



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

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Inspiring and Preparing Today's Learners to Embrace Tomorrow's Challenges

October 4, 2021

Dear Bellefonte Area School District Parents, Families, Staff and Community:

Happy Monday! It's so hard to believe that we are halfway through the first marking period. Homecoming is this week for the high school and district. This is such a special school district with our current awesome students, but I'd also like to recognize all of the outstanding alumni we have at Bellefonte Area School District and welcome back any who may be visiting.

Before I explain the new case notifications from the weekend, I need to apologize for a mistake that I made in the chart on Friday's update email. The new case counts were accurate for all schools. However, I accurately listed 3 new student cases for Bellefonte Elementary and indicated that 0 students were in school while infectious. This was incorrect and I inadvertently made a mistake on the chart.. Two of the students indeed were not in school while infectious, but one student was in school for one day while infectious. The process, contact tracing and reporting at Bellefonte Elementary were completely correct. Contact tracing was completed on Thursday and parents of students who were identified as close contacts were notified. I am not part of the actual contact tracing, quarantining, or official reporting process. I keep my own notes which were accurate. I just missed it when I was completing the right hand part of the chart. I am sorry for any confusion.

BASD Case Count Update

Since my letter and report on Friday, October 1, 2021, we received notification and confirmation of 4 new positive covid19 cases in our district.

The new cases are as follows:

- Early Friday evening, we received notification that a Pleasant Gap Elementary staff member tested positive for covid19. And, then last evening, we received notification that another PGE staff member tested positive. Dr. Besch reported that there were no students who were identified as close contacts for either case at the time of this writing.

- Yesterday, we were notified that a middle school student tested positive over the weekend. The student was in school while infectious last week. Dr. Garman and Dr. Eckenroth completed contact tracing yesterday and parents of students who were close contacts were notified. Three students were required to quarantine for this case.
- Yesterday, we received notification that a staff member who travels between a few schools tested positive. We were working on contact tracing late into last evening and it was not completed at the time of this writing. If there are students who are identified as close contacts, parents will be notified today. The staff member is not assigned entirely to a specific building, so I listed the person with Central Office in the summary.

Here is a summary of the new, confirmed cases in the chart form since Friday, Oct. 1st.

Building	Total number of known, confirmed, new cases since 10/1	*Since 10/1, the number of new cases - students/staff that were physically present in the building while infectious
High School	0	0
Middle School	1 (student)	1
Bellefonte Elem.	0	0
Benner Elem.	0	0
Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	2 (staff members)	2
BeLA	0	0
Central Office	1 (staff member)	1

The PA State Press Conference held on Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021

Last week, the state held a joint Press Conference with the PA Secretary of Transportation, Alison Beam, the PA Dept. of Health Secretary, and Noe Ortega, the Secretary of Education from the PA Department of Education. During the Press Conference, the following subjects were discussed, and my notes about each in our district:

- School bus driver shortage in PA - The PA Department of Transportation will be taking measures to increase the number of school bus drivers to address the statewide shortage. Right now, we are OK in the Bellefonte Area SD. We have just enough drivers for our

buses, but the shortage could be a concern for us at some point, too. By the way, our bus drivers do an amazing job driving our students to school and home every day. Big shout out to our bus and van drivers!

- Covid vaccine for children ages 5-11 - As reported nationally, a vaccine for children may be available in several weeks
- Covid testing program for K-12 schools - I mentioned this in last week's letter. At the Press Conference, Secretary Beam of the PA DoH reported that only 400 schools in PA are utilizing this program. That's 400 schools of the many thousands that are in PA, not districts. As I mentioned, there seems to be a lot of logistics to be figured out, and a lot of questions remain unanswered about the program.
- Contact Tracing - According to Secretary Nortega (PDE), school districts "will receive important updates to the contact tracing protocols for schools" early this week. .
- School Masking Order update - Secretary Beam indicated that "the PA DoH will provide another update on masking in early November."

Other Reminders

Parents should continue to notify building principals if their child(ren) tests positive for the coronavirus as soon as possible, so that we can provide information for parents and we can stay on top of any contact tracing that may need to occur. The best way to get in touch with the building principal in the evenings, on the weekends or off times is via email, as our principals check email regularly even during the evening hours and on weekends. The quick notifications really have helped our administrators to act quickly to begin contact tracing and to lessen the spread of the disease over the past 12 months. And, again, students and staff who are experiencing symptoms, not feeling well or may have been a close contact to a person who tested positive should stay home. We are hearing from some parents who have children who tested positive that there is a wide range of symptoms for this Delta variant, including the classic symptoms (fever, loss of taste/smell, cough, headache,), but some have experienced a sore throat, vomiting or sinus congestion, too.

On a personal note, I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you for your patience, understanding and support throughout these difficult times. I truly appreciate it. I hope you and your family stay safe, healthy and well! Best wishes for a fabulous week ahead!

Sincerely,

Tammie Burnaford

Superintendent

Bellefonte Area School District