

Dr. Melissa Varley noreply@bhpsnj.org via spe.schoolmessenger.com
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(7 days ago)

Dear Families and staff;

I wanted to take a moment to bring you up to speed on the current situation within Berkeley Heights Public School District as it relates to COVID-19 and share with you how our administrative team and staff are working through this situation. My team has been working tirelessly over the last week and I want to take a moment to thank them for the hundreds of calls that they have made and their diligence in this matter.

Background:

The week of November 2-6 School Schedule:

Cohort A In Schools

In-person Monday, 11/2

Election day Tuesday, 11/3 (all schools remote)

In-person Wednesday, 11/4

Teacher Convention, 11/5 & 11/6 (no school)

On Wednesday, November 4, Governor Livingston High School was made aware of an individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. This individual was not in school on Wednesday as they are a COHORT B student. By the afternoon, it was communicated to the school nurse that the student did in fact test positive. Our immediate first step was to notify the Department of Health (DOH) of this information. Once the Department of Health receives this information it is their responsibility to obtain medical documentation to confirm the positive case (be it from the parent and/or healthcare provider). The DOH will then communicate directly with the positive case and begin the contact tracing procedure. Contact tracing includes communicating with any and all individuals with whom the positive case was in contact 48 hours prior to the onset of the first symptom. These individuals will be directed to quarantine for 14 days.

Once the school notified the Department of Health, the GL/district pandemic team began to investigate if the positive case had participated in any Berkeley Heights Public School co-curricular activities (i.e. GL athletics, band, clubs, etc). In order to be supportive of the students and staff within the community, and in the interest of time, when it was determined that there was *contact*, the BHPS school district felt it was appropriate for the GL pandemic team to reach out to staff and students to make them aware and suggest that they quarantine for 14-days. Additionally, the GL pandemic team communicated that the DOH- medical experts that have to officially make this call, will be following-up.

As more positive cases were communicated to the district, the GL pandemic team continued the exact same process: contacting the DOH, obtaining lists of BHPS students and staff that were considered to be in contact with the student who had tested positive, and communicating with them that they should quarantine and await a call from the DOH.

*Please note that the Department of Health is the only organization that can require someone to quarantine, the district can only suggest. The DOH also makes community contacts, the district ONLY contacts school-oriented contacts.

To be clear, the assistance provided by the GL pandemic team is not required by the Department of Health or the State and goes above and beyond COVID-19 call to action protocols from the educational sector. However, we felt that this level of communication was necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff members associated with Berkeley Heights Public Schools and was necessary in an effort to minimize the continuation of this spike and/or spread of virus.

We have also had many questions regarding quarantining. Please see this [chart](#) for a quick guideline on School Based Quarantines.

At this time, we currently have 40 students at GL who have tested positive, up 3 from yesterday. Our K-8 positives remain unchanged since Friday, 11/6.

For those of you who have been following the reports on the number of district cases, there was a drastic increase on Tuesday. This increase was due to a delay in the reporting from the Westfield Department of Health which services Mountainside. Berkeley Heights receives its reports from the Rahway Department of Health. The two departments communicated and shared reports on Tuesday morning.

Thank you and have a good evening.

Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Varley