



**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

March 15, 2021

Dear Bellefonte Area School District Parents, Families, Staff and Community:

Happy Monday! This letter includes a brief case count update and a summary of cases in the district over the past year. I'd like to note, first, that we have had an uptick in cases within our families and slight increase in our schools over the past week. Although the number of new cases have trended downward, we are not out of the woods yet. We can't let our guard down. As we know, the disease is spread easily and rapidly. Centre County is still in the substantial rate of transmission according to the PA Department of Health (PA DoH). We still could be forced to close schools if we have an outbreak as required by PDE and the PA DoH. This could curtail any and all school activities, as well. Please continue to follow all safe practices. We worked together so well and have had an absolutely marvelous school year, thus far. Let's keep up the good work!

BASD Case Count Update

Since my letter and report on Monday, March 8, we received notification of four new cases in our schools. Last week, we received notification that a high school student tested positive for the coronavirus. The student was not physically present while infectious, so there was no contact tracing to be done. This case does not count in the PDE guidelines. Additionally, we were notified that a staff member that normally works in multiple schools tested positive last week. But, the staff member also was not present while infectious in any of the 3 schools that he/she normally visits. If he/she had been in school while infectious, the case would have counted against all schools that he/she visited. Also, no contact tracing needed for this case. Finally, this weekend we received notification of two high school students who tested positive. These students were present in school while infectious, so the cases do count according to PDE guidelines. Mr. Fedisson and Mrs. Michaels worked on the contact tracing this

weekend, and most parents of students who may have been close contacts, were contacted yesterday, but they are following up on a few this morning.

Just to refresh your memory, per the PA Department of Education (PDE) mandates, we must keep track of the number of active cases in each district school based on a 14 day rolling calendar. Cases count in the rolling 14 day calendar only if the student/staff member was physically present in the building while infectious. Active cases move in and out of the 14 day window based on the date of symptom onset or a positive case. The case counts and surrounding circumstances are discussed with the PA Department of Health (DoH) after each new case is identified, and we are given recommendations about possible closures, if needed.

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 3/8	*Since 3/8, the number of new cases that do “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious
High School	3 (students)	2
Middle School	0	0
Bellefonte Elem.	1 (staff member that may travel to 2 other buildings)	0
Benner Elem.	0	0
Marion-Walker Elem.	1 (staff member that may travel to 2 other buildings)	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	1 (staff member that may travel to 2 other buildings)	0
BeLA	0	0

A Year of Covid Cases in Review

As we reached the one year mark for the pandemic, I'd like to share some statistics from our district. Due to the closure last spring and the summer vacation, there was no data for the number of positive cases in the district at that time. If you recall, we were tasked with keeping track of cases when we began school last fall. Here is some cumulative data since the fall until today:

- We received notification of our first two positive cases in the district during the evening of Oct. 8, 2020. These unrelated cases involved a high school student and a middle school staff member.
- Since Oct. 8, 2020, there have been 108 known, positive cases of the coronavirus in our students. These cases involved students in all of our schools and BeLA. The 108 positive student cases represents about 4.6% of our total student body in the district.
- Since Oct. 8, 2020, there have been 24 known, positive cases of the coronavirus in our staff members. These cases involved staff members in all of our schools, BeLA and our district offices. The 24 positive staff cases represents about 5.8% of our total staff in the district.
- Undoubtedly, we have had hundreds of students and dozens of staff members who have been quarantined due to being close contacts with someone who tested positive for the virus. There is no easy way to gather this data. However, we do know these quarantines have been a result of close contacts in and out of school, and some were voluntary during the holiday seasons and at the peak of new cases. The willingness of parents, staff and students to stay home when sick, or exposed, or voluntarily contributed greatly to the lack of spread of the disease in our schools.
- To date, we still have no known transmission of the disease within our schools or buildings. All known cases have been connected to an outside the school exposure, most often with a family member, a close friend or as a result of a gathering.

Other Reminders

Parents should continue to notify building principals if their child(ren) tests positive for the coronavirus. The best way to get in touch with the building principal in the evenings, on the weekends or off times is via email, as our principals check email regularly even during the evening hours and on weekends. The quick notifications really have helped our administrators to act quickly to begin contact tracing and to lessen the spread of the disease.

Of course, the PDE mandates, the DoH directives, increases in new cases or unforeseen issues can happen rapidly, and we may need to change our plans at a moment's notice. If any of this latest information changes or our status must change, we will let you know as soon as

possible. Unless we have any major news, outbreaks or changes that need to be shared immediately, I will send a weekly update letter with case counts and other information next Monday.

Again, 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, social distancing and practicing personal responsibility. Now, as much as ever, we need to keep up the great work in order to keep our students, staff and community safe and healthy. Please use good judgement and practice safety at all times, so that we can return to normal.

I hope you and your family stays safe, healthy and well! Best wishes for a fabulous week ahead!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District

P.S. I have been blessed to be able to drop the word “interim” from my title. If you haven’t heard, at the School Board meeting last week, the Board offered me a 3 year contract to be the Superintendent of our awesome school district. I am so very honored and humbled to be part of this most amazing school community. I can’t wait to actually meet more of our parents, families and students as soon as our world becomes safer from the virus. And, I really can’t wait to see how much more we can do when we work together to do the best for our students!