



**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*

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**Jan. 29, 2021**

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

Happy Friday! I want to start by apologizing for the confusion that arose out of the closure this past Tuesday and to thank you for your patience and understanding. Over the past 10 months, we've learned so much about how important it is to try to plan for every aspect of education in our schools. We try to think of every implication we can for every idea, problem and solution. Unfortunately, I didn't do that on Tuesday. I did share lots of information about what a Flexible Instructional Day is as compared to a Remote Learning Day because I know the whole idea is confusing. Then, on Tuesday, we called a 2 hour delay which evolved into a school closure. I did not think ahead of the confusion that may be caused by that change. In addition, I had forgotten to make arrangements to have the closures posted on the website and social media, so no information at all was posted on those places. I'm sorry. Throughout this pandemic and on Tuesday, I've learned a lot, too. I continue to learn and strive to do better. In the words of the great Karen Krisch, our district Pandemic Coordinator and the principal at Marion-Walker Elementary School, "when you know better, then you do better." I will.

I also have some good news to share about the counts for the new, known cases of coronavirus in our district since Monday. And, I'll end with some information about what happens on Sunday and Monday if...

### **The Weather on Tuesday and Flexible Instructional Days**

The decision about schools on Tuesday was very difficult given the ever-changing, weather forecasts we were getting Monday night and on Tuesday morning. The conflicting and changing forecasts caused the group of Centre County superintendents to take it one step at a time. In the end, we made the right decision, but it did cause confusion with the Flexible Instructional Days.

I think the key is to remember that Flexible Instructional Days are not like Remote Learning Days. Flexible Instructional Days are for very short periods of time, like a day or two at a time, and we can only have up to 5 per year. Remote Learning Days are for total, online, virtual teaching usually for extended periods of time, and right now these are unlimited during the pandemic. This is similar to having a weather delay and/or early dismissal, a FID counts as a whole school day, and we don't have to make it up in June. By contrast, on a Remote Learning Day, we must account for a full day of teaching and learning (PDE defines this as 5 hours at the elementary level and 5.5 hours at the secondary level). This is one reason why a Remote Learning Day is synchronous and requires live teaching and learning.

On Flexible Instructional Days, teachers may provide an *opportunity* for students to join in some synchronous (live) instruction, but the day is intended to be asynchronous. This means the students can work at their own pace, at any time of the day or evening, and attendance is taken solely on the completion of work and assignments. If a student needs help or support, the teachers are available through Google Classroom to help them during the day. Additionally, students have 2 days after the FIDs to complete and submit their work and assignments in order to be marked present for the day. So, if they are struggling and they need more help, they can connect with their teacher the next day, too.

When we have a weather related or emergency closure, we will announce what type of day it will be. If it's a Flexible Instructional Day, students should login to their Google Classroom to get more information from their individual teachers for the day or for their classes.

### **BASD Case Count Update**

Since my letter and report on Monday, Jan. 25, we were notified of only 1 new, positive coronavirus case in the district. According to a report received, a student who is enrolled in the BeLA cyber program tested positive last week. The student has not been in the BeLA center or any of the schools, so the case does not count according to the PDE guidelines. Accordingly, there are no known, new cases in any of the schools since Monday. While the number of cases in our schools, local areas and across the state seem to be dropping, we cannot let our guards down. We need to be as vigilant as ever in trying to mitigate the spread of the virus. We have been able to keep our schools open due to the incredible support and working together as one community. Let's keep up that great work!

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 for each school in the district:

| <b>Building</b>     | <b>Total number of known, new cases since 1/25</b> | <b>*Number of cases that now “count” - students/staff that have been physically present in the building while infectious since 1/25</b> |
|---------------------|--|---|
| High School         | 0  | 0   |
| Middle School       | 0  | 0   |
| Bellefonte Elem.    | 0  | 0   |
| Benner Elem.        | 0  | 0   |
| Marion-Walker Elem. | 0  | 0   |
| Pleasant Gap Elem.  | 0  | 0   |
| BeLA                | 1  | 0   |

More information about the PDE mandates and the 14 day rolling calendar for instructional models can be found on the PDE website.

### **I Heard There is a Storm Coming on Sunday!**

We’ve already received preliminary reports of potential poor weather conditions for Sunday through Tuesday. According to the National Weather Service, there is a likelihood that a winter storm will impact the state, but there is still uncertainty about the details (type of precipitation, where, when, potential accumulations in our specific area, etc.) As I noted last week, my philosophy is to give parents as much notice as possible if there are pending delays or cancellations while trying to take a best guess about how poor weather conditions may (or may not) impact travel. Tuesday was impossible to make that earlier call due to so many conflicting weather forecasts. If we have reliable information on Sunday evening about a pending storm and

we can make a decision, I will contact parents on Sunday. Otherwise, it could be Monday morning or not at all depending on how the storm plays out.

If there is a school closure, most likely we will have another Flexible Instructional Day. My announcements will say exactly what is planned for the day.

### **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.

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.

And, and once again, thank you so very much for all you do, your support, and your willingness to partner with us to do what is best for students while keeping them and our staff as safe and healthy as possible! I hope you have an awesome weekend!

Sincerely,  
Tammie Burnaford  
Interim Superintendent  
Bellefonte Area School District