shared a summary of the results at the December 15th Board of Education meeting. A summary of the results will also be posted on the District website.

COVID TESTING

Q. When will you begin testing?

There has been no decision made to implement COVID testing outside of the testing that would be required should the District be designated as part of a Yellow, Orange or Red Zone. We are preparing

Q. What is the testing plan that an email was sent about last week?

The District is preparing a small pilot of testing with District employees that will happen at the end of December.

ATHLETICS

Q. If guidance from the NYSPHSAA approves winter sports will the district follow that guidance and approve sports in the district?

The District will review the guidance from the NYSPHSAA and will provide students with the opportunity to take part in sports if it is deemed safe to do so.