



Good evening!

As mentioned, I want to share an update for new covid cases in the district since my last email on Monday. Since Monday, we have been notified of 10 new cases in the district. Nine of the new cases are students and one is a staff member. Please note that at least a few of them had a family member that had tested positive earlier, and the students or staff member were already quarantined and not in our schools while infectious (this was a term that PA DoH and PDE required last year in reporting). Also note that some of the cases may be related in the same family. I'm going to start using the old chart format from last year to help clarify.

Building	Total number of known, new cases since 9/13	*Since 9/13, the number of new cases that were physically present in the building while infectious
High School	1 (student)	1
Middle School	3 (all students)	3
Bellefonte Elem.	2 (both students)	2
Benner Elem.	0	0
Marion-Walker Elem.	1 (student)	1
Pleasant Gap Elem.	3 (2 students, 1 staff)	0
BeLA	0	0

The PA DoH “rules” for positive cases are different this year compared to last year (more information can be found on the PA DoH website). Compared to last year, there have been far fewer students who are identified as close contacts because the students were wearing masks and/or at least 6 ft. apart in physical distancing, and the PA DoH determined that quarantines were not needed. This was particularly evident at the elementary level when the total number of students that need to quarantine in all cases is less than 3 for these specific, recent cases (all elementary schools combined). Additionally, we have had a number of staff members and some students who do not need to quarantine according to the PA DoH because they are vaccinated and/or because they were 6 ft apart for physical distancing, particularly at the middle and high schools this week. However, also note, in all cases where students and staff who are actually identified as close contacts and are not required to quarantine, they must wear a mask and monitor for symptoms for the designated period of time by the PA DoH rules. Our building principals are ready to help parents understand the new PA DoH “rules” for quarantines this year like last year.

I would like to note that we try extremely hard to maintain confidentiality in all of our cases like last year. In fact, we have to communicate with the PA DoH through a secured email system now. I know that sometimes parents and students may be curious and want more detailed information about specific cases. We simply cannot share that information. It's also not good to speculate who may or may not have contracted the virus and who may or may not have been in or out of school. Sometimes students and staff members may be absent due to family quarantines outside of school. And, sometimes students and staff have other health concerns, other medical or dental appointments, etc. and are absent for those reasons. Speculation may cause inaccurate rumors, and we can't easily quell those rumors. We truly appreciate your understanding.

As I mentioned in previous emails, in order to stay ahead of any potential spread of covid, we ask parents to keep their students home if they have symptoms or are not feeling well. We also ask that parents let us know if their child tests positive as soon as possible, so that we can begin contact tracing. Like last year, the PA DoH is not timely in assisting parents or us in combating the spread of covid. We sincerely appreciate parents working together with us, so that we can keep *all* of our students and staff safe and in school. This partnership worked phenomenally last year. I know we can do this together this year!

I'll send another update email or letter on Monday morning as usual. I hope you and your family have a safe and wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Tammie Burnaford

Superintendent

Bellefonte Area School District