

BARNWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT 19

Blackville-Hilda Public Schools

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David W. Corder, Interim Superintendent

August 24, 2021

Dear Parents:

I know that many of you are concerned and anxious about the recent outbreak of COVID-19 in our schools. Please know that the district and school administrations take the outbreak seriously and that the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff are our top priority. The schools are following the guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the State Department of Education.

Although we have a number of students and staff who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or are under quarantine, we are not at the point of going virtual or closing the schools. Per the South Carolina Department of Education : " Districts/schools (except virtual charters) are not permitted to offer only virtual instruction unless the district/school can no longer safely operate and provide face to face instruction due to staffing shortages resulting from COVID-19 or similar infectious disease. Should staffing shortages exist and the school/district feels it cannot safely offer face-to-face instruction; the school/district should contact the regional DHEC office and allow public health officials to assess the situation and provide a recommendation on operations. Should DHEC or a similar public health provider make a strong recommendation that the school/district move temporarily to a virtual only mode of instruction based on positive cases, quarantines, and relevant public health data, the school/district is permitted to move temporarily to a virtual mode of instruction. The decision making should be handled on a school by school basis rather than district wide unless the staffing shortages exist district wide and district wide closure is recommended by public health officials. The school/district must move back to face-to-face instruction as soon as staff becomes available. The school/district should also notify the SCDE prior to announcement of the move to temporary virtual only instruction." If one of our schools reach the point in which we cannot provide instruction safely, we certainly reach out to DHEC for guidance.

I am urging our school community to help us as we battle this pandemic. Although state law forbids us to mandate students or staff to wear masks in school, please encourage your children to wear masks at school, in the store, or anywhere they may possibly be exposed. If parents or students are eligible to be vaccinated, please do so. Where the vaccination may not protect a person 100% from getting the virus, research suggest that symptoms are less severe in people who have been vaccinated. Finally, if your child is exhibiting symptoms, please keep them at home and contact our school nurses, Ms. Hair at Macedonia Elementary School or Ms. Ford at Blackville-Hilda High School. They will advise you regarding quarantines and testing. The schools will provide your child with assignments so they can keep up with their work while they are under quarantine.

Blackville-Hilda has always been a community of great faith. We will get through this together. If you should ever need my assistance, please call me at 284-5608.

Sincerely,

David W. Corder
Interim Superintendent

Mission

The mission of Barnwell District 19 is to engage, empower, and establish each student to achieve academic excellence and meet the goals of college and career readiness.