



Dear BASD Parents, Families, and Staff:

I hope you have had a chance to relax and enjoy this break! As a follow up to my call, I'd like to provide more detailed information about the current status in our district.

First, I'd like to share the positive case count update for our district. Over the break, thus far, we have been notified of 5 new positive cases (4 students, 1 staff) at the High School, 1 new positive case (student) at Pleasant Gap Elementary, and 1-2 presumed positives (student, staff) at the Middle School. Some new cases did not have any contact tracing implications because the persons haven't been in school, and schools have been closed for the break. However, a few of these new cases did require contact tracing. Parents of students who need to quarantine for these cases have been contacted by principals and administrators. We are currently following 1-2 potential, new positive cases at the middle school, and we will follow the contact tracing protocols for these cases, if needed.

If you recall, PDE and the PA Dept of Health issued new mandates and orders over the past week. As such, the President of our School Board and I had to sign and submit an Attestation form to PDE in order to continue in-person learning in whole or in part in any of our schools. We had to agree to all of the new mandates and orders which includes our following the PDE closure recommendations, a chart based on building size and number of positive cases. At this point in time, the High School, a "medium sized building" on the PDE chart, has 5 cases and must close for 3-7 days. Out of an abundance of caution and an attempt to follow the law, the High School will move to remote learning through this week (Dec. 1st - 4th). High School teachers will be teaching virtually and will be available all day long virtually. High School students should follow their schedules and logon into each of their classes each day. Teachers may reach out to students with more information through Google Classroom. Barring any more issues, the High School will return to in-person learning on Monday, Dec. 7th. If this plan requires any changes, I will let parents/families know as soon as possible.

As of this evening, only the High School will be closed this week. As mentioned, we are following some potential, positive cases at the middle school and will send a notification to parents if the middle school needs to move to remote learning this week, as well. However, as of 5:00 this evening, in-person learning will resume on Tuesday, Dec. 1st at the Middle School and at all 4 elementary schools for as long as possible. I will send a notification to parents, if the status must change in any other buildings, as soon as possible.

As a reminder, in my last letter to parents on Nov. 25th, I asked parents to voluntarily quarantine their students if they have any concerns that they could have been exposed to the disease in any way over the holiday period. In addition, I shared that parents who have concerns about their students returning to school with the rising number of cases or are feeling uncomfortable with the return may also voluntarily quarantine their children. Students will be able to login to their own classes, follow their own schedules and connect with their teachers virtually. Up to this

point, we have not allowed “self” or “voluntary” quarantine for students who were not a close contact, but this phase of the rapid spread of the disease and the holiday are different than the past few months. If parents of middle school or elementary students choose to quarantine their children instead of returning to school on Dec. 1st, they simply need to send a note to their child’s school indicating that they will be quarantining and learning virtually. The typical 14-day quarantine period after the break which ends on Nov. 30th would mean that students could return on Dec. 14th. With the HS closure, parents could choose to keep their students home for the extra week, too. As another bonus, if some students are voluntarily quarantined, this will lessen the numbers in the classrooms and schools, making physical distancing even better and perhaps lessening other quarantines if a new case arises.

I know this is an inconvenience for parents, and unfortunately, things can change on a moment’s notice. We have worked together so well to get us to this time. As I’ve said before, the support of parents and our working together for the health and safety of our students and staff has been absolutely incredible. We will continue to work tirelessly for our students, parents, staff and community.

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 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, even as the number of positive cases continues to surge.

I’ll send my usual letter on Tuesday morning this week. I’ll include any updates and maybe some helpful hints. I’ll try to be brief, but those who know me best, think that’s nearly impossible for me (lol).

Best wishes for a marvelous Monday!

Sincerely,

Tammie Burnaford  
Interim Superintendent  
Bellefonte Area School District