



# BOYERTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

## EDUCATION CENTER

**Safety & Well-Being Acceptance & Respect Communication & Collaboration Learning & Growth**  
*To cultivate an exceptional, innovative learning community that enables all students to succeed in a changing world.*

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August 21, 2020

Dear Boyertown Learning Community:

Effective today, Friday, August 21, 2020, Boyertown Area School District will begin the school year under a soft-opening model. The first day of school will remain Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>; however, our plans for face-to-face learning have been suspended until a target date of Monday, October 5, 2020. As a result of this decision, our students will be participating in BASD Virtual Learning to begin the school year.\*

We understand that many will be disappointed, even angered, by this current development. We know that it directly impacts the lives of families across our district in countless ways. Please know that this decision was not made lightly. Countless numbers of you have watched as we worked diligently on a plan that included face-to-face instruction and as our Board of School Directors fought to give parents options for learning. There is nothing we can do other than to apologize and explain the last-minute changes that have led to our decision at this late date.

1. Our professional and support staffing shortages have significantly exceeded this administration's expectations. With the implementation of the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) combined with the non-pandemic-related needs of our employees, our staffing shortages have grown and continue to grow on a daily basis – sometimes by five or more employees per day. Even with bringing back our furloughed Temporary Professional Employees (TPEs) and tapping into our available substitute resources, the bottom line is that there simply are not enough human resources available to cover the face-to-face learning needs of our students safely and with health as a priority.
2. Last week, the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) released an update to their guidance](#) strongly recommending children age two and older should wear face coverings **at all times** to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Prior guidance released in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) stated students in schools could remove their face coverings as long as six feet of social distancing could be maintained. Given this recent change from the AAP, and consistent with the [Secretary of Health's Face Covering Order issued on July 1, 2020](#), DOH is requiring **students wear face coverings at all times while in school**, even when six feet of social distancing can be achieved. No matter how far apart, our students would be mandated to wear their masks/face coverings at all times – with limited exceptions.

#### Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings (e.g. masks and face shields)?

Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least 6 feet apart during "face-covering breaks" to last no longer than 10 minutes.

\*Students with an IEP will be virtual for the first two weeks. Then we will begin with a soft return to school based upon their specific needs, related services, and IEP goals. Over the next three weeks, we will be contacting our families of children with special needs and preparing/coordinating a return to face-to-face learning.



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PreK Counts students will be face-to-face Monday through Thursday beginning on Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. Our PreK students will participate in remote learning on Fridays. This is a separate program. Children in this program do not require transportation and staffing is not an issue.

BCTC has moved to a hybrid model that will begin for BASD students on August 31<sup>st</sup>. We will continue to transport our BCTC students to their face-to-face learning opportunities (under the transportation plan already released) in combination with their BASD Virtual Learning. More details to follow.

Due to lack of personnel, we are faced with modifying our scheduled face-to-face learning until at least October 5<sup>th</sup>. We will continue the daily monitoring of our staffing needs and explore the options available to us for filling those needs – including the possible recruitment of furloughed employees from other districts, leveraging the personal networks of our employees, additional work with CCRES, and more. We will monitor the impact of the pandemic as it specifically pertains to our BASD communities – regardless of their specific county location. Most importantly, every effort of our administrative team will be focused on a timely return to face-to-face learning as soon as possible.

With the implementation of our soft-opening model, *we will modify the scaffolded/hybrid model*. When we are able to begin the process of returning to face-to-face learning, students in grades K through 5<sup>th</sup> will return to their elementary buildings; students in grade 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> will return to their middle school buildings; and students in grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> will return to the high school. This will most-likely happen in some variation of an A-B schedule. Once our school year has begun, we will begin to share the details of our return to face-to-face learning as soon as they become available. These planning efforts are already underway and include moving our teachers back to their home buildings to teach from their original classrooms prior to August 31<sup>st</sup>. In this way, your child will begin to familiarize themselves with their return to face-to-face learning environment.

It is important to note that as we begin the return to face-to-face learning, BASD Virtual Learning will remain in place throughout the entire school year for those families who choose to remain virtual.

Over the course of the next week, the district will provide numerous additional communications to our families. Please continue to watch for these important emails not only from the district, but from building principals, and teachers, as well.

I continually thank our Boyertown Learning Community for their patience and flexibility. As always, we remain committed to prioritizing the safety and well-being of our students and staff while meeting the educational needs of our students.

Kindly,

Mrs. Marybeth Torchia

Substitute Superintendent of Schools

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What does synchronous learning look like?** Synchronous learning is direct interaction with your teacher and other students. It includes various learning activities, projects, labs, assessments, etc. It is not just students watching a teacher lecture. Teachers engage students in a way that strengthens and deepens the learning process. We have created a virtual schedule that is similar to our brick and mortar schedule and will mimic face-to-face learning to the fullest extent possible.

**What does asynchronous learning look like?** Students are not required to participate in learning at a designated time. The teacher delivers instruction through a recorded video, projects, virtual labs, assignments, etc. There will be times that students will work on activities on their own.

**When will the school day start and end?** Per our original plan, teachers will be expected to be in their classrooms five minutes prior to the start of the school day and the start times for the elementary and middle schools have shifted by 5 minutes.

***Boyetown Area Senior High Grades 9 through 12: 7:40 AM - 2:35 PM***

***Middle Schools East and West Grades 6 through 8: 7:40 AM-2:35 PM***

***Boyetown Elementary Schools Grades K through 5: 8:40 AM-3:20 PM***

**Will my child have the opportunity to visit their school prior to returning for face-to-face instruction?** Yes. We are making arrangements for in-person building orientations. More details will follow in the coming weeks.

**What happens if my child is unable to attend virtually on any given school day?** We will follow our typical attendance policies and procedures. Staff will post their substitute plans in an asynchronous model (just as if school was in session traditionally).

**Will the Board approved school calendar remain in place?** Yes, the calendar and all associated days will remain as is. The first day of school is Monday, August 31, 2020.

**Will my child receive a district-issued device?** Yes. Students in grades K – 5 will receive their devices during the week of August 24, 2020. Students in kindergarten and first grade will receive iPads. Students in grades 2 through 5 will receive Windows laptops. All student profiles for the students in grades 2 through 5 will be completed by the district prior to distribution.

Families will have the opportunity to pick up the device(s) for their child(ren) at their elementary buildings on:

Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> – 3:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup> – 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup> – 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

More information will be released on or before Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>.

**What if I do not have internet access in my house?** We will work with families who need internet access using the available resources in the community, as well as district resources.

**Will my child's AP and Dual Enrollment classes be taught by teachers who are trained in this?** Yes, all AP and Dual Enrollment courses will be taught by teachers who have taught this before and are fully certified and trained in the program.

**What is an EXAMPLE of an AB model?** An AB model allows schools to bring some children back for face-to-face learning on certain days of the week and other children back on different days of the week. As an EXAMPLE of one POSSIBLE model: students with last names beginning with the letters A through L would attend face-to-face learning on Monday and Tuesday. Students with last names beginning with the letters M through Z would attend face-to-face learning on Thursday and Friday. Wednesday would be a cleaning day. All students would be virtual on the three days per week that they are not face-to-face. AB models reduce the number of

children in a classroom at one time and make social distancing of at least six feet more achievable. This is NOT an indication that this is the model BASD has chosen for our return to face-to-face learning. Please do NOT make plans using this example..

**What will BASD administration be doing between now and October 5<sup>th</sup>?** The BASD administration has already begun the work needed to facilitate a return to face-to-face learning. Our goal is to return to face-to-face learning as soon as possible based upon the availability of human resources and the progression of the pandemic.

**We are...**

1. **Providing seven full days of professional development for our teachers prior to August 31<sup>st</sup>.**
2. **Moving our teachers back to their original classrooms prior to August 31<sup>st</sup>.**
3. **Reviewing resources related to AB Plans and other models available for the return to face-to-face learning.**
4. **Continuing to increase our supplies of Personal Protective Equipment and cleaning and disinfecting.**

**We will...**

1. **Continue to pursue new avenues for filling both professional and support openings.**
2. **Complete the development of a “softer”, staggered return to face-to-face learning under what will most likely be a version of an AB plan. Our goal is to target a plan that allows us to start to bring approximately 50% of our students back (into their home buildings) at a time.**
3. **Continue to adjust transportation (in alignment with the return to face-to-face learning plan) to provide more social distancing, etc.**