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November 16, 2020-- Updated

Dear Families,

Thank you for your continued support and patience during this crazy school year. We know that hybrid instruction is challenging for families and the school. We do appreciate the partnership that we have built to support each other and keep our students in school, even if we only see our students on a limited basis.

As you have undoubtedly heard, positive COVID-19 cases are on the rise in Allegany County. The good news is that positive cases in schools have been limited to date. However, the increased number of positive cases in the area could result in Allegany County being identified as a micro-cluster hotspot. If this happens, schools will be required to implement COVID-19 tests to continue in-person instruction.

The NYS Department of Health updated guidance for schools on Saturday, November 14 to the following requirements:

Effective the week of November 16, 2020, schools in yellow zones must test 20% of in-person students, faculty and staff over the two-week period immediately following the announcement of a yellow zone designation. If the results of the testing reveal that the positivity rate among the 20% of those tested is lower than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, testing at that school will no longer be required to continue. A positivity rate in a school that is lower than in the yellow zone is a sufficient demonstration that in-person instruction is not a significant driver of local viral spread. The current positivity rate for zones can be found at, <https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-county-dashboard>.

However, if the results of the testing over the first two weeks reveal that the positivity rate among in-person student, staff and faculty is higher than the Yellow Zone's current 7-day positivity rate, the school will be required to continue to test 20% of the in-person population on a bi-weekly basis.

If Allegany County is identified as a micro-cluster hotspot, Belfast Central will be working with the Allegany County Department of Health, Medical Transport Service (MTS), and the Belfast Ambulance Squad to implement any required testing requirements in the District. Testing in schools will be rapid COVID tests, which are minimally invasive and results are available within 15 minutes of the test. (Tests will only be conducted if a color designation is made by New York State.)

In order for the District to coordinate any testing requirement, we will need your consent to administer the tests. I completely understand hesitation with COVID-19 testing; however, if our area is identified as a micro-cluster zone, testing will be the only way we can keep our doors open. Students who are selected for testing must have a completed permission slip on file to be tested.

I am sending out this information for families to think about before any declarations are made by the state. If Allegany County is designated a micro-cluster zone, I will send out another letter and a consent form for our families.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Butler Ed.D.  
Superintendent