



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

Bellefonte Area School District

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

Oct. 26, 2020

Dear Bellefonte Area School District Families, Staff and Community:

Happy Monday! It's hard to believe that the end of the first nine weeks is this Wednesday! As challenging as it has been, our staff has worked hard to provide the best education possible, and our students have been simply awesome for the first 45 days of school!

First, I'd like to share some information about another positive case that was identified in our school district. Yesterday, we received confirmation that a high school student tested positive for the coronavirus. We are working again with the Department of Health (DOH) in our plans and will follow the Dept. of Health recommendations. The high school principals identified and contacted parents of students who may have been in close contact with this case by last evening. The DOH will also reach out to those individuals and will provide further guidance.

We know that it seems like we have had several cases in the high school and district. However, as we track cases, we must keep in mind the time frames of those cases. The DOH considers the number of active cases over a 14 day period. For us, this case is our sixth overall in the district. The first two cases were identified on Oct. 8 and the third case was identified a few days later. This means, the first three cases were identified more than 14 days ago and are no longer active. The quarantines for those cases ended last week. The next two cases will be inactive and the quarantines will end for those cases at the end of this week. As of this writing this morning, we have just three, known, active cases in the district, and hopefully two of those cases will be over by the end of the week. As mentioned in a previous letter, we have not had any known transmissions of the virus between our own student and staff populations. The virus has made its way in from the outside organizations to this point in time.

With all of this being said, there has been a significant increase in the number of positive cases in the 16823 over the past few days. In the past seven day, DOH, reporting period (Friday, Oct. 16 - Thursday, Oct. 22), the number of new positive cases in the 16823 zip code was 15. This was down from 24 new cases during the prior reporting period. But, on just Friday, Oct. 23 and Saturday, Oct. 24, the DOH reported 16 new cases in the 16823 zip code on those two days alone. It's very hard to tell where these cases are in our community. But, we do know that there is a significant outbreak in the nursing and personal care homes in Centre County (i.e. over 31 reported in a two-day period this week), and we have been told there has been an outbreak in the prisons and other local establishments or businesses. We have three nursing/personal care homes and three jails/prisons in the 16823 zip code. The DOH will not identify where the cases are specifically in our community, so it's so difficult to know exactly what the impact is. 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 terms of the county level data, the number of positive cases in Centre County is lower again during this reporting period. Centre County is no longer leading the state in positive cases per 100,000 or positivity rate. In fact, there are now at least 11 counties in Pennsylvania that will be determined to have a "substantial rate of community transmission," and Centre County is closer to the moderate phase than many of the other counties. On a state and national level, there seems to be more testing and a surge in positive cases in recent days and weeks.

Now, as much as ever, we need to work together to keep the virus out of our schools and to keep our students, staff and community safe. Our students and staff have been and are very vigilant in following all of the safety protocols we have in place (masks, social distancing, hand washing, cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting, etc.) in our schools. We need parents to continue to be supportive in keeping their students home when they are sick and reporting their concerns to the building principals as soon as possible. We encourage 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 and practicing personal responsibility. We need to keep up the great work in order to keep our students, staff and community safe and healthy, even if the number of new cases rises in our zip code. As of now, we are not planning to move to full remote learning in any of our schools yet or at this time, but we cannot let our guard down in any way.

Again, I know I do say it enough to truly reflect my heartfelt gratitude. Thank you so much for your patience, kindness, understanding and support and for all you do for our students, staff and community on a daily basis!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District