



BPS COVID Health and Safety Update
School Committee
January 4, 2022



Preparing for January 3, 2022

- Staff-optional testing on Sunday (1/2/22) and Monday morning prior to student arrival
 - Approximately 150 staff in total administered self-tests
- This process yielded limited positive cases and gave the district some advance support in staffing schools
- Secured staff KN95 masks and student (small-fit) masks for use in schools
- Planned a one-hour delay to support staff in testing, securing masks, reviewing updated guidance, and preparing for students
- Doubled the pay rate for substitute teachers (last week) to secure subs and ensure proper staffing of all schools
- Redeployed personnel (including central office, Unit D professional aides, and Unit B administrators) to buildings and classrooms for support
- Promptly resumed Pool Testing in our schools

Status and Context

- The district is thankful to have school open after winter recess.
- The district is realistic this is only one step in a longer journey.
- The district respectfully supports keeping students in school.
- The district respectfully supports the concern of those families who have health-compromised children and/or family members.
- These first few days, and the days to come, present truly hard choices and circumstances for families.
- This is a fluid environment.

Staff Attendance

The district had 72 staff out on Monday, January 3, 2022 and 73 staff out on Tuesday, January 4, 2022. These absences are a combination of existing leaves (maternity / paternity), personal days, professional development, sick-planned and/or sick unplanned (COVID-related: positive case, failed symptom checker etc.).

Due to self-reporting of absences by staff, specific COVID data is difficult to ascertain.

<u>School - Staff</u>	<u>% in school (1/3/22)</u>	<u>% in school (1/4/22)</u>
BHS	87%	88%
CMS	91%	88%
Burbank	93%	95%
Butler	85%	80%
Wellington	88%	90%
Winn Brook	87%	89%

Impact of Staff Attendance and Staffing Levels

- We are deeply appreciative of the efforts of every employee -- paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, educators, administrators, and custodians -- who have worked in different roles to maintain a safe and healthy school day.
- The district proactively increased the pay rate for our daily substitute teacher pool which has provided an increased number of available substitutes.
- The district has allocated existing staff from all departments to support in class coverage in all schools.
- The current manner in which we are “covering” our school classrooms is not sustainable in the long-term, as we are pulling staff from academically needed positions (ex: small group instruction) to supervise classrooms.
- We are working through this week in a “triage” manner and will continually evaluate staffing levels each day.
- ***Staffing levels may be an issue moving forward, which could impact the delivery of our traditional school day schedule.***

Student Attendance

- The district had 605 students out on Monday and 473 students on Tuesday.
- These absences are a combination of families calling their child out sick (COVID-related and otherwise), vacation travel, etc.
- Due to self-reporting of absences by families, specific COVID data is difficult to ascertain.
- The average daily attendance the district is roughly 95%. The past two days have averaged approximately 86% for attendance.

<u>School - Students</u>	<u>% in school (1/3/22)</u>	<u>% in school (1/4/22)</u>
BHS	89%	93%
CMS	87%	89%
Burbank	83%	88%
Butler	87%	88%
Wellington	81%	83%
Winn Brook	79%	82%

Challenges this week (and moving forward)

Challenges include actively assessing our community cases, monitoring the degree to which in-school transmission is occurring, and providing appropriate staffing levels.

- We will monitor our student and staff positive cases daily.
- This includes vaccinated and unvaccinated staff and students.
- The district will continue to recruit substitute teachers and support staffing levels.
- The district will monitor our ability to hold school due to staffing levels.
- The district will continue to promote and offer COVID Safety Checks (pool testing) to all students and staff.

In an effort to keep data active and useful we need to have as many students and staff sign up for pool testing as possible.

Challenges this week (and moving forward)

Lunch

- Every level of our district will conduct lunch safely each day by:
 - Keeping masks on in the cafeteria unless eating
 - Having assigned seating to support contact tracing
 - Allowing students to eat outside when possible
 - Shortening length of lunch period by sending students to recess early
 - Reducing or minimizing talking during lunch
 - Distancing to the best extent possible

Shifting Guidance

Similar to last year, safety guidance from authorities (CDC, DESE, DPH) is inconsistent.

- DESE issued updated safety guidance on 12/30/2021, and again on 1/3/2022.
 - DESE recommends at least five days of isolation after testing positive, and allows for return to school once an individual is fever free and their symptoms have resolved or improved (not consistent with CDC recommended 10-days).
 - DESE does not require testing to re-enter school (consistent with CDC).
 - DESE defines “fully vaccinated” as 2 doses of vaccine (not including booster) (consistent with CDC).
 - DESE recommends that Health Departments no longer conduct contact tracing and that schools do so only when “feasible” (not consistent with CDC).
- Belmont Schools is working closely with the Belmont Health Department, neighboring districts, and DESE/DPH to continually review and adjust to changing guidance.

BPS: Athletics and Extra-curriculars

- The Belmont Public Schools has been meeting frequently with our partner Superintendents and Athletic Directors of the Middlesex League (MSL).
- Over winter recess several student-athletes and coaches tested positive for COVID.
- These positive cases have resulted in limited cancellations of contests and games.
- Our goal remains to keep all programs active, as long as it is safe to do so.
- With that goal in mind, we are implementing temporary mitigation strategies. Effective today and for the next two weeks we will:
 - Restrict the use of locker rooms for athletes
 - Limit spectators and only allow two adults per player at the game - no student spectators at this time
 - Practices have been limited in time to reduce overcrowding in the fieldhouse and other spaces
- The Belmont Public Schools and MSL professionals will continue to monitor these issues and provide updates.

Cases in Belmont

Given the holiday impacted work week, the Health Department and School Nurses continue to identify new cases. We expect this data to increase.

At this point in time, we have the following case count:

- The town reported 346 cases between 12/24/21 – 1/3/22 (per the Belmont Board of Health)
- The town reported 57 cases between 1/3/22 – 1/4/22 (per the Belmont Board of Health)

- The school department reported 130 cases between 12/24/21 – 1/3/22
- We are monitoring today's cases closely...

Overview of BPS COVID Testing

- District COVID Routine Safety checks (pooled testing) have now fully transitioned to the take-home nasal swab collection by Veritas Genetics.
- Pool testing promptly resumed on Monday, 1/3/2022
- "Test and Stay" continues in all schools
 - Alternative to quarantine at home for identified close contacts in the school setting
 - Unvaccinated, asymptomatic students/staff only
 - No positives have been identified through Test and Stay
 - All individuals are required to quarantine when not in school related activities - school is a controlled environment
 - Working with the after school programs to include in the Test and Stay

Please remember!

There are several action steps that families can take *at home and in school* to support our efforts to keep all BPS students and families safe:

- Sign up (consent) and participate in pool testing
- Get vaccinated and get boosted – two upcoming vaccine clinics for BHS and CMS students
- Wear a properly fitting mask to school every day
- Wash/sanitize hands regularly
- Physically distance wherever possible
- If your child feels sick, keep them home
- Adhere to the symptom checker and absence follow up
- Attend upcoming community testing events (January 8, and 9...)

Belmont Public Schools Vaccination Rates

Grade	As of 9/13/2021	As of 10/29/2021	As of 12/2/2021	As of 1/4/2022
K	N/A	N/A	62.4% at least 1 dose	
1	N/A	N/A	60.6% at least 1 dose	63% Fully vaccinated
2	N/A	N/A	63.6% at least 1 dose	66% Fully Vaccinated
3	N/A	N/A	63.3% at least 1 dose	65% Fully Vaccinated
4	N/A	N/A	70% at least 1 dose	72% Fully Vaccinated
5	N/A	N/A	67.1% at least 1 dose	69% Fully Vaccinated
6	N/A	N/A	74% at least 1 dose	71% Fully Vaccinated
7	72.6%	80.3%	82 % Fully Vaccinated	
8	77.5%	84.5%	86.7% Fully Vaccinated	
9	79.1%	89.9%	91.8% Fully Vaccinated	93.9% Fully Vaccinated
10	83.1%	87.8%	88.7% Fully Vaccinated	
11	80.8%	84.3%	85.8% Fully Vaccinated	
12	80.8%	84.3%	85.5% Fully Vaccinated	

Belmont Consent Rates

		Butler	Winn Brook	Wellington	Burbank	CMS	BHS
CIC	% consent	81.7 %	82.7 %	74.5 %	80.6 %	66.2 %	46.7 %
Week of 10/18/21	# ind tested/ # pools	197 / 23	334 / 41	277 / 30	248 /32	N/A	N/A
	# positive pools	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Week of 10/25/21	# ind tested/ # pools	257 / 26	346 / 36	369 / 38	270 / 28	N/A	N/A
	# positive pools	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
Week of 11/1/21	# ind tested/ # pools	272 / 28	357 / 36	401 / 41	287 / 29	194 / 52 grade 5	N/A
	# positive pools	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Week of 11/8/21	# ind tested/ # pools	281 / 29	358 / 36	No Test	268 / 27	295 / 60 grade 5 & 6	N/A
	# positive pools	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
Week of 11/15/21	# ind tested/ # pools	283 / 29	367 / 38	420 / 42	290 / 29	470 / 108	to begin 12/1
	# positive pools	0	0	0	0	1	N/A
Veritas	% consent	86.20%	86.20%	72.90%	85%	71%	51.30%
Week of 11/28/21	# ind tested	234	264	284	187	421	90
	# positive pools	0	0	0	0	1	1
Week of 12/6/21	# ind tested	197	288	335	193	486	170
	# positive pools	0	1	0	0	0	0
Week of 12/12/21	# ind tested	210	278	400	214	379	186
	# positive pools	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total # Veritas pools to date 1291							
Total # pos Veritas pools 5							