



**Bellefonte Area  
School District**

## **Bellefonte Area School District**

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

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

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**September 21, 2020**

### **Dear Bellefonte Area School District Families:**

Today is day 18 of our school year! As of this writing, there are still no known positive COVID-19 cases in our BASD schools. One reason we have been able to keep our schools open and our students and staff safe is due to the support we have received from students, staff, parents and families in following safe practices, such as wearing masks and social distancing. We encourage everyone in our school community to continue to follow the guidelines and practices that can lessen the spread of the virus. Working together is essential, and we are so proud of what we have done together. Thank you!

As an update, the number of cases in Centre County continues to climb. Undoubtedly, Centre County will be designated as having a “substantial community transmission rate” later today. Last week, the PA Department of Health announced that a free COVID-19 testing site will be established at the Nittany Mall. More information can be found in this press release: <https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Health-Details.aspx?newsid=1027>

The number of new positive cases in our two main BASD zip codes is holding steady. During the latest reporting period (Friday, Sept. 11 - Thursday, Sept. 18), there were a total of 9 new positive cases attributed to the 16823(+7) and 16841 (+2) zip codes. This is up 1 case from the last reporting period. As a reminder, these two zip codes also span two other school districts, so the actual cases may not have been in our communities. The data is not broken down by specific municipalities. As of this writing, but before our next meeting with the PA Department of Education and the PA DOH, we are not planning to move to full remote learning at this time. We will continue to closely monitor the data and our schools. Of course, changes can come rapidly and are sometimes out of our control. If any of this latest information changes or our status must change, we will let you know as soon as possible.

In last week's letter, I shared the answer to the question "How will we know if there's a positive case in our child's class or school?" In short, a general district letter will be sent to parents/guardians as soon as possible. Due to confidentiality and health privacy laws, as a district, we won't be able to provide specific information to parents/guardians about student/staff health concerns. More information about Responding to a COVID-19 case can be found on the PDE website at the following link:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/PublicHealthGuidance/Pages/SchoolClosureRecommendations.aspx>

To elaborate on the "what if" more, **if** we do have an outbreak, we will follow the recommendations of the PA Department of Health (PA DOH). The PA DOH will do all the contact tracing and notifications and provide guidance about potential closure of classrooms, schools or districts. This could mean that we may need to move to full remote or virtual instruction in one or more of our schools based on the guidance. It's very important for parents and families to understand that full, virtual learning under the present conditions will not look anything like it did last spring. We are in such a better place educationally than we were in the spring. Our teachers have received and participated in a lot of training for virtual teaching over the past 5 months. They have practiced basic online skills with students in the classroom over the past 18 days and continue to do so. Instruction and teaching will be daily in a new remote learning setting. Students will have their Chromebooks immediately, and we will work to make sure students have materials they may need. We have the devices and plans in place for the hardware for teaching and learning remotely, and we have teachers that are far better prepared. If we have to go to full remote learning in one or more of our schools, we may still face challenges, but we have support in place and ready to go when we hit some of those bumps. We will work closely with parents/guardians to do what's best for our students.

We've heard from many parents about how challenging a school closure might be. For now, we intend to stay our course until we need to take additional steps to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Please know we are doing everything we can to first keep our students and staff safe, and secondly to provide the best education possible, which is full time, in-person learning for most of our students. We are deeply appreciative of the willingness to work with us -- the patience, the understanding and the support of every parent and guardian in our district. We will continue to work as one amazing school community for our awesome students!

Sincerely,  
Tammie Burnaford  
Interim Superintendent  
Bellefonte Area School District