



November 20, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians of the Rumson School District,

With the recent rise in transmission rates, I hope this finds all of you and yours well before the holiday. I apologize in advance as this is a long letter, but an important one as well. Since I last wrote, we have seen a marked change in quarantine numbers within the District and our community. Currently, we have over 100 students, 15 staff members, three classrooms, one bus on quarantine, and several positive cases in our community. Additionally, the data is conclusive: the majority of these quarantines have resulted from the following actions being taken outside the schools:

- Non-essential travel
- Exposure of parents to COVID-positive individuals at large gatherings
- Exposure of individuals to others who are supposed to be in quarantine but are not
- Exposure of students to COVID-positive individuals at athletic activities
- Exposure of students to COVID-positive individuals during indoor playdates

**These numbers have not diminished the staff, administration, or board's commitment to in-school instruction.** It has, however, laid bare two primary roadblocks to quality in-person instruction during the pandemic:

- 1) **Not being conservative enough with our "at home" screening process.** Clearly, there are and have been examples of children feeling fine at the start of the day and then showing symptoms as the morning has worn on. But if you have to think about how to answer any of the screening questions in the Genesis COVID-Screener - **either the symptoms or exposure sections** - please keep your student(s) home for the day. It is comforting that if a whole class needs to go virtual - while undesirable - at least the whole class can stay in rhythm for those two weeks. But this unnecessarily moves us away from the in-school experience that we know our community desires.
- 2) **The expectations of self-imposed quarantine.** In some ways, this is the more problematic issue that faces our district. For the purposes of this letter, I am going to define self-imposed quarantine as one that results from a decision any of us make that is contrary to the guidelines set forth by the school and the NJ Department of Education; the classic example is family travel to a quarantined state. When you return, we need you to abide by the state's quarantine rules. And, at the same time, we need you to understand and accept that the student experience in those situations will likely be diminished. In short, **we simply do not have the infrastructure or the resources to operate in a dual system that supports in-class instruction coupled with high levels of quarantined students at home.**

We need everyone to consider the activities taken outside of school that threaten to shut us down. There is only so much effort and time your children's teachers, administrators, and support staff can put into holding instruction together before a sense that those efforts are not supported by greater community action and they begin to break down. We will continuously refresh our operations and policies to ensure our students remain in-person, but we need our parents to partner with us to make it work. **Please help us.**

In that vein, we will be taking the following measures together as a community. While we may each, individually, not be happy with certain measures we must all, together, as a community commit to them. This commitment is one that will help us stay on course for long-term in-person instruction, something we all agree is in the best interest of our students' academic, social, and emotional well-being.

1. **Thanksgiving Schedule:** With the advent of college students returning home for the holiday, impending travel, and visits with or from family members, the risk for the transmission of coronavirus will increase in the days over Thanksgiving Break. These conditions will impose a greater need for the quarantining of students and staff, putting pressure on our ability to run an effective in-person instructional program. In addition, with concern for exposure increasing many are opting for their children to stay home next week to ensure individuals are not impacted during the holiday. As a result, our schedule will be as follows:

**Monday, November 23rd - Wednesday, November 25th AND Monday, November 30th - Friday, December 4th will be full virtual instruction.** On Monday students will follow a Day 0 schedule and the remainder of the week students will follow their in-person schedule virtually. More information will be coming from your child's principal and teachers.

**Beginning Monday, December 7th, students will attend school in-person five days a week on a 1:00pm dismissal schedule.** We will follow this Monday-Friday in-person schedule moving forward from this point.

I know this pause in our in-person schedule may feel like a setback to some, but the administration, faculty & staff, Board of Education, and majority of families in our community look at this pause as necessary to curb the patterns of symptoms and exposures so we may return to an in-person program that is more consistent for all.

2. **Genesis COVID-Screener:** When you complete your daily screener, please read the two new questions that have been added in response to quarantining needs in the district and stay home if you check either off.
  - a. Someone in your household is being tested for COVID-19 or is awaiting COVID-19 test results.
  - b. You have traveled to a Level 2 or 3 risk area outside the country linked here. [TRAVEL TO OTHER COUNTRIES](#)

Per above, please take time to carefully consider the symptom list and ALWAYS err on the side of caution if your child shows any signs of illness. Keeping your child home until they are free of any signs of illness for 24 hours, without the use of medication, is always the best decision.

3. **Quarantined Instruction:** Our faculty is exploring and piloting a few different protocols we want to consider putting in place for those students who are on quarantine. After Thanksgiving

Break, we will announce these protocols for implementation on our return December 7th. Please understand these will be utilized for students who are quarantined by the district and do not apply to those days missed by students deemed “self-quarantined” absences mentioned above.

#### **4. FACTS About Quarantining**

- a. When on quarantine from school, it is imperative that students also quarantine from all other activities with other individuals. Doing so will prevent the possible transmission of the virus and the possible shutdown of classrooms, buses, schools, and outside programs.
- b. You cannot test out of quarantine. Once placed on quarantine, you must fulfill it. The virus is contagious for the full quarantine time; exposing others prior to the quarantine ends puts others at risk of contracting the virus.
- c. If members of the household show symptoms or are being tested for COVID-19, please keep your child home until symptoms subside for 24 hours without medication or until test results come back. If symptoms do not subside or positive results come back, keeping your child home may have possibly prevented the transmission to others.

I acknowledge this letter is decidedly candid. My intention is to relay: 1) just how concerned I am that the momentum we have inside our building may be overwhelmed by the fatigue of COVID everyone feels beyond these school walls and 2) equally, how confident we are that we can get through this pandemic with a commitment to long-term in-person instruction. We need you to help us realize our potential by heeding what has been said in this letter and urging fellow community members to do the same. This is the support we have always seen from our community, and these actions will make a difference in our children's access to their education.

Sincerely,

Dr. John E. Bormann  
Superintendent of the Borough of Rumson School District