



## Happy Friday!

Another outstanding week in the Bellefonte Area School District! As promised, I'll be providing covid information weekly in a brief email on Fridays. I'd also like to explain the recent CDC covid ratings for Centre County for inquiring minds.

## Covid Case Counts

Since last Friday (5/13), we have received notifications of 23 new covid cases in the district. These new cases involve 13 High School students, 2 Marion-Walker Elementary students, 4 High School staff members, 2 Middle School staff members, 1 Bellefonte Elementary staff member and 1 Benner Elementary Staff member. Note that some of these cases are related to each other (ex: students may be siblings or staff member and child who both test positive)

As a reminder, the rules for contact tracing/quarantine were changed for schools by the PA Department of Education (PDE) and the PA Department of Health (PA DoH) several weeks ago. We are still required to report new cases to the PDE/PA DoH, but we are no longer required to report the number of close contacts/quarantines.

## A Description of the CDC Covid Designations

Early on, the CDC began issuing **covid transmission rates** for communities. The CDC's community transmission levels are calculated using data for the number of new cases per 100,000 people and the percentage of positive tests, both over the last seven days. If you recall, the PA DoH used this data and similar data to determine if a county was in the low, high, substantial rate of transmission. This is the data and the designations that were reported most often during the pandemic.

Many weeks ago, the CDC began issuing a revised covid data report for **community levels**. The community levels are determined weekly using three data sets — new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 people in the past seven days, new cases per 100,000 in the past seven days and percent of available COVID hospital beds occupied. This is what I have been including in my weekly emails for about 2 months.

So, as of today, Centre County is designated as having a high covid transmission rate using the previous metrics. But, according to yesterday's CDC report of community level, Centre County is designated as

having a “low” community level rate again this week. This may sound like it doesn’t make sense. Both reports consider the number of cases per 100,000 people (by the way, if you are wondering, the CDC indicates that there are about 162,000 people living in Centre County). However, the threshold for the number of new cases is different for each one. But, additionally, each CDC designation takes into account different statistics. For example, the covid transmission rate takes into account the percentage of positive tests. But, the community level takes into account the number of hospitalizations and the percent of occupied hospital beds. This is why Centre County is both in the high level of transmission and in the low community level right now. Regardless of the CDC designation for the county, we have seen an uptick in cases within the district over the past few weeks.

As mentioned, we are still required to report school cases to the PA DoH/PD until June 10th, so I will keep sending these covid updates for the remainder of the school year which is only about 2½ weeks (12 student days!). Barring any breaking news, I’ll send my next update on Friday next week. Please note there is no school for students next Friday, May 27th. As always, thank you so very much for your continued support, patience and understanding! I hope you have a wonderful weekend!

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