



Happy Monday!

Over the long weekend, we received notification of 0 new covid cases in the district (woohoo!). I do not know when the last time this happened, but maybe we are moving out of the pandemic finally. Instead of case counts, this email includes a brief overview of the new CDC guidelines and the implications for our district.

### **CDC Guidelines Updated**

On Friday, Feb. 25, 2022, the CDC revised the covid guidelines again. The PA Department of Health followed the announcement with support for relaxing the mitigation strategies as we move into the next phase of the pandemic and move toward covid being recognized as an endemic similar to seasonal or regional flus. Additionally, the CDC developed new metrics to determine the amount of community transmission. At the time of this writing, Centre County was still designated as having “high” community transmission, but with the rapidly declining number of new cases and the decrease in hospitalizations, Centre County may be moved to a lower rate of community transmission very soon.

The biggest change in the new CDC guidelines is guidance regarding masks on school buses and vans. According to the CDC, masks are no longer required on school buses and vans (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>). However, the original order about masks on school buses came from the US Department of Transportation (US DoT) and was in compliance with a federal law that indicated masks must be worn on all public transportation until March 18, 2022 (<https://www.transportation.gov/safety/mask-travel-guidance>). Just like every other step of the way through this pandemic, confusion abounds at the national and state level, and school districts are left to try to figure it out.

I’ve been holding this email for clarification, maybe from the CDC, the US DoT, the PA Dept. of Health or PDE, but of course, we’ve gotten none. Please understand that we

have been and are still very frustrated, too. For now, we are going with the CDC guidance which indicates school systems may choose whether masks are worn on school buses and vans. In short, for now, we will keep masks optional in our schools and also make masks optional on the school buses and vans (reminder- N95 and KN95 masks are still available in our schools for any parent who wants one for their child). Aside from the lack of consistent guidance and from the confusion that is created, our making masks optional on buses and vans is also based on the current, local case data and our having so few cases in our schools now. If we receive any other information, I'll send it to you.

Barring any breaking news, I'll send my next update letter or a brief email on Friday, as usual. As always, thank you so very much for your continued support, patience and understanding through these very challenging times. I hope you have a marvelous Monday and a great week ahead!

Tammie Burnaford

Superintendent

Bellefonte Area School District