



## **Bellefonte Area School District**

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**Mrs. Tammie L. Burnaford, Superintendent**  
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*Inspiring and Preparing Today's Learners to Embrace Tomorrow's Challenges*

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**April 23, 2021**

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

Happy Friday! I am sending this letter to give a quick update for the covid cases in the district. As I have been mentioning, we have seen a significant uptick in positive cases of the coronavirus in our zip codes and district, particularly over the past three weeks. Since Monday, we were notified of 16 new coronavirus cases (14 students, 2 staff members) in our district.

### **BASD Case Count Update**

As a recap, since my letter and report on Monday, April 19, we received notification of 16 new cases in our district, as follows:

- Two staff members at Bellefonte Elementary School tested positive for the coronavirus this week. Preliminary information indicated that one of the staff members was present in school while infectious while the other was not. As of now, one case counts by PDE guidelines. There were no identified close contacts with this staff member. We are awaiting more information on the other staff member who tested positive.
- We received notification that five more Benner Elementary students tested positive over the past week. Four of those students have not been in school while infectious, so their cases do not count by PDE guidelines, and no contact tracing was needed. Another student who tested positive was in school since last week and present in school while infectious. That case does count by PDE guidelines. Most of these new Benner cases are connected or related to the earlier cases at Benner and have been quarantined for more than a week.
- The rest of the new, known district cases involve 9 High School students. We have received notification of the following cases since Monday:

- Seven of the positive cases involve students who were physically present while infectious. The cases did count according to the PDE guidelines. Mr. Fedisson and Mrs. Michaels informed parents of the students who may have been close contacts throughout this week.
- Two students who tested positive were not physically present while infectious and did not count by PDE guidelines.

Many of these cases are connected or related. But, the number of cases that count reached the thresholds for closure. The PA DoH required us to close the High School building, and to cancel all athletic activities and extracurricular activities for 5 days. High School students engaged in remote learning from Wednesday until today (3 of the 5 days). The High School and grounds will be closed tomorrow and Sunday, as well (2 of the 5 days). I'd like to note that we have never reached the number of cases required for the longest PDE closure this entire year. If we had been living under the old PDE guidelines, we would have been closed for 14 days. However, in the newest mandates, we were required to close for 5 days.

In the mandates from PDE, the "clock" for the 14 day, rolling calendar of active cases resets after a closure. Barring any complications, the High School will return to in-person learning on Monday, April 26. But, we absolutely must be vigilant in safe practices - wearing masks, avoiding large gatherings, social and physical distancing, washing hands frequently or using hand sanitizer - if we want to remain in school and have the activities and events that are planned.

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.

<b>Building</b>	<b>Total number of known, new cases since 4/19</b>	<b>*Since 4/19, the number of new cases that do “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious</b>
High School	9 (all students)	7 (but the calendar resets after a closure)
Middle School	0	0
Bellefonte Elem.	2(staff members)	1
Benner Elem.	5 (students)	1
Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	0	0
BeLA	0	0

**If you are interested..**

Brian Griffith, the Superintendent of the Penns Valley Area School District, sent me the following information today:

This Monday, April 26, 2021, Centre Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM) will hold a first dose, appointment-only Pfizer vaccination clinic at State College High School. If you or someone you know who is 16 or older is interested please have them sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/cvim1stdosecovidvaccination>.

From my understanding, only the Pfizer vaccine is available to students 16 or older. Persons wanting the Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson vaccines must be 18 years or older. According to the pharmacist that we have been working with, there seems to be a growing abundance of vaccine doses. If you or someone you know is interested in getting the vaccine, more information about locations and availability are available on the PA DoH website. I’m not

encouraging or discouraging the vaccine. It's a very personal choice. I'm just offering information if anyone is interested.

### **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 and finish our last 5 and a half weeks of school this year safely together.

I hope you and your family stays safe, healthy and well! I hope you have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,  
Tammie Burnaford  
Superintendent  
Bellefonte Area School District