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To the Berlin Central School District families:

Due to the high number of absences resulting from various factors including COVID-19 Quarantine, medical appointments, etc. the District has explored additional alternative ways to provide instruction for your children. One way that we have found that will support the tutoring that our teachers are performing is a program called *iTutor*. We have researched several programs and believe that this one will be most suitable for our students.

Why this tutoring is important:

Firstly, your children's education has been through a series of disruptions related to COVID-19, from complete remote learning in the Spring of 2020, to Hybrid learning for the majority of 2020-21, to the continued need for quarantine that has persisted throughout the 2021-22 school year. Secondly, we identified a need to support parents and students in relation to medically excused absences; i.e. doctor appointments, dentist appointments, counseling, etc. We understand the challenges that arise when one has to bring their child to a medical appointment in Troy or Bennington, East Greenbush or Albany. Our geography, though beautiful and filled with character, is difficult to travel to and from quickly, and as a result many of our students miss full days when these appointments take place.

To address the challenges associated with these medically excused absences, we began to collect doctor's notes in 2018-19, and we were able to provide tutoring through PM School (if you had Middle High students at that time then you may recall this program). If your child receives tutoring for that medically excused absence, then the absence essentially goes away.

Attendance is extremely important at this time both for the learning of your children, and also because BMHS is an identified school for the category of Chronic Absenteeism, and we do not want the State Education Department to identify us again and thereby assert undue influence over our programs and our schools.

How tutoring will work:

While we do have teachers supporting student learning through quarantine tutoring, the volume of need far exceeds the capacity to provide. As a solution to offset some of the capacity concerns, the District has contracted with a company called *iTutor*. This company provides live instruction in a

one to one scenario on an electronic format, such as Zoom. This is a live certified NYS teacher working directly with your student in one or two hour intervals, depending on your child's grade level. These tutors will use our curriculum, and our teachers' assignments to help ensure your child remains engaged and in receipt of the best education we can provide.

If your child needs to receive tutoring, then you will receive an email directly from the *iTutor* company seeking to set up the proper time for such tutoring to occur. Please respond to these emails (they are not spam), in order to establish the best time with them directly. Oftentimes these sessions can take place in the evening or during weekends. iTutor will then inform the District that the student's tutoring needs have been met, and we will work to amend your child's attendance record to reflect the reclaimed absence.

The hope behind the effort:

With all this effort we hope to achieve three things:

1. We hope that the tutoring will help your students to continue to make progress against the learning loss they may have suffered as a result of COVID-19 school disruptions.
2. We hope to be able to reclaim attendance for your children so their attendance records reflect good data, which is important for their future success (and will look good on college and job applications as they get into the upper grades of school).
3. We hope to be able to rise above the accountability that we have been stuck in since the school closures in March. For those who may not know, we need to show growth over two consecutive years in order to become "unidentified". We made growth in 2018-19 and were making good growth in 2019-20, but with the cancellation of State Assessments in the Spring of 2020 and the Spring of 2021, we were unable to prove this progress to the State Education Department, and therefore have remained on their identified list of schools in the State. Our hope is that we get back to good standing status following the next round of State Assessments, but our attendance rate also has to show improvement, or else it will not matter how we do on the tests, in terms of getting identified.

As always, we provide this information to families in an effort to continue our long tradition of partnership between the school and the community. We are all in this together!

If you have questions regarding *iTutor* please feel free to reach out to the BCSD Curriculum, Instructions and Assessment office.

Sincerely,

Fred Hutchinson
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