



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

Bellefonte Area School District

**318 North Allegheny Street
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Telephone: (814) 355-4814**

**Mrs. Tammie L. Burnaford, Superintendent
Mr. Kenneth G. Bean, Jr., CMA, Director of Fiscal Affairs**

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

April 12, 2021

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

Happy Monday! While we have fewer new coronavirus cases this week and many of them do not count by PDE standards in our district, Centre County, and our specific zip codes for the district (16823 and 16841), continue to see an uptick in cases. With the Easter holiday and the easing of restrictions, the number of cases in our district could rise even farther. We are still urging parents to keep students home if they are exhibiting covid-like symptoms or if they may have been exposed to a positive case of the coronavirus. We need to be vigilant in our safe practices in order to curb the spread of the virus.

BASD Case Count Update

Since my letter and report on Tuesday, April 6th, we received notification of 5 new cases in our district, as follows:

- A student at Benner Elementary School tested positive for the coronavirus early last week. The student was not in school while infectious, so the case does not count by PDE guidelines. No contact tracing needed.
- A student at Bellefonte Elementary School tested positive for the coronavirus early last week. But, the student had not been in school for more than 10 days and not in school while infectious. The case does not count by PDE guidelines, and no contact tracing.
- The rest of the new, known district cases involve 3 high school students. To the best of our knowledge, here's what we know, as of today:
 - ❑ 1 high school student tested positive for the coronavirus late last week. The student was in school while infectious, and the case does count by PDE guidelines. Mrs. Michaels and Mr. Fedisson received the notification late yesterday and began contract tracing immediately. Some parents of students who may have been close contacts to this student were notified, but they may still need to get in touch with a few this morning.

- ❑ 2 unrelated, high school students tested positive for the coronavirus, but were not in school while infectious. The cases do not count by PDE guidelines, and no contact tracing was necessary..

Just to refresh your memory, per the PA Department of Education (PDE) mandates, we must keep track of the number of active cases in each district school based on a 14 day rolling calendar. Cases count in the rolling 14 day calendar only if the student/staff member was physically present in the building while infectious. Active cases move in and out of the 14 day window based on the date of symptom onset or a positive case. The case counts and surrounding circumstances are discussed with the PA Department of Health (DoH) after each new case is identified, and we are given recommendations about possible closures, if needed. The PDE guidelines for closures changed last week and include shorter lengths of closures if closures are recommended by the PA DoH. As we have done all year, we will continue to follow the guidance of the PA DoH when new cases arise.

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 4/6	*Since 4/6, the number of new cases that do “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious
High School	3 (all students)	1
Middle School	0	0
Bellefonte Elem.	1 (student)	0
Benner Elem.	1 (student)	0
Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	0	0
BeLA	0	0

In Other News, Looking to the Future

When Dr. Saylor, our former Superintendent, retired last year, I was the Assistant Superintendent for the district. At that time, the Board put the search for a new Superintendent on hold and asked me to serve as the Interim Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent position was not filled this past year, so with lots of help from the building Principals, I served in both positions. Now that I have been so fortunate to become the Superintendent full time, the Board recently supported hiring a Director of Curriculum and Instruction who will assume the same duties as an Assistant Superintendent.

As a brief recent history, BASD has had a period of time with leaders who had each of those titles - Assistant Superintendent or Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Most recently, as mentioned, I was the Assistant Superintendent; and before me, Dr. Michelle Saylor was the Assistant Superintendent when Dr. Cheryl Potteiger was the Superintendent. Before that, Dr. Cathy Brachbill was the Director of Curriculum and Instruction while Dr. J. Thomas Masullo was the Superintendent. Basically, the titles sound very different, but the duties and responsibilities of two positions are the same.

At the Board meeting on March 23, 2021, the School Board appointed Dr. Kristopher Vancas as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the district. Dr. Vancas has been the Principal at Benner Elementary School for the past 9 years and was recognized as the Principal of the Year for all of Pennsylvania about 2 years ago. I have had the pleasure of working with Kris for many years, and I'm so excited to see how much he will bring to the district in this new role.

Like everyone, I'm very anxious to return to some sort of "normal." However, when I think of all of the amazing things we've accomplished as a school community over the past year, as challenging as it was, I can't help but be so very excited to move to the next phase when we will continue to try to provide the best education possible for each and every one of our students. The sky's the limit when we work together, and our future is incredibly bright!

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 7 months.

Of course, the PDE mandates, the DoH directives, increases in new cases or unforeseen issues can happen rapidly, and we may need to change our plans at a moment's notice. The uptick in cases is concerning. If closures must occur, all other school-related activities and athletic events will be postponed, as well, during any closure. If any of this latest information changes or our status must change, we will let you know as soon as possible.

Again, we are urging everyone in our school community to continue to follow the guidelines and practices that can help lessen the spread of the virus. This includes washing hands frequently, wearing masks, social distancing and practicing personal responsibility. Now, as much as ever, we need to keep up the great work in order to keep our students, staff and community safe and healthy. Please use good judgement and practice safety at all times, so that we can return to normal.

I hope you and your family stays safe, healthy and well! Best wishes for a fabulous week ahead!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District