

NEW BRIGHTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

3225 43rd Street • New Brighton, PA 15066-2697 [724] 843-1795 • [724] 843-6144 Fax • www.nbasd.org

August 19, 2020

Dear New Brighton Area School District Families,

During the last few weeks we have continued to monitor the local health data, requirements from the PA Department of Health (PADOH) and PA Department of Education (PDE), as well as the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While the local health data has shown some improvement, the requirements in which schools must operate are proving to be a significant and even insurmountable challenge. Since we began this journey on March 13, 2020 we have faced the many obstacles the Coronavirus presented head-on, embracing flexibility, and pivoting our services and planning to keep the safety our community paramount. Our efforts to communicate with families in a transparent, honest, and open way, has always included the caveat that our return to school plans must remain fluid.

I am writing today to let you know that we must again shift and pivot to ensure the best educational model possible for our students, by adjusting our plans and I am recommending that we open school in a fully Virtual Model. Our students will begin school on Tuesday, September 8, 2020. We plan to bring students into school in small groups to receive their devices, learn how to use them, and engage with their teachers. This will occur in small groups and details will be released in the next few days. Please monitor the Coronavirus page of our website for additional details.

There are a number of reasons why we must change our reopening plans. Within the past week the PDE and PADOH issued guidance on school attendance that requires anyone, students or staff, showing any symptoms of Covid-19 (cough, fever, congestion, etc.) to remain home for ten (10) days or until a negative test is produced. This guidance is clearly to protect the health and safety of school communities, but it is impossible for us to plan for the number of absences we may have every day as we all know that coughs and sniffles run rampant through schools. Additionally, on Monday afternoon, the PDE released new requirements regarding facial coverings. The changes in the requirements are as follows:

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.*

These changes mean that it is no longer acceptable for us to socially distance desks and allow students or staff to remove masks. All students and staff would be required to wear their masks for the duration of the day, except for meals or short mask breaks. We recognize and value the role that masks play in the mitigation of this virus and we know that our children are resilient and could wear masks, but we are also clear on the amount of time that teachers would have to spend helping kids with masks, asking them to put them back on, and missing out on the facial expressions and connections those expressions bring. We feel strongly that moving to an all

NEW BRIGHTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

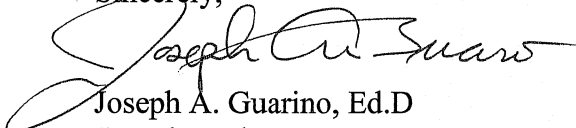
3225 43rd Street • New Brighton, PA 15066-2697 (724) 843-1795 • (724) 843-6144 Fax • www.nbasd.org

virtual learning model will provide the safest and most educationally rigorous environment for all of our students and staff. This model will include learning that provides periods of live connections, live instruction, video-based learning, and the online platform Schoology that serves as the digital locker for all classes, assignments, and learning.

As a parent, I know all too well that Covid-19 has caused stress, frustration, and uncertainty for all of us and today's announcement may add to those feelings. When I came to you in the first video in our series, I shared the story of Duncan and his crayons and expressed that just as Duncan was building a new home for his crayons, we too were building a new school for your children and our model would serve to welcome them back in a sound educational setting. I believe that today's announcement of full virtual continues to drive home that same message. While it is a change from the initial plan, I am confident that we are building a new school in a virtual setting for your children that will provide them rich opportunities to learn from their teachers and with their classmates. They will grow and learn and flourish. It will not be what any of us are used to, but it will be an educational model that supports children, educates them, and protects them until we can find the calm waters on the other side of this journey.

Once again, thank you for your support and patience. Please monitor the Coronavirus page of our website for additional updates, in particular we will provide an update to the School Calendar and a presentation outlining more details of a Virtual model. We expect to post our presentation on August 22, 2020.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Guarino, Ed.D
Superintendent