



Bristol Tennessee City Schools

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COVID-19 Communication

November 2, 2020

Dear BTCS Parents/Guardians:

First of all, I sincerely hope you and your family are in good health. For those in our community who have experienced the effects of COVID-19 firsthand, my heart goes out to you. As a school district, we continue to work diligently to implement all reasonable safety precautions to keep our students and staff safe and in school. I am optimistic about the limited number of cases in our schools and credit that to the commitment of our students and staff to following safety protocols. I could not be more proud of them for wearing masks and attempting to socially distance as much as possible in a school setting. While our cases have made quarantines of students and staff necessary, quarantines are simply one additional precaution to control the spread of the virus. The cooperation of all who have been impacted by quarantines has been critical.

Schedule Beginning November 9

As you know, community spread of the virus in Sullivan County is trending upward. In addition, we are beginning to experience challenges with staffing in our schools, primarily due to staff quarantines and more stringent COVID-screening guidelines. Therefore, **beginning the week of November 9, our district will shift to a four-day per week schedule for in-person learners.** Wednesdays will be designated as remote learning days for all schools. Learning will be primarily asynchronous with students working independently on these days. The purpose of these days is for our buildings to undergo a thorough cleaning and to allow time to adjust staff schedules to help with shortages.

Please keep in mind that the all-remote learning option remains for families. While we still believe in-person learning is best for our students, we recognize each family has different needs as it relates to COVID-19. Therefore, students are permitted to switch learning pathways at any time to best meet the needs of the student. If you would like to change your child's learning pathway, please call your school.

COVID-19 Decision-Making Factors for School Operations

Our operational decisions regarding school are based on numerous factors, and our decision-making processes continue to evolve as public health experts learn more about the virus and more data points become available to us. We have weekly, sometimes more frequent, calls with the Sullivan County Health Department and the three Sullivan County school districts. In order to help you better understand the factors we consider during these weekly calls and even on a daily basis in our schools, I've created a [video](#) to walk you through the process. It outlines the various COVID-19 data points we use.

We Need Your Help!

This schedule change is the first step in doing our part as public schools to help control the spread of the virus in our community. It will be in place through the end of the semester unless we feel additional steps are warranted, such as returning to hybrid or remote operations. It is not my intent to ever return our district to all remote learning. As cases develop and/or staffing issues increase, it may cause us to shift classrooms or schools to remote learning temporarily. Those will be handled on a case-by-case basis. We want our students in school as much as possible, and we desperately need your help to make that happen:

- Limit gatherings of any size, especially with the holidays approaching. If you must be in a gathering, wear a mask and maintain six feet of distance.
- Put limitations on your children's social activities.
- Always wear a mask when interacting with those outside your immediate household.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- If you are identified as a close contact of a positive case, carefully follow all [quarantine guidelines from the CDC](#).
- All of these precautions will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other viruses as we enter cold and flu season.

Parent/Guardian Notifications of Positive Cases

Up to this point, schools have been providing daily notifications of positive cases at each school via parent phone calls. Recognizing that some families do not want to receive these daily calls and that oftentimes this makes the situation seem more alarming than the reality, we have decided to switch the daily notifications to parents via Canvas announcements. Beginning Monday, November 9, we will be adding a summary of student and staff quarantines to the daily school updates. We will communicate the details of that notification process with you later this week to ensure you are able to receive those notifications if so desired. We will also continue to update our [COVID-19 Reporting Dashboard](#) daily, Monday-Friday by 4 p.m. In addition, we are adding a weekly update for staff and parents via a Canvas announcement, which will include even more information about the number of positive cases of COVID-19 and resulting quarantines in our district.

The COVID-19 pandemic has by far provided the biggest challenge I have faced in my 26 years as an educator. I know most of my colleagues would say the same. Please be assured that we are working tirelessly each and every day to make the very best decisions possible for our students and staff! As always, thank you for your patience and support.

Sincerely,



Annette Tudor, Ed.D.
Director of Schools