

Good morning!

The school year is flying by! It's hard to believe that we have just 11 school days before the Thanksgiving break. With the end of the first marking period, today is set aside for parent conferences, a special day to share the progress of our students with their parents. I also thought I'd share some covid data (covid grades? - lol) for the first marking period, so I am writing this update in letter form.

COVID Case Count Updates

Over the weekend, we did not receive any new notifications of positive cases from parents.

The case numbers in Centre County dropped slightly during the last PA DoH/PDE reporting period (Oct. 29 - Nov. 4). Like last week, the number of new, confirmed cases in 16823 dropped slightly again, but the number of new confirmed cases in 16841 seem to be spiking again. I am looking forward to a continuous or sudden downward trend, as I am sure most everyone is.

COVID Case Counts for the First Marking Period

I enjoy collecting data and statistics, and I have been following local COVID data for over a year now. With the end of the first marking period this past week, I thought I'd provide COVID by the numbers since we started school on August 31st. First a disclaimer...the data and the numbers of cases I have collected are from the PA Dept. of Health page daily and from notifications that we have received from parents/staff from Aug. 31st through Nov. 3, the end of the first marking period. I didn't include the cases that occurred right before school started. I keep several spreadsheets of this data, but it's possible that I may have made an unintentional, small error in the aggregated data. While I like numbers, I sometimes make mistakes with them. Some of the interesting bits of information:

- The total number of new, confirmed cases in **Centre County** from August 31 - Nov. 3 was **3158**.
- The total number of new, confirmed cases in our two main, BASD zip codes from Aug. 31 - Nov. 3: **550 for zip code 16823** and **146 for zip code 16841** (keep in mind that our 2 main zip codes also spread into at least 2 other school districts)

- The following chart includes the number of positive cases that we have received notification for since August 31st by BASD building:

Bellefonte Area SD Building	Total Number of Positive COVID Cases from Aug. 31 - Nov. 3	Number of Positive Student Cases	Number of Positive Staff Cases
High School	33	24	9
Middle School	37	34	3
Bellefonte Elem.	13	13	0
Benner Elem.	2	1	1
Marion-Walker Elem.	21	17	4
Pleasant Gap Elem.	15	8	7
Central Office	1	NA	1
BeLA	0	0	0
TOTAL	122	97	25

- In case you are wondering, as of today, we have 2638 total students and a little over 400 staff members in the district.
- In many cases, parents reported that a family member had also tested positive prior to one of our students or staff members testing positive. There were several student cases involving siblings which were counted as separate cases. We have no way of knowing for sure exactly where a person contracts the virus, but it still does not seem that there is significant, direct spread in our schools.

COVID Vaccine

As anticipated, the CDC gave the final approval for the emergency use of the Pfizer Vaccine for children 5-11 years old last week. Vaccine clinics and

vaccine locations are popping up in Centre County for those parents who are interested in having their children vaccinated. Similar to information about other immunizations and health-related concerns, parents of students who are vaccinated may want to add that information to their children's health record at school by contacting their children's school nurse. Again, it's not required to inform our nurses, just a suggestion.

PDE Secretary Noe Ortega visited BASD

Last Wednesday, Noe Ortega, the Secretary of the PA Department of Education, visited our district. His assistant contacted us the week before and asked if Secretary Ortega could visit our district. He wanted to visit a classroom, to talk to our administrative team and to discuss our successes and challenges in the pandemic. He commended our efforts during the last school year, as we were one of a few districts that offered in person learning for our students all year last year. As a district, we were closed for only 2 days. I had the opportunity to share how we made that happen, how we worked together as a community, how our parents/guardians/families were so supportive and helpful, how hard our teachers and staff worked to create a safe and effective, educational learning environment, and most importantly, how awesome our students were during the difficult times last year and how they continue to be simply outstanding. He was extremely impressed. We have had our challenges, and we haven't been perfect, but overall we have done the best we can together. I have been saying for more than a year how incredibly wonderful the Bellefonte Area School Community is to anyone and everyone. It was really nice to be recognized at the state level, now, too.

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