



Binghamton City School District

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October 8, 2020

Dear BCSD Families:

On Tuesday of this week, Governor Andrew Cuomo identified a section of Broome County as a Yellow Zone, and a large portion of the zone includes the City of Binghamton. As seen on the illustration on the second page, each of our 10 BCSD schools fall within the Yellow Zone. The number of active positive cases in Broome County have continued to increase throughout the past several days, more than doubling from 193 active cases last Wednesday, Sept. 30, to reaching an all-time high of 586 active cases today. As a Yellow Zone, our density of active cases is less than other zones across the state, but the identification by the state is intended to prevent a more significant outbreak. We are the first and currently, the only, cluster in upstate New York to receive such a designation, and as such, are entering uncharted territory.

As a Yellow Zone, the state does not require schools to close, but it does require schools to participate in COVID-19 testing of employees and students who are present for in-person instruction. Governor Cuomo indicated in a press conference earlier this week that testing of randomly selected employees and students will occur. However, until specific guidance is issued, the requirement remains unclear. Guidance is anticipated to be released by the end of the day on Friday, October 9th. We anticipate that the County will then have a week to determine a plan to be used and testing will need to be implemented no later than Friday, Oct. 16.

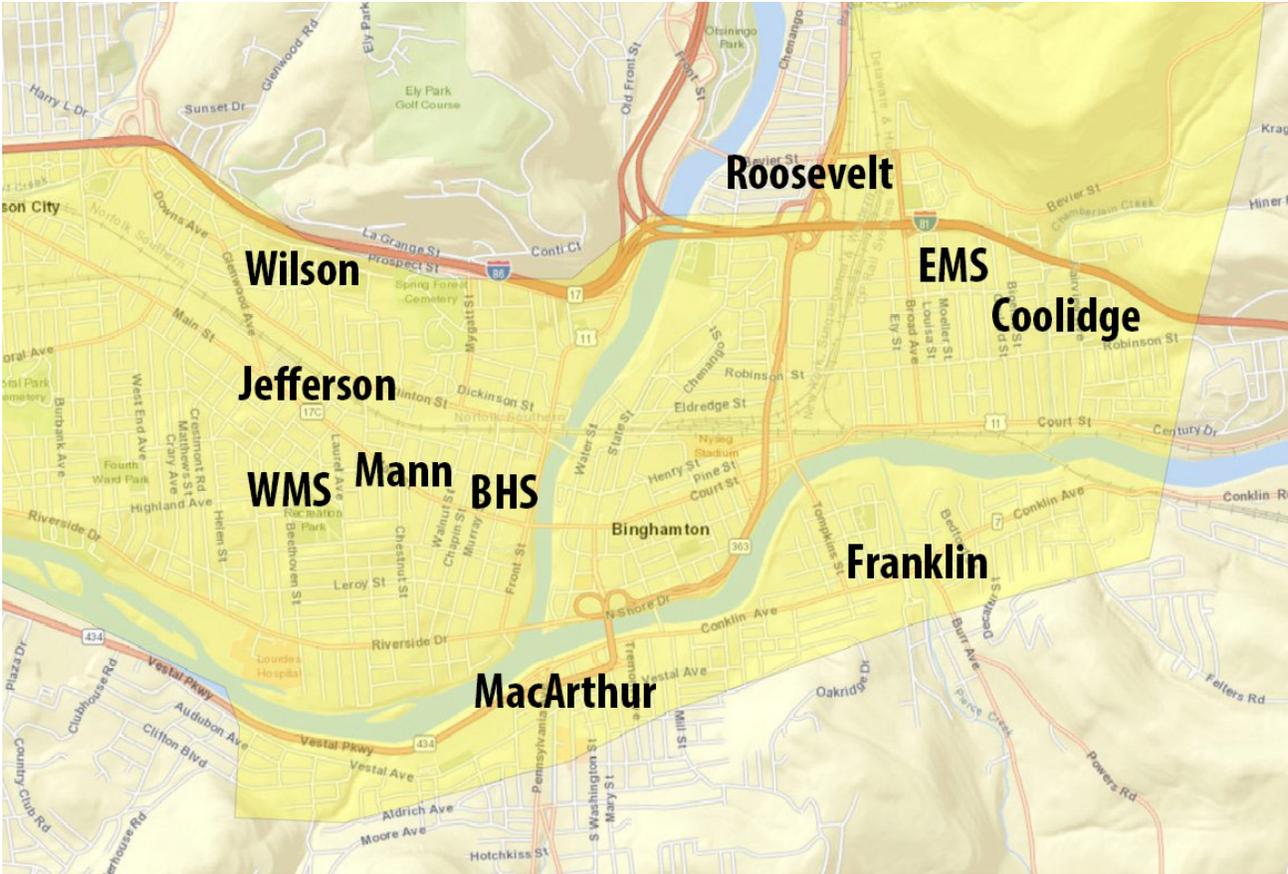
The state has not yet provided details regarding the mechanism for testing, who will conduct the tests, the percentage of each school's population that will be tested each week, how a test sample might be conducted, and steps to be taken after weekly testing is completed, among others questions that are being raised regarding testing. Additionally, it is not clear what data is being used to distinguish between zone designations, or what is required to get out of the yellow zone. More importantly, the data currently is indicating that the number of cases in the zone remains high and has not yet demonstrated a downward trend. The lack of clear, timely information from the state has been mutually unsatisfying for school districts.

In consultation with the Broome County Executive's Office and Broome County Health Department, and due to having schools in the designated Yellow Zone and the continued high number of active cases, the Binghamton City School District will delay in-person instruction until Monday, October 26. This aligns with the 14 day change to state ordinances for other public and private groups in the Yellow Zone that will go into effect this evening. Our priority since the onset of this pandemic has been the safety and health of our school community. And, we want them in our schools, where they belong. Although we are incredibly disappointed not to have our students back in the classroom, where they belong, it would not be responsible to bring all students back into our buildings in light of the current numbers and the multiple unknowns surrounding the new requirement of COVID-19 testing. We thank you for your patience, understanding, caution, and we will remain committed to keeping you informed as we learn more about these new guidelines and how they will impact our schools.

With Patriot Pride,

Tonia Thompson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Broome County Yellow Zone:



Educating, empowering and challenging all students to become productive, global citizens through innovative approaches to learning.