

## COVID-19 Report and Discussion

### Cases at Belmond-Klemme

At this point in the school year, we have few positive cases, that we know of, to report. As previously reported:

- Two members of the Bronco football team tested positive for COVID-19 as of Saturday, August 22, 2020.
- A single student tested positive for COVID-19 on the second day of classes on Tuesday, August 25.
- A student who was present in our secondary school on Tuesday, September 8, tested positive.

In our most recent case, we received word this week (October 12) from county health that we had a student at the elementary test positive. The student and siblings were doing a ten-day self-isolation for not feeling well. Therefore, we did not need to do any contact tracing at school as the students had not been here.

We feel like our careful and measured approach to instruction is succeeding despite the continued and broadening spread of the COVID-19 virus.

### Positivity Rate is Climbing

As of Tuesday, October 13, the 14-day positivity rate for COVID-19 in Wright County had reached its highest point in the last three months: 14.4 percent. This is the measure by which schools should decide whether or not to hold classes in school.

However, this climbing county rate does not appear to be affecting our school attendance. Here at BK as of last Friday, October 9, our absence rate was

- 2% sick at the elementary school  
5% if you add sick, plus those quarantined who should be in person learning
- 3% sick at the secondary school  
4% if you add sick, plus those quarantined who should be in person learning.

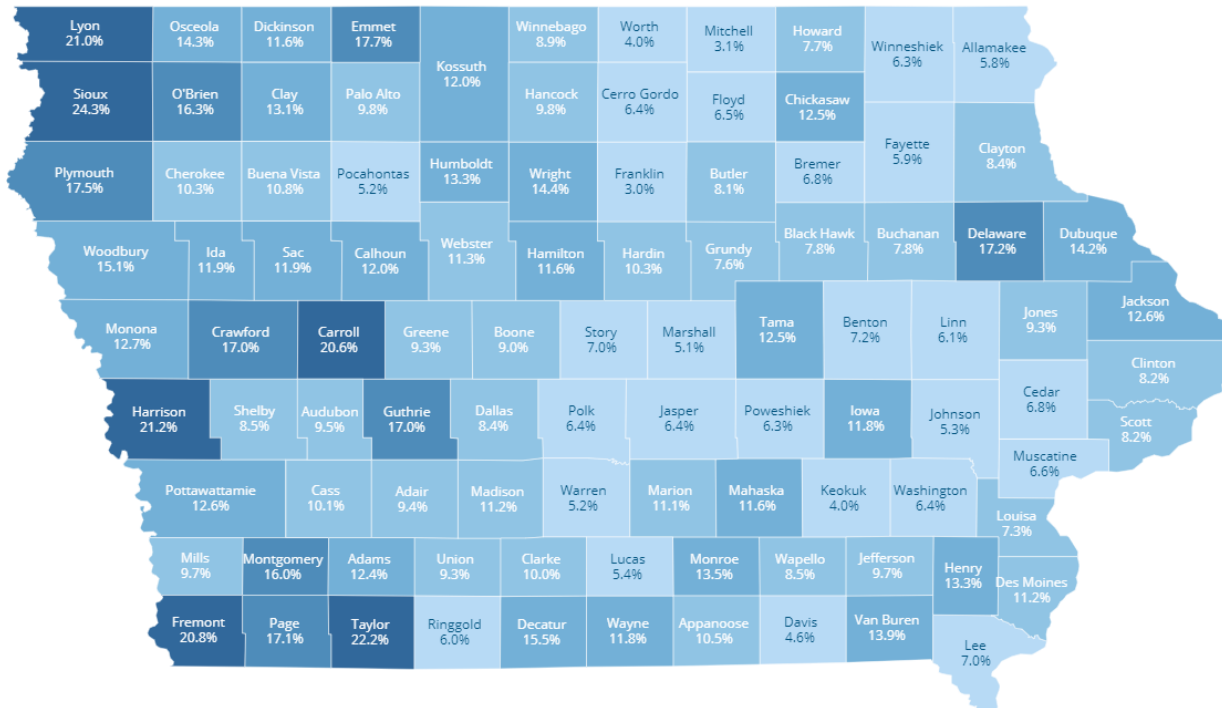
Caution, these numbers only reflect the students that are reporting illness when calling in for attendance. There are still several students who do not have a reason listed for being absent, so those are not counted in this statistic.

## Current Positivity Rate

As of Tuesday, October 13, 2020, . . .

### COVID-19 in IOWA

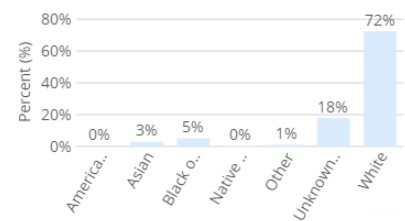
% Positive (Past 14 Day Average) by County



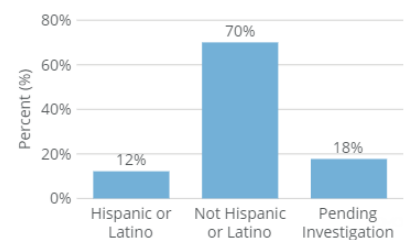
## Wright County Infection Rate

County	Positive Cases	Cases Per 100,000 Population
Buena Vista	2,140	10,768
Crawford	1,240	7,227
Woodbury	6,417	6,258
Sioux	2,117	6,064
Plymouth	1,383	5,511
Wright	662	5,217
Tama	857	5,070
Marshall	1,873	4,685
Carroll	928	4,605
Henry	918	4,575
Dubuque	4,193	4,329
Webster	1,563	4,309
Louisia	469	4,199
Wapello	1,435	4,076
Lyon	477	4,039
Emmet	356	3,847
Story	3,725	3,797
O'Brien	524	3,786
Black Hawk	4,931	3,724
Dickinson	635	3,702
Johnson	5,493	3,631

Positive Cases by Race



Positive Cases by Ethnicity



## **COVID-19 Mitigation Rules Change**

Face masks have now been identified as a means of avoiding close contact with a person infected by the COVID-19 virus. People exposed to COVID-19 will quarantine for 14 days. This guidance continues unchanged. However, the Iowa definition of what constitutes exposure has changed.

First, a person is considered in close contact and exposed if he or she is living in the same household as an infectious person (irrespective of whether face masks are used in the household).

Second, a person is considered in close contact if he or she was less than six feet away from an infectious person for more than 15 consecutive minutes *AND* the case, the close contact, or both were not wearing a face masks during the interaction.

This is a big change for Belmond-Klemme schools. As long as we maintain our practice of all people wearing fabric face masks, anyone in close contact with an infected person is *NOT* considered exposed. Acceptable face coverings, according to CDC guidance are described as having two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. The mask must completely cover your nose and mouth and must fit snugly against the sides of your face without any gaps.

You can check CDC mask guidance rules at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>.

Recent research in Iowa comparing schools that require masks to schools that do not shows that schools without masks run 30 percent to 130 percent higher rates of positive cases than the schools where fabric masks are required.

Clear plastic face shields and neck gaiters do not meet CDC standards at this time. Anyone wearing a face shield or gaiter when in close contact with an infected person will be considered exposed and will be required to quarantine at home for 14 days.

Most of our faculty and staff have chosen to wear fabric masks. We will continue to allow teachers to opt to wear transparent plastic face shields instead of fabric masks, but only fabric masks will protect teachers from exposure.

Belmond-Klemme Schools continues to have a plentiful supply of both face masks and face shields available to all faculty and staff. The Iowa Department of Public Health has promised more guidance on masks will be coming soon.

### **District Rules for Face Covers**

Face coverings are required in our school. Most of our faculty and staff have chosen to wear fabric masks. Acceptable face masks, according to CDC guidance are described as having two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. The mask must completely cover your nose and mouth and must fit snugly against the sides of your face without any gaps.

The district will continue to allow teachers to opt to wear transparent plastic face shields instead of fabric masks, but only fabric masks will protect teachers from exposure. We recognize hard-of-hearing students, ELL students, and other special needs students benefit from being able to see a teacher's face and lips.

Face shields need to cover the entire face, i.e., extending from the top of the forehead to below the chin and back on the sides to the front of the ears.

### **Eagle Grove Shut Down**

Eagle Grove Schools announced Wednesday, September 16, that they would close Thursday and Friday of the same week due to increasing numbers of COVID-19. Their student absentee rate was over ten percent. They did not have that many sick students, but they had about 150 students out of school quarantining.

Ten Eagle Grove staff members also tested positive. This resulted in a total of 30 staff exposed.

Eagle Grove used online, virtual instruction for one week starting Monday, September 21. They applied to the Iowa Department of Education for an additional two-week waiver. Unfortunately for them, they were not allowed to count quarantining students in their absentee count toward approaching ten percent for state purposes.

### **Change Football Opponent for Friday, September 25**

Belmond-Klemme was slated to play Eagle Grove for its homecoming game Friday evening, September 25. With Eagle Grove school closing, we quickly matched up with another opponent: the Jays of Le Mars Gehlen Catholic School. Gehlen traveled three hours each way to play us. We split our gate with them to off-set their travel costs.

Several schools across Iowa are scrambling each week to find opponents for their Friday night games as the virus continues to spread and shut down more athletic teams.

## **Outside Groups Using School Facilities and The BCBC Using Our Gymnasium**

From the outset of the pandemic emergency, it has been the policy and practice of our school to not allow access inside our buildings by external groups or entities. We do this out of caution and concern that groups that are not part of our organization and not under our control coming into our building could potentially spread the COVID-19 infection to our students and staff.

On March 19, 2020, the school board approved a resolution that stated,

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that access to public school grounds and public school buildings of the District may be limited as directed by the Superintendent during District closures.”

Since that decision, we have denied access to commercial and public groups including local dance schools and scout troops. There is some evidence that the COVID virus can live on hard surfaces such as glass and steel for extended periods. Our cleaning crews have taken on expanded duties in sanitizing our buildings. Use by outside groups would place a greater burden on our cleaning crews. Moreover, outside groups might be unwilling to follow our health protocols since they do not have accountability to anyone within our organization.

I am requesting school board guidance on a related issue.

The BCBC sponsors and organizes youth basketball. It is a community service organization; they serve students in our community. Typically, they begin practices in early November and run through February. The BCBC has asked for permission to use our elementary gymnasium again this year, and I am considering making an exception for them.

The use of our facilities by the BCBC must be conditional upon the coaches and participants following the rules and protocols list below:

1. Coaches must keep accurate records of those athletes and staff who attend each practice in case contact tracing is needed.
2. Each student must be responsible for his or her own supplies (water bottle, hand sanitizer, face covering, towel, etc.)
3. Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (with no sharing of clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout immediately upon returning home.
4. Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all contests and practices.
5. Athletes must tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well.
6. Coaches must take the temperatures and screen for symptoms for each participant before each practice session.
7. Players and coaches who feel sick or have been exposed to someone sick, should not attend or participate in practices.
8. The use of cloth face coverings is mandatory at all times for coaches.
9. The use of cloth face coverings is mandatory at all times for players unless in a scrimmage situation.

10. Players must wear masks for warmups and when they are seated on the bench and not playing in a scrimmage or game. This includes coaches.
11. If a player comes out of a game or scrimmage, he or she will immediately put on a mask when and sit on the bench. A player can take his or her mask off when entering a game and put the mask with his or her other items on the bench.
12. Each participant must bring his or her own water bottle. Individuals must never share water bottles.
13. Each player should bring his or her own towel. Individuals must never share towels.
14. Players should be encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer that they can set next to their water bottle.
15. Personal items should be clearly labeled.
16. Breaks should be given to hydrate and for players to sanitize.
17. Locker rooms are off limits.
18. All involved should use hand sanitizer before and after practices.
19. Parents and other guests are not allowed in the building during practice times.
20. Basketballs and any other equipment used must be sanitized after use every day.
21. Once practice concludes, player should go directly home; no congregating with other players in the gymnasium or student center.

These rules must be clearly and consistently communicated to all participants, coaches, and parents.

Failure to observe these rules and mitigation practices shall result in the revocation of building use privileges. Periodic spot checks will be conducted.

The BCBC exclusively serves our Belmond-Klemme students. I am assured that all BCBC participants will be students of Belmond-Klemme schools. We will need to see a roster of participants to ensure that only current students, actively attending our school on a daily basis, are participating in the BCBC basketball in our gymnasium.

The BCBC has also asked to host a two-day basketball tournament in our two gymnasiums, inviting teams from across Northern Iowa. I indicated to the BCBC that we would not allow a tournament this year. We did not host our own volleyball tournament this year, nor did we participate in other area tournaments. We have also decided not to host a home wrestling tournament this winter. Hosting a BCBC tournament would be inconsistent with our own mitigation precautions.

## **Veterans' Day**

Every November 11, we invite area military veterans and other interested patrons into our high school gymnasium at 11:00 AM for our Veterans Day observance and ceremony. However, the danger of adult-to-adult transmission of the virus forces us to not allow visitors. We still want to observe the day and recognize our local veterans, but we remain undecided as to how to do so safely. I am accepting suggestions and ideas.