



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

Bellefonte Area School District

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Inspiring and Preparing Today's Learners to Embrace Tomorrow's Challenges

Feb. 19, 2021

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

Happy Friday! What a wild weather week we've had! The calls were so difficult because the forecasts were not consistent. I sincerely appreciate your understanding during the difficult weather times. I know that altering schedules can put a lot of stress on parents and families, and I'm sorry. I go on the information I have at the time and just try to air on the side of caution in order to keep our students and staff as safe as possible.

With all of the craziness this week, I didn't send a covid case update letter, so I'd like to provide an update today. I'd also like to briefly discuss "what if" we run out of Flexible Instructional Days.

BASD Case Count Update

Since my letter and last report on Friday, Feb. 12, we were notified of only 2 new, positive cases in the district; two unrelated students at the middle school contracted the virus outside the school setting. The students were both physically present for a short period of time while infectious last week. The parents of students who may have been close contacts were contacted last weekend. These cases do count according to PDE mandates, but one of them will be off the rolling 14 day calendar by Monday.

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. With only the two known, new cases since Friday, this is today’s summary for each school in the district

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 2/12	*Since 2/12, the number of cases that do “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious
High School	0	0
Middle School	2	2 - however 1 of these cases will be off the calendar and not count by Monday)
Bellefonte Elem.	0	0
Benner Elem.	0	0
Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	0	0
BeLA	0	0

Just saying...

Last Friday, the CDC released guidance for reopening schools. We already have implemented the recommendations for the past 7 months. And, we have been doing an outstanding job, working together as one school community to do so! Even though the case counts seem to be dropping in our local zip codes and across the state, we need to continue to be vigilant about following all of our safety protocols.

The next hurdle with the weather

As of today, we have used 4 of our 5 PDE allotted, Flexible Instructional Days. We have one left and will use it if we are forced into another weather-related closure. If we have any additional cancellation(s) after we use our final FID, we will have 3 options, all of which have some downsides, as follows:

1. We take a snow day and make up the day in one of two ways:
 - a. We could alter the built-in vacation days around the Easter holiday and have in-person school on one of those days - Thursday, April 1 or Monday, April 5. If the students go on Thursday, the Act 80 Day would be moved to Monday (students would be off on April 5). The district calendar would need to be revised.
 - b. We could add any make up days on to the end of the school year in June. The longer we go in June, the more likely the hot weather would impact 2 of our elementary schools.
2. We use Remote Learning Days on the day that school is cancelled. We can use Remote Learning Days as long as the pandemic continues. However, Remote Learning Days have different PDE rules and requirements. Instruction would have to be synchronous. Students would have to be logged on to their classes and follow their daily schedule. We may be able to work through some complications with this if we have to go this route.

Nothing has been decided yet. So much will depend on timing, and we may need to be flexible. I just wanted to let you know that we have options and are thinking ahead in case we run out of FIDs. I'll let you know the train of thought if we use our last FID. Here's hoping the weather breaks and we have no more closures!

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 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 an update letter with case counts and other information on Friday, again this week.

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.

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

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District