

Joshua R. Meyer *Superintendent of Schools*

September 16, 2020

Boquet Valley Central School District Families:

I have received several emails and seen some social media posts inquiring about our decision to proceed with the fall sports season. I thought that a letter to the community might answer many of these questions.

New York State Public High School Athletic Association, our state-wide governing body for all of our athletics, The Mountain Valley Athletics Council, and Section VII have all announced their support/approval for a fall season. While I have several concerns surrounding the health and safety of our student/athletes, I do believe that there is a way to have a fall season and keep everyone safe. Participation on any of our athletic teams is always optional. Some student/athletes may choose not to participate this season. We will be supportive of any decision that any student/athlete makes in regards to their participation.

We have decided to proceed with Boys and Girls Soccer and Cross-Country for the Fall 2020 Season starting with practices on September 21st. These athletes will need 10 practices prior to playing any games. If we had waited until October 5th to start practices, there would be no realistic way to get any kind of "season" in before it got too cold to play. This is in compliance with the NYSPHSAA guidance. A clarification to make is that we did not "close". We opened with a full-remote model. We made this decision specifically because of cases at the Essex Center and the concern of how this may quickly spread into our community, not because of cases in our schools or in our district. The decision to select the full-remote model for 5 weeks was not a health and safety decision, but rather an instructional decision. This was widely communicated at the time of the decision. Lastly, we chose this. No outside organization (NYSED, NYSDOH, Essex County Health Department, etc.) made the decision for us. For all of these reasons, we have the ability to start on September 21st.

The next question that I have been asked is "How is it safe for athletes to practice yet not safe for in-person instruction" I want to emphasize that the decision to select the full-remote model for 5 weeks was an instructional decision. Our health and safety experts would tell you that two weeks is an appropriate time from a health and safety perspective. The additional three weeks had to do with allowing our students and teachers the time to get comfortable and excel with the remote instruction model. I would also like to point out that the practices that will be happening will be entirely outside, masks will be worn, and everyone will be appropriately distanced. The square footage of a soccer field per student/athlete is significantly more than that of a classroom. While only running practices, BVCS D does not have to worry about transportation, like we do with in-person instruction. The point being that it is not a fair comparison between an outdoor practice with appropriate safety precautions, and the health and safety concerns that come with indoor, in-person learning.

This season will be unlike any other. There is no state or regional play. There are no sectional championships. There may not be any opponents. No games have been scheduled yet. Games will be scheduled only after players and coaches demonstrate their ability to safely comply with the appropriate health and safety requirements, including wearing a mask while practicing and playing. Transportation to games will rely heavily on parents. Once all the student/athletes and coaches can demonstrate that they can practice successfully while abiding by all the appropriate guidelines, and parents have agreed to assist with transportation, we will schedule a game. If it is successful, we will look at scheduling more. If it is not, we may or may not continue with practices for the rest of the season. If the appropriate guidelines are not followed, the season will be immediately cancelled.

We are at the stage where we need to try things. We need to see what works and what doesn't. What can be improved upon and what needs to wait until we have a better understanding of COVID or better preventative solutions. I am sure,

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that like so many other things over the past several months, some of you will consider this to be unsafe, others will consider it appropriate, and other will think that we should have started sooner. I want to assure you that we are trying to provide opportunities for our students while keeping them healthy and safe. If at any point we lose confidence in the health or safety of any activity or event, it will stop.

I appreciate those that have reached out directly. I hope that this letter has answered your questions. If you continue to have athletic questions, please contact Paul Buehler. If you have academic question, please contact the appropriate building principal. If you have other questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Joshua R. Meyer