



COVID-19 COMMUNICATION

July 29, 2020

Dear BTCS Parents and Guardians,

In our recent release of our Remote Learning Guide, we introduced the theme of “Reimagine Learning, Reimagine BTCS.” When this theme was first mentioned by our administrative team in the spring, we had no idea exactly how much reimagining (and then reimagining some more) would be needed to begin the 2020-21 school year.

Patience, Flexibility, and Grace

These are my guiding words each day. As COVID-19 has done from the beginning, it continues to surprise us and the experts. As guidance and recommendations change, we must adapt. Many times that makes it difficult to keep you as informed as we would like because plans must be “reimagined” before we have even had the chance to update you. It is frustrating to me. It is frustrating to our team. And, I cannot imagine how frustrating it must be to you when you are trying to make decisions for the safety and education of your child. For example, principals met with teachers yesterday to get input on our plans for starting the school year. Before we had time to digest that information, the governor made an announcement with new guidance for schools.

Opening of School

As I have stated before, as a mom and an educator, I am passionate about having students back in our buildings. I firmly believe it is the very best place for our students’ academic, social, and emotional well-being. Our feedback from parents continues to indicate the majority of you (approximately 75%) want and/or need your children safely in school, in person. Additionally, as recently as yesterday, guidance has shifted from both the governor and the Tennessee Department of Education, emphasizing the benefits of having students in person for instruction and providing guidance as to how we can, and should, do that safely.

When we released the Framework for Opening the 2020-21 School Year: Sullivan County Plan, we assumed the recommendation was going to be to transition to all remote learning with no athletics or extracurricular activities should our community be at the Red threshold level. However, recent guidance from state leaders and public health officials has indicated we can, and should, have students and staff in our buildings if we can meet specific requirements. Therefore, we are exploring opportunities for continuing in-person instruction at the Red threshold level. Additionally, regional school districts are developing a plan for continuing athletics and extracurricular activities, which includes information released by the TSSAA yesterday for contact sports.

At this time, all students will participate in remote learning from the first day of school on August 6 through August 14. Should our community remain at the Red threshold, we will communicate to you as soon as possible whether we can meet the requirements for in-person learning at this level. We understand that this may be a change in how you are interpreting learning in the Red threshold, which may prompt you to want to make a change in your learning pathway selection. I assure you that you will be given that opportunity. If we are unable to meet requirements for in-person learning in the Red threshold, we may be forced to extend remote learning beyond August 14.

You will receive instructions for accessing remote learning from your child's school prior to the first student day, Thursday, August 6. On the first day of school, classroom teachers will provide specific information about remote learning requirements for the week of August 10-14, as well as information about back-to-school materials, technology assistance, and meal options. Please watch for additional information from your school.

While COVID-19 continues to present more questions than answers, I want to assure you that our staff is committed to serving students and families to the very best of our abilities. We have updated our website, www.btcs.org, to make information more easily accessible. More information will be added to these pages as it becomes available. In closing, I want to ask of you those same three things I ask of myself each day: Patience, Flexibility, and Grace. Some days we need to extend these to ourselves, and some days we need to extend them to others. Regardless, we need all three right now. We are in this together, and we will get through this together! #WeAreBTCS

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annette Tudor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Annette Tudor, Ed.D.
Director of Schools