



BENTLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
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DR. KRISTY SPANN, SUPERINTENDENT

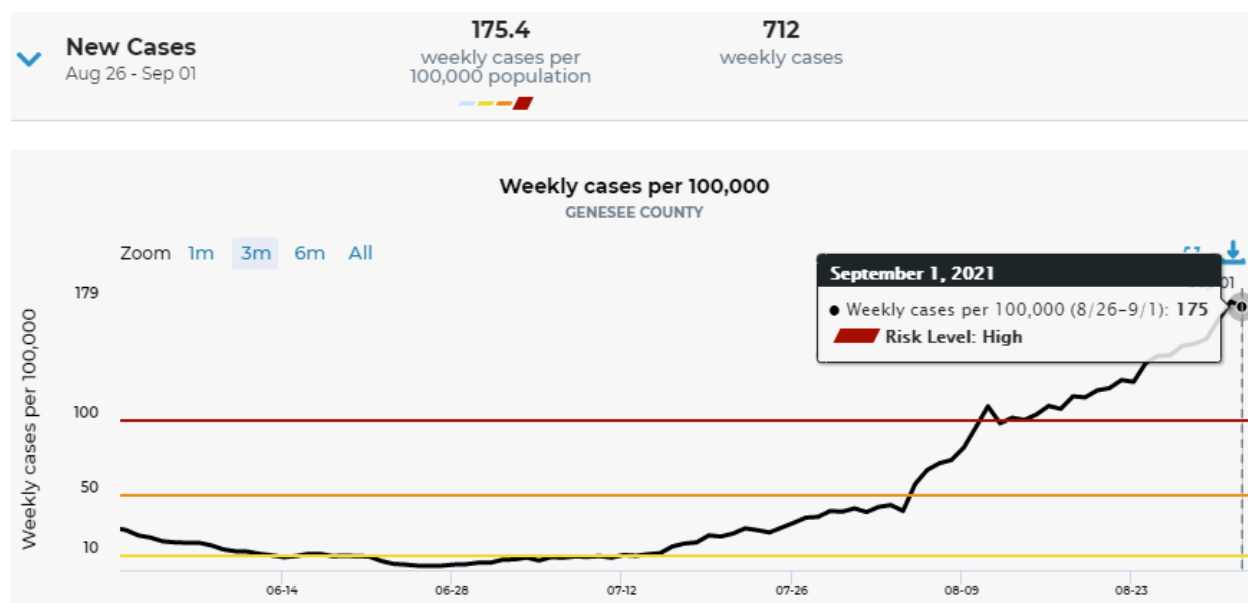
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September 3, 2021

Greetings Bentley Families,

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) announced yesterday **that masks are mandated in schools and buses for all students (preK-12) and adults effective Tuesday, September 7**. This is due to the increasing number of cases for Genesee County, which can be seen in this graph:



Specifically starting on Tuesday, all “persons in educational settings” pre-kindergarten through adults must consistently and properly wear a mask while inside any enclosed building or structure of the district. “Persons in Educational Settings” means students, teachers, staff, parents, guests, attendees, and volunteers while inside any district building or structure—in short, anybody four years old and older.

The order does not apply to people who are eating or drinking, under the age of four, hard of hearing, have a current qualifying medical reason confirmed in writing from a doctor, or have a developmental condition that requires them to see facial expressions to communicate effectively. People in the last category must have an Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 plan AND would benefit from facial cues and a clear facemask is not possible. The specific language is in the attached order.

Part of the order requires that we share how COVID-19 is affecting and being addressed within schools.

COVID-19 spreads when respiratory fluid carrying the virus is inhaled or lands on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eyes. People release respiratory fluids during breathing, coughing, sneezing, singing, etc. The risk of infection depends on how much virus a person is exposed to and the transmissibility of the particular variant—the current primary variant (Delta) is significantly more infectious than the original form. The risk of infection decreases with increased distance between people. Of note, COVID-19 infections are increasing among children across the country with children accounting for 22.4% of reported cases.

Besides individual illnesses, the impact of COVID-19 has been the need to quarantine staff and students, which is very disruptive to the educational process. **Universal masking coupled with social distancing of greater than 3’ will virtually eliminate the need to quarantine.**

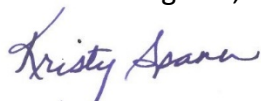
Studies of COVID-19 incidence in schools demonstrate that masking is the most effective mitigation strategy to prevent secondary transmission in schools when vaccination is unavailable, or there is insufficient uptake of vaccination. Masks reduce the number of virus-laden droplets in the air, which is especially helpful with asymptomatic wearers. **The most effective way to reduce transmission is through vaccination** of eligible people, which the American Academy of Pediatrics has said is safe and essential.

Finally, as previously communicated, Bentley Community Schools will continue to promote:

- Vaccines and ensure mask use
- Physical distancing – maintaining >3’ of distance between people to the extent possible
- Ventilation – opening windows to improve air circulation and run air purifiers in classrooms
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette – promoting handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes
- Staying home when sick and getting tested - students, students’ immediate families, and staff who are symptomatic are expected to stay at home, get tested whether they have been vaccinated or not, and report any suspected or known cases of COVID to the principal
- Contact tracing – the district will continue to work with GCHD to support this practice
- Cleaning and disinfecting – BCS will continue to clean and disinfect per MDHHS guidelines

While there is a continuum of beliefs on this topic, I believe we all want our children and families to be safe and healthy. Let us work together to keep everybody as safe as possible and be grateful that we can provide in-person learning.

With kind regards,



Dr. Kristy Spann
Superintendent