



Oct. 19, 2020 (part 2)

Dear Bellefonte Area School District Families, Staff and Community:

Greetings! This morning, I sent our weekly update via email. After sending that email, a few great questions arose, and we have more information about an additional positive case. I'd like to take this opportunity to answer those questions and to share that information.

In this morning's letter, I explained that we had received a notification about a positive case in one of our elementary schools, and we had contacted staff members and parents of students who may have been in close contact with the positive case by Sunday evening. I failed to mention that Karen Krisch, our BASD Pandemic Coordinator, also sent out a voice message to all of the parents who have children in that particular elementary school (school name omitted here). The content of her voice mail was:

Hello, This is Karen Krisch, Pandemic Coordinator for the BASD. This message is for parents of students at _____Elementary School . Today we were informed of a positive case of COVID 19 in a student at this school. Contact tracing has been completed and all affected families have been notified if they are required to quarantine. As a reminder, only people within 6 ft for more than 15 min are required to quarantine if they have had direct contact with an infected person. Others in the building or classroom are considered secondary contacts and are not required to stay home. As always, please follow the district's sick day rules and contact the school nurse or the principal with questions. Thank you and have a good night.

Several parents emailed me to ask if I would identify the elementary school for all parents. This is completely understandable. Please understand that my only hesitation was that we must balance trying to keep everyone informed and safe with the risk of a breach of confidentiality. In our smaller schools, it becomes more difficult to keep information confidential simply because there's a smaller population. So, we made the decision to contact all of the parents in only the school that was impacted. If there had been an overlap or connection to any of the other schools or across the district, we would have called those parents, as well.

What makes this even a little trickier in terms of confidentiality is that a family member of this elementary student also tested positive for covid19. We had anticipated this and began to work

on contract tracing even before we got the confirmation of the positive case in the family member, who is also a student in our district, early this morning. Our principals contacted the parents of the students who may have been in close contact today. And, again, we sent out a similar voice message just to the parents of the students in the same building as this additional case. If this sounds confusing, I apologize. Again, please know that we are trying to give as much information as we can without breaking the confidentiality of the situation. Your patience and understanding are so greatly appreciated.

As I mentioned in the earlier letter, I'd like to note that currently, the outbreaks in the local and community places are trickling into our schools, but we have not had any known transmissions of the virus between our own student and staff populations. We have had a total 5 cases in 3 schools, and none of the cases are connected to each other with the exception of the 2 most recent cases which are members of the same family. The virus has made its way in from the outside organizations. Our students and staff have been and are very vigilant in following all of the safety protocols we have in place (masks, social distancing, hand washing, etc.). And, parents have been supportive in keeping their students' home when they are sick and reporting their concerns to the building principals as soon as possible. These practices have kept the virus from spreading within the schools to this date. We need to keep up the great work in order to keep our students and staff safe and healthy.

Finally, another omission from my letter today, and perhaps some earlier letters, is information about the cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting our schools receive on a daily basis and when we are notified of a positive case. All areas of our schools, buses and vans are deep cleaned every day. Regular and nearly constant cleaning and sanitizing occurs before, during and after the school day. Buses and vans are disinfected before, between and after each run. When we are notified of a positive case, even more cleaning and sanitizing measures are put in place in the affected areas. If for any reason an area cannot be cleaned immediately, the area will be sealed off and not used. In these recent cases, the buildings and areas were thoroughly cleaned on Friday and early this morning and throughout the day as normal.

I hope I've clarified some of the information. As I mentioned in today's letter, we will work tirelessly to keep our students and staff healthy and safe. We will keep you as informed as we can. Again, thank you so much for all you do! I'm so very proud and humbled to say that I'm part of this awesome school community!

Sincerely,
Tammie Burnaford
Interim Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District

P. S. I'm sorry my letters are long. For those of you who do not know me well, I do tend to talk a lot (lol). I look forward to the day when I can talk with students, parents and families more face to face. In the meantime, if you see me out somewhere, please let me know and say hello. I'd love to meet and talk with you!