

BARNSTEAD SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Administrative Unit #86

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To the BES Community.

Alton Central School is closed today as a precautionary measure as a result of an ACS parent being tested for COVID-19. ACS Administration and staff will be using today to work on their preparedness in the event that they need to close school for a period of time as either a precautionary measure or in response to a certified COVID-19 case. Similarly, PMHS is also closed today to work on their plans for conducting education via technology in the event that a school closure is needed in future. It is important to note that as of the time of this message there are no confirmed cases or known testing of BES staff, students, or parents/family members from BES.

Yesterday morning the State Board of Education approved schools/districts to provide instruction via the Blizzard Bag model and/or technology based instruction for the next 180 days. BES Administration and I have been working on this plan for several days, including a meeting that was held Tuesday with the Teacher Leadership Committee. Below is a summary of the model that we are working on.

If we need to close BES due to COVID-19 concerns, students in grades 4-8 will be able to sign out Chromebooks (or use their own technology from home) and will be able to access teachers and instruction via email and Google classroom. We know that not all students have Wifi access from home so we recognize that we may need to be flexible and/or provide additional support or options in some cases. For the lower grades instruction may look more like our current "Blizzard Bag" approach but we will be preparing larger instructional packets (likely at least one week's worth of instruction) and therefore parents could, for example, simply come to BES and drop off the completed Week 1 package and pick up the Week 2 package simultaneously.

The main goal of these efforts is to provide instruction while maintaining significantly lower levels of person-to-person contact across the entire BES community. By reducing population density and person-to-person contact we reduce the likelihood that COVID-19 will spread.

We need to prepare for the use of this model knowing that the best case scenario is that we never need to implement it. The other scenarios are:

- 1) That we adopt the model for a short period of time while a BES parent, student or family is being tested and/or in isolation; or
- 2) School is closed for a significant period of time as a result of a confirmed case (or cases) in the BES community.

However, the preparation for the use of this model will take planning, coordination and time. Therefore, Barnstead Elementary School will be closed next Monday and Tuesday and reopening on Wednesday.

More information will be forthcoming as it is available.

Brian Cochrane

Superintendent of Schools