



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

Bellefonte Area School District

**318 North Allegheny Street
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Telephone: (814) 355-4814**

**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

Dec. 1, 2020

Dear Bellefonte Area School District families, staff and community:

Welcome to December! The weather for the next few days looks wintery. Perhaps, the weather will start to play a part in delays and closures, too. Those decisions are also difficult, but I'll try to give as much notice as possible for weather-related events, as well. For now, let's stick with COVID updates. I'm going to try to organize these letters a little better, so parents and staff can find information more quickly.

BASD Positive COVID-19 Cases

As explained in my email yesterday, there are still 5 active cases at the High School (4 students, 1 staff) at the High School and 1 new positive case (student) at Pleasant Gap Elementary School. Most, if not all, of the quarantines for these cases will conclude by next Tuesday. The Middle School previously had 2 presumed or possible positive cases (1 student, 1 staff) prior to the break, but neither required any contact tracing because the persons hadn't been in school. We did not get notification right away, but I just wanted to mention them here, in full disclosure. However, last evening, we were notified of 2 other new positive cases (students) at the Middle School. Parents of students who need to quarantine for these two new cases were contacted by principals and administrators today. All of these quarantines are expected to conclude by next Thursday. There are currently no known, confirmed positive cases for students or staff in any of the other schools.

What I Learned from PDE

If you recall, last week, the PA Department of Education (PDE) issued mandates regarding how our schools may operate. The Superintendent and School Board president of nearly every district in the state were required to sign and submit an Attestation Form in order to provide any in-person instruction, in full or in any district schools. In the new orders and according to the Attestation form, all school districts are required to follow the PDE chart, Recommendations for Schools Following Identification of Positive Case(s) of COVID-19. More information about this can be found on PDE's website. I had the opportunity to speak to a man from PDE yesterday, and he clarified many of the questions that we had regarding the chart. He helped with the interpretation of numbers, length of closures and more. I later got written correspondence that confirmed how we should follow that chart. The man from PDE was very helpful, and I'm pleased to say that he provided support in how we are handling new cases in our district. He commended all of us for following the safety protocols and keeping our students as safe as possible while providing the best education possible. Of course, I shared that it really has been a wholehearted effort from everyone in our district -- students, parents, families, staff, administrators and community.

Speaking of Community

As anticipated, the numbers of new, positive cases for Centre County and our zip codes continued to surge over the latest reporting period. We are still aware that many of the cases in our 16823 zip code have arisen at the nursing homes and prisons. As reported by the administration at Centre Crest, the DOH and the Centre County Coroner, the epidemic and loss of life at Centre Crest, in particular, has been heartbreaking. Centre Crest is part of our town, too, and many of our residents may have relatives or loved ones at Centre Crest. I'd just like to express my sincere thoughts and prayers for anyone who has been impacted by COVID-19 at Centre Crest or any of the other facilities with outbreaks.

Thus far, we haven't had any spread within our schools, and we will continue to mitigate any spread as best we can. We have faced this pandemic as one district and community united, and we have done an amazing job together. This is a testament to our safety protocols being strictly followed, and students and staff staying home when they are sick or have been a close contact to someone who tested positive. And, now with the holidays, parents are opting to have their children learn virtually this week and beyond, if they have concerns about potential exposure or travel or any concerns at all about the spread in our schools. Parents may choose remote/virtual learning for their students for the remainder of the month, if they'd like (just send a note or email to your child's principal or attendance secretary). Thank you so very much for all of your patience, understanding, consideration and support!

Current Status of our Schools

For now, the high school will remain in full, remote learning this week. We are tentatively planning to resume in-person learning at the High School on Dec. 7.

For now, the middle school will continue with in-person learning. However, if we get 1-2 more, new cases at the middle school over the next week or so, we may need to consider moving to remote learning for a period of time.

For now, all four elementary schools will continue with in-person learning.

Of course, any of this could change on a moment's notice. If so, I will send information as soon as I possibly can.

Moving forward

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. As part of the new DOH and PDE orders, we need to remind everyone and reinforce wearing masks properly with all, including our students. If parents can help with this, it is greatly appreciated! 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!

Best wishes for a safe and healthy week!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District