



BUNKER HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

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"Bulldog...It's more than our mascot; it's our character"

*Michael J. D'Ostilio
Principal*

*Gregory Muscelli, Ed.D.
Assistant Principal*

November 24, 2020

Dear Bulldog Families and Staff:

As positive cases of COVID-19 continue to escalate across the country, we at Bunker Hill are experiencing some increase in cases as well. We have entered a new phase in New Jersey, which requires a more regimented protocol of contact tracing.

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) frequently releases a COVID-19 activity report and uses the color-coding system of green, yellow, orange, or red. Last week, Gloucester County hit orange status. Red is the highest risk ("very high" status). Orange is a step below at "high" risk. While in Orange, this means organizations have to quarantine close contacts of presumptive positive cases as well as close contacts of actual positive cases. We have already been doing this for the most part, but this is an upgrade of the activity

Coincidentally, we have had a small number of individuals report that they feel they have symptoms in accordance with the COVID-19 chart of symptoms. Because of the orange status, these individuals are no longer categorized as having symptoms but "presumptive positive", meaning we are forced to assume that they might be positive. Therefore, not only do individuals who are "presumptive positive" have to quarantine but their close contacts do as well. Also, because many of these cases were reported to us on Saturday, November 21, 2020 when symptoms began, we have to be diligent because they could have been infectious on Thursday, November 19, 2020 and Friday, November 20, 2020 while in Bunker Hill. That is what necessitates this letter to you.

A couple of reminders:

- An individual is considered a close contact if they are 6 feet or less from an individual for a cumulative time of 15 minutes or more.
- There is a difference between a "close contact" and "a contact of a contact." A **close contact** is what is considered above. Whereas a **contact of a contact** is someone who was in contact with someone who happens to be a close contact of someone else. In this case "contacts of a contact" have no direct exposure and have no need to quarantine according to health department or CDC standards

Unfortunately, we received word today that one of our individuals who was "presumptive positive" category above obtained a positive test result. We are confident that with our contact tracing over the last four days we have notified and quarantined all the close contacts of that individual. It is also helpful that we have not been in person with school since November 20, 2020 which greatly reduces anyone's exposure.

Bunker Hill and district officials were informed of the positive test around 1:15 pm today. While the individual has not been in the building since Friday, November 20, 2020, the positive test notification today necessitates that BHMS act swiftly to ensure the safety of students and staff. We continue to closely monitor this individual and the close contacts of this individual. We are also closely monitoring other individuals with "presumptive positive" symptoms who may be symptomatic but unrelated to this known positive case.

Just as before, and as is the process, the school is coordinating closely with public health officials and following CDC, state, and local health department guidance in order to ensure the health and safety of our community. We are unable to provide any information about the individual who has tested positive because that would violate the person's right to privacy about their health. We have also continued to routinely clean and disinfect all areas of the school, including the exposed areas. As you know, the school is also taking precautions to prevent the introduction and spread of viruses and other germs on a daily basis.

Any students, teachers, or other members of the school community who are considered close contacts of the person who tested positive for COVID-19 have already or will be contacted.

As before, **if you are not contacted with additional information, you and/or your child(ren) are not required or advised to do anything additional beyond the health and safety measures you are already taking.**

We understand the level of concern regarding COVID-19. We encourage parents and students to continue following the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention promoted safeguards, such as:

- Staying home when you are sick
- Washing hands often with soap for at least 20 seconds
- Covering coughs and sneezes and properly disposing of tissues
- Limiting close contact with people who are sick and not sharing food, drinks, and utensils
- Practicing social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart)
- Wearing a face covering while in school
- Continuing to monitor your health for symptoms

The status of this situation is fluid, and we are monitoring it closely. If we learn of any additional steps from the health department, we will let you know immediately. If another positive case surfaces we will be sure to inform you immediately.

As always, we appreciate the support and cooperation of the BHMS community. You can assist us by remaining vigilant but sensible in your approach to dealing with this health concern. Should you have any questions about this situation, please feel free to contact the school at 856-881-7007. With all of this activity and uncertainty, I hope you all have an opportunity to have a restful Thanksgiving. It will for sure be different, but whatever safe "bubble" you have maintained through this pandemic, please make the most of that time together.

Sincerely,



Mike D'Ostilio
Principal