



BENTLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
1170 North Belsay Road
Burton, MI 48509

DR. KRISTY SPANN, SUPERINTENDENT
kspann@bentleyschools.org
(810) 591-9120

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Dear Bulldog Families,

I know you are wondering about the return to school. I know you are concerned about your child's safety, your safety, the safety of your extended family, your ability to go to work, your child's emotional well-being, your child's education, and so much more. And just as not knowing what to expect is stressful, so is hearing a plan and then having it changed.

Please know that we are continuing to work on the plan for the return to school. As of today, we are planning to offer three options for you to choose from: attend school 5 days a week, attend school 2 days per week (hybrid) and remote learning. My goal is for us to work together to get to the best plan for everybody's sake. Although we surveyed you over a month ago, time and new information have influenced people's thinking and plans. So after reading this note, please take time to [give us feedback](#) in order that we can factor your thinking into the ongoing planning.

The [MI Safe Schools Roadmap](#) outlines the requirements and recommendations for the return to school by phase (1-3; 4, and 5). The criteria for each phase are described in the [MI Safe Start Plan](#), and Region 1 (which includes Genesee County) is currently in Phase 4. The Roadmap uses three levels of designations (required, strongly recommended, and recommended) to address many aspects of school in the areas of safety protocols, mental & social-emotional health, instruction, and operations. Per the Roadmap:

- **Phases 1-3** require virtual learning from home, much like what we did this spring.
- **Phase 4** allows for face-to-face instruction; masks are required for all staff, required for all students in 6th-12th grades, and strongly recommended for children through 5th grade.
- **Phase 5** allows for face-to-face instruction; masks are strongly recommended for everybody.

I led off with the issue of facemasks because that has become such a flashpoint for people, and it was a point that was brought up by many of you in the last survey. As we all have heard, masks will help contain and decrease the spread of COVID19. Here is a link to an article that talks about the [science behind how facemasks prevent coronavirus](#) and here is a link to [research with a 42-second video showing speech-generated droplets with and without a mask](#).

We know we cannot eliminate the risk of coronavirus; however, we can reduce the risk. We do this all the time when we drive. Consider Genesee County car [crash statistics from 2018](#) in which there were 10,547 crashes logged. There were 3,199 injuries and 43 fatalities for 3,242 injured. So, 1.3% of all injured resulted in death. Many of us get into the car multiple times each day and do not worry about getting in a fatal car accident. We reduce the risk by wearing our seatbelt, leaving distance between us and the car in front of us, not going out if the weather is severe, etc.

In Genesee County (as of July 15, 2020), the [COVID-19 statistics](#) show 2,373 cases with 264 deaths. Therefore, 11.1% of all infections have resulted in death, of which 95% of those deaths have been in people aged 50+. We reduce the risk by wearing a mask, leaving distance between us and others, not

going out if we are already compromised unless we need to, etc. Additionally, the statistics for the Bentley attendance area – including our school of choice students – reflect an infection rate of 0.66%. In other words, about ½% of the local population has been sick with COVID-19.

Another concern that has been voiced is the use of masks during hot weather. I am looking into the feasibility of air-conditioned rooms. However, I am also working to determine under which conditions (heat and humidity) that we should consider closing school and learning remotely from home because the masks in the heat and humidity would potentially be too uncomfortable. Another face covering possibility is the use of a gaiter, and specifically a [cooling neck gaiter](#). This is a circular, light-weight cloth worn around the neck and which can be pulled up over the nose and mouth. Additionally, it can cool the body by getting it wet with cold water and ringing it out. Bottom line: we're trying to consider how we can ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment.

I encourage you to look at the MI Safe Schools Roadmap that is hyperlinked above because it will address many of the questions I'm sure you have. The Executive Summary on pages 7-10 provides a good overview; page 11 gives a snapshot of those most impacted by the coronavirus; pages 22-36 address the return to school for Phase 4 (where we currently are); and pages 38-52 address the return to school for Phase 5 (where we hope to be by mid-August.)

Know that this is a work in progress. I continue to communicate with the Genesee County Health Department, my colleagues across the county, Bentley staff, and you through emails, phone calls, and survey data. I will follow up with you at the end of the month with additional information, including the survey results. We are all working together to figure out the best way forward. My hope is that we all try to be informed, flexible, patient, and positive.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristy Spann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Kristy Spann
Superintendent