



**Bellefonte Area
School District**

Bellefonte Area School District

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

Jan. 25, 2021

Dear Bellefonte Area School District families, staff and community:

Happy Monday! I hope you and your family had a wonderful weekend! This update will be shorter with only weather-related information and a case count update.

The Weather and tomorrow

First let's talk about the potential storm that is approaching our region. I know I said that I like to give parents as much advance notice as possible, but there is still uncertainty around this storm system in terms of timing and anticipated type of precipitation. I'm fairly sure that we may have some weather-related issues tomorrow morning, but it's just a little too soon to make a final determination and call it tonight. For example, if I had to guess, the forecast sounds like we may have a 2 hour delay. However, if we have a lot of snow/ice that impacts travel later into the morning or the storm sticks around, we may need to close schools tomorrow. I know these days put parents in a bind with short notice, but it's too difficult to know exactly what will happen with this particular storm.

At any rate, the county superintendents and others are planning a conference call very early tomorrow morning. If we do have a delay or cancel, I will send a call out early in the morning before 6:00 AM, so arrangements can be made for those needing an early alert. If we cancel school tomorrow, we will use one of our Flexible Instructional Days (more information in yesterday's letter).

BASD Case Count Update

Since my letter and report on Friday, Jan. 22, we were notified of 6 new, positive cases in the district, as follows:

- On Saturday, we received notification that 2 different, high school students tested positive for the coronavirus. One of the students was not in school for more than a week, so that case did not count according to PDE standards, and there was no contact tracing to be done. The other high school case involved a student who was in school very briefly last week, so that case does count by PDE standards. Mr. Fedisson and Mrs. Michaels notified all parents of students who may have been a close contact to the latter case on Saturday.
- And, connected to one of the high school cases is a relative who is a student at Benner Elementary School. This student was “presumed” positive, and Mr. Vancas notified parents of students who may have been close contacts to this Benner Elementary case over the weekend. This case counts by PDE standards.
- On Sunday, we received notification of a staff member at Bellefonte Area Middle School who tested positive for the coronavirus. There were no students who were identified as close contacts to the staff member, so there was no contact tracing needed. However, the staff member was physically present in the school while infectious, so the case does count according to PDE mandates.
- Today we received notification that a student at Pleasant Gap Elementary School tested positive for the coronavirus. However, this student was not physically present in school while infectious, so no contact tracing was needed, and the case does not count according to PDE guidelines.
- Finally, in full disclosure, a staff member in administration offices tested positive for the coronavirus. This staff member was not physically present in any of the schools or the administrative offices while infectious.

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. This is our current summary since Friday for each school in the district (please note: the chart shows only the new cases since Friday, the counts are not cumulative over time).

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 1/22	*Number of cases that now “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious since last reported on 1/22
High School	2 (students)	1
Middle School	1 (staff)	1
Bellefonte Elem.	0	0
Benner Elem.	1 (presumed, student)	1
Marion-Walker Elem.	0	0
Pleasant Gap Elem.	1	0
BeLA	0	0

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 week ahead!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District