



**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 19, 2021

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

Good evening! I want to provide an update regarding the uptick in cases in the district. As I mentioned in my letter on Monday, we began seeing more cases in our schools than we had seen for many weeks last weekend. There seems to be a surge in our schools, particularly at the high school, this week.

First, I'd like to share the positive case count update for our district. If you recall, in Monday's letter, I shared that we had learned of two new positive cases (both students) at the high school last weekend and that both of those cases counted by PDE guidelines. Since my letter on Monday, we received notification of 8 new cases (all students) in the district, as follows:

- One student at Pleasant Gap Elementary School tested positive for the coronavirus. The student was in school while infectious, so the case does count by PDE guidelines. All parents of students who may have been close contacts were notified on Monday.
- One middle school student tested positive for the coronavirus. The student was in school while infectious, so the case does count by PDE guidelines. All parents of students who may have been close contacts were notified on Monday.
- Six high school students tested positive for the coronavirus. Of these six new cases since Monday, three count by PDE guidelines because the students were present while infectious. Parents of students who may have been close contacts have been contacted this week. Three cases do not count because the students were not present while infectious.

Interestingly, there doesn't seem to be any clear connection between all of these new cases in the past week. There may be some, but we don't have a clear picture of the connections.

We do know that many of these cases are linked to a parent or family member who had tested positive.

This brings the active case count at the high school to five. We haven't had this many active cases since December. But, if you recall, PDE and the PA Dept of Health issued mandates and orders back in November about the number of active cases in schools. At this point in time, the High School, a "medium sized building" on the PDE mandate chart, has 5 cases and must close for 3-5 days. We worked with the PA DoH today and will abide by the recommendations of the PA DoH. The High School will be deep cleaned, as always, and closed completely tomorrow and Sunday. We will have a remote learning day for high school students only on Monday, March 22, 2021. High School teachers will be teaching virtually and will be available all day long virtually. High School students should follow their schedules and logon into each of their classes each day. Teachers may reach out to students with more information through Google Classroom. Barring any more issues, the High School will return to in-person learning on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. If this plan requires any changes, I will let parents/families know as soon as possible.

Here's our updated chart of all known cases in the district since I last reported on Monday:

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 3/15	*Since 3/15, the number of new cases that do "count" - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious
High School	6 (students) - 3 "count" and 3 do not "count"	3 (reminder - 2 others were reported in the letter on 3/15)
Middle School	1	1
Bellefonte Elem.	0	0
Benner Elem.	0	0

Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	1	1
BeLA	0	0

I know this is an inconvenience for parents, and unfortunately, things can change on a moment's notice. We have worked together so well to get us to this time. As I've said before, the support of parents and our working together for the health and safety of our students and staff has been absolutely incredible. We will continue to work tirelessly for our students, parents, staff and community.

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 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, even as the number of positive cases surge.

I'll send my usual letter on Monday morning this week. I'll try to be brief, but those who know me best, think that's nearly impossible for me (lol).

Best wishes for a marvelous weekend!

Sincerely,

Tammie Burnaford
Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District