



Nov. 20, 2020

Dear Bellefonte Area School District families, staff and community:

With the surge of cases across our area, the state and the nation and the changing status of many school districts around us, I just want to provide a brief update of our status. I have spoken to or received information from the superintendents of our county districts over the past few days and today. Specifically, as of today at 1:00, this is the status of the surrounding school districts:

- Penns Valley moved to full, remote teaching/learning earlier this week. They are hoping to resume in-person instruction on Dec. 1st. Penns Valley had a rise in cases and a shortage of substitute teachers and staff members.
- Wingate Elementary School in the Bald Eagle Area School District moved to full, remote teaching earlier this week. Today, the entire Bald Eagle Area district moved to full, remote learning for just Monday and Tuesday next week. They are hoping to resume in-person instruction on Dec. 1st. Bald Eagle was experiencing staffing shortages due to a significant number of staff members who are quarantining. Bald Eagle also has a significant number of students who are quarantined, particularly at the high school.
- State College Area School District is planning to remain in the schools this Monday and Tuesday, but then move to full, remote learning for 2 weeks beginning on Dec. 1st. They are hoping to return to in-person learning on Dec. 14th.
- The Central PA Institute (CPI) is moving to full, remote teaching/learning for Monday and Tuesday next week. This is due to a rise in cases today. They are planning to return to in-person learning on Dec. 1st.

This leads to our status at BASD. We have the 2 active cases that I shared in Monday's letter - a middle school student and a high school student. Today, we were notified of a new, positive case in a middle school student. This student has been quarantining because a family member tested positive and has not been in school for many days. No contact tracing or quarantining at the middle school was necessary. This means we currently have only 3 known, active cases in our schools in the Bellefonte Area School District. Like the other local school districts, we are facing a shortage of substitute teachers and staff members. These shortages are due to our employees needing to quarantine because they have been in close contact with someone who tested positive *outside* our schools. And, we have staff members who live in other districts and have no child care if their own children's schools are closed. Additionally,

we still have no known transmissions of the virus *within* our schools, between students and/or staff while in the schools. As I have said before, I believe this is a testament to the diligence of our students, staff and parents in following all safety precautions. As a side note, there is also a growing body of evidence from health organizations that schools can be safer places to be if safety protocols are followed while in school. Working together, we have done an excellent job keeping our students and staff safe!

At this point in time, at approximately 2:30 PM today, we are going to try to keep all of our Bellefonte schools open for as long as we can.. Of course, this status could change at a moment's notice if we have a significant rise in cases and/or quarantines within our schools, or we do not have enough staff members to provide an in-person education in our schools, or another government entity (the Governor, the PA Department of Health, the PA Department of Education, etc.) tells us that we are required to move to a full, remote teaching/learning model. We will let you know as soon as we possibly can if our status changes.

The PA DOH issued new mandates this week regarding masks and travel. We will be updating our BASD Health and Safety Plan to include the new mandates. The building principals will be sending out some information as well. And, I'll touch base about these new mandates in my next Monday letter, as well as provide any updated information that I have. These are certainly very difficult and challenging times in our world. We appreciate all of your understanding and patience as we try to navigate through each day. Thank you for all you do! I hope you have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District