



**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*

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**September 14, 2020**

**Dear Bellefonte Area School District Families:**

We've made it to our first full, five-day week of school! We can't thank you enough for all of the support you have given us. The students have been simply awesome!

Over the past week or so, there have been some rumors floating around about possible, positive COVID cases in our BASD schools. Again, as of today, there are no known, positive COVID cases for our students or staff in our schools. As I mentioned in a previous letter, we have been asked, "How will we know if there's a positive case in our child's class or school?" by many parents. The PA Department of Health (PA DOH) will work with administrators to gather information, do contact tracing, make necessary notifications to parents and our staff, and provide recommendations to schools and districts, if a case or outbreak occurs. 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. A general district letter will be sent to parents/guardians. The PA Department of Education (PDE) website includes more information about Responding to a COVID-19 case, at the following link:

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

If an outbreak occurs in a classroom, school or district, we may need to move to full remote or virtual instruction. The PA DOH will provide guidance and recommendations, if this should occur.

As described in last week's letter, the other reason we may be forced to change our instructional model in our schools involves the Centre County community transmission rate. More information and details about the designations can be found on the PDE or PA

DOH websites. However, in short, if the rate for a county reaches the "substantial" level using the metrics provided by the PA Dept. of Health, then the PA Dept. of Education (PDE) and the PA Dept of Health (PA DOH) will meet with all of the county superintendents to provide recommendations or suggestions, which could include remaining in our current Blended Learning Instructional model or moving to a full remote learning model. Last Tuesday, Centre County, as expected, was designated as having a "substantial rate of community transmission" during the week prior to Tuesday. As such, the Centre County superintendents met with persons from PDE and the PA DOH twice last week to discuss the designation and increasing numbers. The numbers of new cases for this week have more than doubled to what they were in the prior week. Undoubtedly, Centre County will be designated as having a second week of "substantial rate of transmission" later today, and it is anticipated that PDE and the PA DOH will call another meeting today to discuss the skyrocketing numbers for Centre County.

Similar to the information in last week's letter, nearly all of the new cases continue to be in the University Park or State College areas. There have been few new cases in the 16823 (+5 new cases) or 16841 (+3 new cases) zip codes during the latest reporting period. These two zip codes are the main two zip codes for our communities and even these zip codes stretch from our district into two other school districts. The data is not broken down by municipality, but it is evident that we have not had a significant increase in new cases within our Bellefonte area communities over the past seven days or prior. As of this writing, but before our next meeting with PDE 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, I will let you know as soon as possible.

I've heard from many parents about how challenging a school closure might be. 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