

BELLEFONTE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUE NO. 45

RED RAIDER

m a g a z i n e



In This Issue

• Class of 2020 • Special education • Thank you, Dr. Saylor • Virtual reality



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Kristen Bruckner
Julie Fitzgerald
Jon Guizar, President
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Rodney Musser
Donna Smith
Jeff Steiner, Vice President
Kimberly Weaver
Tammie Burnaford, Interim Superintendent
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Director of Human Resources.....ext. 3002
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Editor's note: Information in this edition of Red Raider magazine was made in the spring to accommodate the May deadline. Other school-related information can be found in the "School News" tab on the district's website, www.basd.net, and on its social media accounts.



Message from the board

By Jon Guizar

While summer is upon us once again, we are certain that it is not the summer any of us had envisioned. Our days have been consumed with more basic and immediate thoughts, which almost none of us have ever seen before – school closures, social distancing guidelines, stay-at-home orders, shortages of cleaning supplies and food items at the grocery stores, and so much more. If that wasn't enough, we then were plunged into remote learning, with no sports, no performing arts, no class trips, and now, once again, no stadium graduation, no large groups and not even a traditional graduation for our seniors to celebrate their hard work and prepare for the next adventure as they continue life's journey. Our hearts are with everyone in this challenging time.

With the ever changing environment we have endured and that we must continue to navigate, it is very easy to lose sight of our primary mission as leaders, educators and as a community – the reason for the season, if you will. Please join us as you make your way through this edition of Red Raider magazine and celebrate the reason we all work hard to do our part in support of our school district – our students!

Specifically, we would like to thank the Class of 2020 for your patience as you all continue to miss so many opportunities that students before you have enjoyed. However, please don't be discouraged. Know that you will continue on your journey and use what you have learned to adapt and thrive in what's been called the "new normal." You will succeed if you study hard, work hard and remember to play hard, as well. Don't be content to follow the path that others create for you, but forge your own way and be your best. Innovate, create, persevere and embrace failures, as they truly are a necessary step toward success.

We wish you all the best that life has to offer.



On the cover: As Bellefonte Area School District was ordered to close as part of Gov. Tom Wolf's state mandate to help prevent the spread of novel coronavirus during the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers switched to virtual means of educating students. Pleasant Gap Elementary School third-grade teachers Pam Grimminger and Trevor Montgomery regularly used video platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom to connect with their

classes. Art teacher Amy Shoemaker also logged in to see the kids. You may read more about online education and other alternative learning efforts on pages 7, 11 and 15.

Thank you, Dr. Saylor



Assistant superintendent
August 2012 to June 2016
Superintendent
July 2016 to June 2020

Former Superintendent Michelle Saylor regularly wrote a blog about different educational topics. Titled, "For the love of learning," it highlighted trends in education that also featured her passion for the work.

"It is a privilege and honor to serve as the superintendent of our district," she once said.

And she meant it wholeheartedly.

"It becomes evident that my professional goals go beyond myself," Saylor added. "They are designed not to simply improve me in some way, but more importantly to lift others – to build capacity, to positively affect student growth, to sustain an effective program or to increase human capital. They are born of purpose and nurtured with love."

Saylor lived in the Bellefonte Area community and helped ignite Bellefonte Area School District values of pride and tradition. She also made it her mission to enhance the district's global education initiative to allow faculty, staff, students and the community to embrace learning beyond Bellefonte.

In January, Saylor publicly announced her retirement – a decision that came after more than two decades in education. Filling the role in the interim is Tammie Burnaford, assistant superintendent. In the spring, Burnaford participated in an interview with reporter Vincent Corso from the Centre County Gazette, which she said this:

Dr. Saylor provided leadership that was positive and supportive for all staff and students. In her eight years at Bellefonte Area School District, she brought new, fresh and creative ideas to the district for students and staff. Her legacy is inspiring students and staff to think outside the box, to embrace challenges, and to learn from and support one another. This legacy will be evident in those who crossed paths with her. I've learned a lot from Dr. Saylor, including the importance of looking at issues and challenges from all perspectives. This is something I will strive to do as I continue on to my role as interim superintendent.

On behalf of Bellefonte Area School District, we wish Dr. Saylor all the blessings and happiness in her journey, and thank her for her dedicated service to the district.

To learn more about the superintendent transition, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/15013



*Photos provided by the CDT and used with permission

Kaitlyn Alterio
Luke Baney
Tynnia Barnhart
Trae Bauman
Gabrielle Bean
Tyler Benner
Blake Berenty
Nicholas Bergman
Logan Bernier
Conner Bitner
Kayla Bitner-Bruss
Hunter Blair
Natalie Book
Alec Bossert
Kiara Boughton
Alexa Bressler
Selah Brown
Zebadiah Brungard
Thomas Bumbarger
Demetri Butts
Robert Cain
Dillon Campbell
Annalee Caprio
Shaun Carey
Nicholas Catalano
Stephanie Catalano
Marianne Chico
Owen Christopher
Colton Clark
Chyeanne Coble
Ezekiel Confer
Jacob Confer
Madison Confer
Sarah Conner
Tyler Cooke
Alex Coppola
Casey Corso
Jeremy Cousins
Hope Cox
Austin Craig
William Crater
Shane Cronin
Madison Dagen
Kalista Darney
Dustin Deitrich
Zane Deitrich
Lindsay Dillon
Alexander Doebler
Kevin Doyle
Nicholas Dugan
Ethan Ebeling
Mackenzie Ebeling
Nicholas Edwards
Alexander Eichenlaub
Julian Emel
Riley Emel
Jenna Etter
Lilith Evans
Mercedes Evans
Alexis Facer
Dakota Featherer
Aidan Fennessey
Linzy Fetterolf
Jaidyn Fountain
Gunner Fravel
Maya Fulton
Carter Funk
William Gairloch
Haley Gardner

Hunter Gardner
Dennis Gerasenko
Logan Gettier
Logan Giffin
Alyssa Glace
Zoe Goff
Anna Goodrow

Brian Hill
Aaron Hillard
Mitchell Holden
Andrew Hollars
Alexis Hosterman
Emily Hovies
Kyle Hoy

Vincent Lawrence
Delilah Ledesma
Ryan Lehman
Rachel Lexon
Scott Liliedahl
Aaron Little
Nathan Long

Calen McCloskey
Megan McClure
Tala McCool
Celina McGrail
Sierra McIntosh
Jillian McKee
Evan McMullen

Alexis Osborne
Maya O'Shea
Kacee Oswalt
Sarah Owens
Rylin Pacella
Logan Paige
Conner Payne
Amber Peacock
Andrew Peters
Keeli Pighetti
Jasmine Platt
Karlie Pletcher
Alexander Poulin
Breanna Praskovich
Nolan Putnam
Olivia Reiter
Skylar Ridenour
Chelsea Robson
Marty Rockey
Ian Rogers
Phoebe Rowland
Trinity Rupert
Hunter Sell
Elisa Shadow
Brittany Shawley
Jessica Shearer
Grace Sherman
Cassandra Shinham
Amber Shirey
Anna Simmon
Mallorie Smith
Chelsea Snook
Alexandra Spencer
Samuel Sprout
Madison Steiner
Isaac Stem
Christian Stitzer
Dylan Stock
Brooke Stroud
Tarin Sunday
Jack Swarm
Dylan Taylor
JaVaun Taylor
Karalee Tedrow
Dahrran Teeter
Charles Theuer
Logan Thompson
Sully Tibbens
Daniel Tishchenko
Sarah Tobin
Katherine Uchneat
Logan VonGunden
Hunter Walk
Alina Watson
Tre Wilson
Rachael Witmer
Brianna Woomer
Tara Woomer
Dylan Young
Morgan Zweig

**Some student photos were omitted from this page because the students indicated the district was not permitted to use their pictures for publication*



Austin Greene
Mason Grey
Emily Hagenbuch
Elizabeth Hargrove
Abigail Harper
Sara Hart
Jason Harter
Robert Harvey
Matthew Heggenstaller

Mackenzie Hubbs
Ashley Ishler
John Jennings
Hailey Johnson
Taylor Johnson
Taylor Kerr
Anna Klena
Ahleah Krout
Cooper Lachat

Alexander Lomartire
Austin Martin
Brady Martin
Jordon Mathias
Jakob Matis
Luciano Mazzotta
Benjamin McCartney
Carson McChesney
Clayton McClelland

Kara Mellott
Ethan Mikesic
Shayna Miller
Cameron Murray
Tyler Muse
Emily Musser
Katie Mussett
John Nastase
Morgan Nichols

Graduation message

By Class President Natalie Book



During our junior year, delays concerning Bellefonte's rebuilding of Roger Stadium robbed our school of the fellowship and opportunities surrounding hosting home football games. However, upon returning to a brand-new stadium our senior year, our enthusiasm and appreciation for not only the new field, but the chance to be together was unmatched. Even though our senior celebrations and memories are not what we had anticipated or hoped for, we understand that our losses enabled others to keep from losing far more. Furthermore, we know from the experiences of our junior year, this season of disappointment will pass, and when it does we will come through COVID-19 with a new appreciation for the friends that accompany and the opportunities that await us. As a class, we will make a greater difference in the world because we have learned not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but lasting life lessons of self-sacrifice and gratitude.

Other class officers
Vice President
Olivia Reiter
Treasurer
Alina Watson
Secretary
Abby Harper

Class advisers
English teacher
Ashlie Crosson
Video production teacher
Carla Cipro

**Photo by business teacher and yearbook adviser Andrew Weigold*

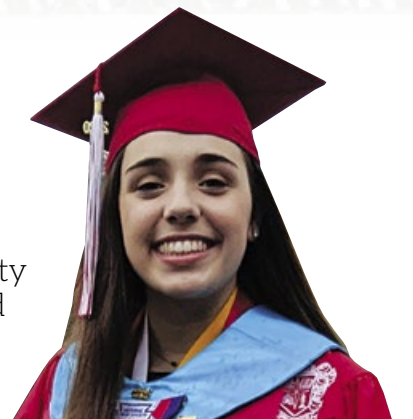


Valedictorian

Elizabeth Hargrove
101.0082%
Messiah University
Biomedical engineering

Salutatorian

Keeli Pighetti
100.3939%
Bloomsburg University
Early childhood and special education



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Kalista Darney
What are your plans after graduation?
I'll be attending Saint Francis University for a major in business analytics and minor in accounting. I love data and working with numbers, so if I can come back to the area to provide expertise to small businesses to help our town flourish, I will.



Kevin Doyle
What's your favorite high school memory?
My favorite memory of high school was helping with the Life Skills Cafe.
*Learn more about the Life Skills Cafe, here: www.basd.net/Page/13487



Mackenzie Ebeling
What tips do you have for underclassmen?
Always be yourself. Don't let the pressure of life get you down and change who you are inside. Never take life's moments for granted, because you never know when they may end.



Jillian McKee
How did you make the best of the unexpected school closure?
By sticking to what I know best – positivity. I always turn my head the other way and strive for a positive mindset. During my time I mostly journaled my experiences and adventures. It's a good reminder that I have things to look forward to in the future.



Evan McMullen
Who is someone you'd like to thank that positively influenced you?
I'd like to thank my friends and family for all they've done over these past four years. They'll never know how much their support has truly meant to me.

To see more senior spotlights, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/15044

Virtual walking tour

Matt Maris, a social studies teacher at Bellefonte Area High School, found a way to engage the community in a historic tour of downtown Bellefonte that allowed people to see it right from the comfort of their own homes. It came at a time when officials suggested that residents practice distancing during the state-mandated school closure and general stay-at-home order due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, also known as novel coronavirus.

With help from Ellen Matis of Downtown Bellefonte Inc., who videoed the tour, Maris took to the relatively vacant streets of Bellefonte to explain its history to online viewers through Facebook Live.

Walking tours were something he created last year as part of professional learning-type activities among staff at Bellefonte Area School District. It also came with a mission to bring new knowledge of the commu-

nity's history into the classroom. The walking tours are made possible through a partnership with the Centre County Library and Historical Museum, where Maris interned while obtaining his master's degree in history from Arizona State. Fellow high school social studies teacher Chris Morris also often helps guide the tours.

See more about the walking tours, here: www.basd.net/Page/14457

QUESTION AND ANSWER



Question:
What did the tour include?

Answer:
This virtual tour featured some historical highlights of Allegheny and High streets, making our way down from the Bellefonte Art Museum to the waterfront area. It was about an hour and covered some new sites I researched like Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, the former GC Murphy store, Beezer Meat Market, Decker Motor (Company), and some Underground Railroad sites and stories.

ny and High streets, making our way down from the Bellefonte Art Museum to the waterfront area. It was about an hour and covered some new sites I researched like Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, the former GC Murphy store, Beezer Meat Market, Decker Motor (Company), and some Underground Railroad sites and stories.

Q: How did you get the opportunity to do this?

A: This was a collaboration between Downtown Bellefonte Inc., as well as Bellefonte.com. The Facebook event was also co-sponsored by Happy Valley Adventure Bureau. Downtown Bellefonte Inc. actually broadcasted it

via Facebook Live. We collaborated to help bring some virtual history to folks during this challenging period of social distancing.

Q: What was the response like?

A: It was incredible. I think around 184 people joined the virtual tour. Lots of positive comments and great questions. I love this community. I know some of my students watched it, as well, which made me happy.

Q: What do you hope your students learned from it?

A: I really want my students to appreciate what incredible local history we have right in our backyard. I hope my passion for the Bellefonte area makes them proud to live here and want to learn more. Maybe this will help preserve the future of our community, too, if more students and people value it.

Q: What was the biggest challenge you faced doing it virtually?

A: I really like the engagement of having actual people in front of me. My

goal is to help individuals make authentic connections with local history, so this was a little challenging because I couldn't get to all the questions. However, this online format made it accessible to more people.

Q: What are some of your favorite historical facts about Bellefonte?

A: There is so much I love about Bellefonte's history. Right now, I'm doing a lot of research for a Civil War-themed tour in Bellefonte – in particular, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in front of the courthouse. There are 20 bronze plates with over 3,800 names of veterans from the Revolutionary War through the Spanish American War, and mostly regiments from the Civil War. Each of those names is a life and story, and I've had the opportunity to learn about several. The Soldiers and Sailors and Curtin (Monument) memorials were dedicated in 1906. The committee that organized it included Gens. James Beaver and George Atherton, who was president of Penn State at the time. Atherton actually left Yale during the Civil War to volunteer, and served in the Union army for a period of time.

Transition to High School

When Brayson Holderman walked into Bellefonte Area High School business teacher Ryan Myers' class, she was dressed in business attire and appeared prepared for a job interview as a physician and general surgeon at WellStar Health System based in Atlanta.

The then-freshman wasn't actually in a real-life situation. Instead, she was among a group of eight students in Myers' Transition to High School class who participated in a mock interview process with school and community business leaders brought in to ask students a series of questions.

It's something students in fellow business teacher Andrew Weigold's class also participated in, and were graded on appearance and poise, and skill presentation.

"I think the job interviews at this age have two important benefits," Myers said. "The first is just to get some practice, so they know what to say and how to answer questions with detailed answers. The second benefit that I try to hammer home is for them to see what experiences they don't have and know that high school is a good opportunity to fill those holes in their personal experiences."

To prepare for the final interview, students created a

resume and learned about general job-specific skills such as confidence, demeanor, what to wear, when to give a handshake and more. Much of the interview preparation focused on SARB – situation, action, result and benefit.

"It's really trying to get them to tell stories when they're answering questions," Myers said. "Without instruction, many students will give a very general answer. What should also come with that is an example that helps get to know them."

The class, which is a one-marking-period elective, is aimed at providing students with soft skills and job readiness preparation, and also allows students to search for jobs, map out a high school plan and set goals.

Professional interviewers

- Stephanie Fost, executive director for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Centre County
- Elaine Jerez, recruiter at Foxdale Village retirement community
- Brit Milazzo, public relations director at Bellefonte Area School District
- Ryan Myers, high school business teacher
- Arlin Roth, instructional technology specialist at BASD

CareerLink

Since 2015, Bellefonte Area High School has partnered with CareerLink to help provide students with the opportunity to better navigate career exploration. Through several programs, eligible students can regularly work with high school teacher and district Transition Coordinator Rachael Davis and CareerLink representatives to help them determine the direction of their futures.

Programs through CareerLink include Bridges to the Future and the Pennsylvania CareerLink Academy.

"The objective is to help them find a career path and what they're interested in to help in their future, whether that's military, post-secondary (education) or the workforce," CareerLink Program Supervisor Derek Reber said. "Our goal is to help them identify that and further help them meet that goal upon graduation."

CareerLink will also work with that student for up a year after they graduate.

Bridges to the Future

Through the Bridges to the Future program, CareerLink works with about 25 students from Bald Eagle and Bellefonte area high schools, but can take a caseload of up to 50 students. A majority of those students are from Bellefonte Area, Reber said.

According to information from CareerLink, Bridges to the Future is aimed at working with eligible students

beginning the spring of their sophomore year and lasting through one year after graduation. The program includes assessment and interest inventories, creating goals, participating in work-based learning, resume and interviewing training, soft skill development and more.

CareerLink Academy

Open to all students and staff, the Pennsylvania CareerLink Academy is a 10-part series aimed at helping students make more informed post-graduation plans through understanding skills and abilities, learning about local career opportunities and setting goals through a pathway plan. It also offers professional development-type training for teachers.

This also translates into some classes at the high school that allows students to learn skills that make them employable, such as projects business teacher Ryan Myers conducts annually with his students. His Transition to High School class aligns with goals of the CareerLink academy.

Many CareerLink programs are made possible by the Business Education Partnership grant through the state Department of Labor and Industry that allows these programs to be brought to local high schools. Through the grant, it also allows teachers to coordinate field trips through CareerLink with local businesses for industry tours that help students learn more about their career interests.

To learn more, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14821
Staff and students interested in learning more may contact Davis at rdavis@basd.net.

*Graphic provided by CareerLink and used with permission



Virtual Spirit Week

Social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram were blowing up during the third week of the state-ordered school closure, with many Bellefonte Area staff and students who posted themed photos of themselves. Sometimes it included wearing pajamas; sometimes it was wearing a hat or tie-dye shirt; and sometimes pets were involved.

It was all part of an online spirit week created by high school business

teacher Andrew Weigold and students from the school's Yearbook Club, which he oversees.

"(We) wanted to spread some school spirit and get students involved from home," Weigold said.

Theme days

- **Monday:** Pajama day
- **Tuesday:** Tie-dye day
- **Wednesday:** Pet day
- **Thursday:** Hat day
- **Friday:** Red and white day

The most popular days, Weigold said, were pet day and red and white day. And as a teacher, he added that being a part of something that keeps him connected with students is important.

"It is important for them to know we are still here and that we care about them," Weigold said. "It isn't just about when we are in school or the grades. We invest our time in them."

Apple Award



*Photo provided by Chris Morelli, Lock Haven Express

"Vicky is a light in our school," Poorman said. "She sees and helps so many students in our school. Her office is never slow, and it's not just students – we teachers are needy. She will help us all with a smile on her face. Vicky is a busy lady, but is always willing to help others. I can't think of a better, more deserving person of this award, because she is so selfless and means so much to our school."

The award was given to Confer through the state chapter of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year program. It's presented annually to teachers, educators, coaches and other support staff for their educational excellence and making a positive difference in the lives of staff, students and the community.

Poorman was a finalist for the 2019 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year honor, which she was then eligible to nominate someone else for the Apple Award.

"It's an honor to receive this award and a privilege to be chosen," Confer humbly said.

Confer has worked for Bellefonte Area School District since 1998, and has been in her current position since 2003.

On any give school day, if you walk into Vicky Confer's office at Bellefonte Area High School, it's busy. The longtime high school office clerk is in charge of helping students and staff with daily needs and maintaining various administrative duties such as discipline records, parking passes, lockers, deliveries, resetting passwords, and monitoring security cameras and distributing van keys for field trips, and more.

Her hard work, dedication to helping make the school a better place, and going above and beyond to work with students and staff in need are just a few of the many reasons why Confer is an Apple Award recipient.

She was nominated by high school agriculture teacher Myken Poorman.

HIGH SCHOOL

PMEA District 4 Band Festival



Bellefonte Area High School students participated in the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association District 4 Band Fest held at Penns Valley Area High School. Among the group, five students qualified for the Region 3 Band Fest in March. That event was canceled due to the state shutdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Band Director Caleb Rebarchak said students had the opportunity to work with Adam Brennan from Mansfield University and enjoyed making music with more than 160 other students from central Pennsylvania.

Student participants were Mykayla Cole, Emily Confer, Mia Elmore, Linzy Fetterolf, Meredith Frey, Abby Harper, Eddie Henry, Elizabeth Marchini, Keeli Pighetti, Matthew Uchneat and Ella Underwood.

Students who qualified for regionals

- Mykayla Cole: Horn 1, chair 2
- Emily Confer: Flute 1, chair 3
- Meredith Frey: Bass clarinet, chair 3
- Keeli Pighetti: Clarinet 2, chair 2
- Ella Underwood: Clarinet 3, chair 3



World Language Week

Each year, the language department at Bellefonte Area High School celebrates World Language Week to expose students to different languages spoken around the world. In its seventh year at BAHS, WLW was celebrated the first week of March.

And this year, like each year before, also boasted a new logo to recognize the week. Katie Musset, a member of the Class of 2020 and Advanced Placement Spanish, created the logo. She was also treasurer of Spanish Honor Society.

Spanish teacher Emily Zimdahl-McManus said all students who participated in language classes at the high school were encouraged to submit designs that paralleled the national theme. Students then voted and a winning design was selected that was printed on a T-shirt.

This week was an extension of Discover Languages Month, held in February, where Spanish Honor Society students promoted different languages.

To learn more about National Foreign Language Week, visit this link: www.amgnational.org/national-foreign-language-week.html. At BAHS, the week is called World Language Week to respect the proper vernacular of what a group of languages other than English are called within the commonwealth.

Slay the Dragon



For the third consecutive year, a team of students from Bellefonte Area High School was Slay the Dragon champions. The annual trivia-style competition, sponsored by the Youth Service Bureau, was hosted at Nittany Mall.

Secondary math coach and team adviser Melissa Duckworth said students who participate are given 140 questions that they must research from a list of sources provided by YSB. The questions address facts

about drug and alcohol abuse with national and local statistics, and aims to combat myths and misconceptions.

The high school team competed against three teams from different schools and placed first. A team from Bellefonte Area Middle School placed second in the competition.

"They studied hard to memorize their questions and rocked it at the competition," Duckworth said. "Over the three games the BAHS students participated in, they only missed a handful of questions. These kiddos worked hard and were very excited to hoist the trophy for another year."

Teams from Mount Nittany Middle School and Our Lady of Victory Catholic School also participated.

Team members

- Caitlyn Bechdel • Carlee Bechdel
- Hana Rados • Regan Roan
- Rilie Roan

Charlie “The Spaniard” Brenneman

Charlie “The Spaniard” Brenneman visited Bellefonte Area Middle School. Once a UFC fighter, and now a motivational speaker, the Hollidaysburg native said he aims to show youth the positive effects of kindness, compassion, hard work and perseverance. During his visit, he also shared a fun fact with faculty, staff and students about his connection to Bellefonte Area School District – it was the place he was first offered a teaching position at after graduating from Lock Haven University, but instead accepted a job to teach Spanish at his home school district and alma mater in Hollidaysburg.

Question: How did you go from teacher to UFC fighter to motivational speaker?

Answer: *I was a wrestler my whole life and got really into Spanish when I was in middle school, because I had an exchange student stay with me, and thought Spanish teacher (or) wrestling coach (was my future). I was there (at Hollidaysburg Area School District) for about a year, but I really missed the root of wrestling and competition and getting after it, living a life of discipline and commitment. I oddly transitioned into professional fighting, so I learned the skill sets. From there when my career was over, (I thought) ‘what am I going to do (next)?’ Back home people would always ask a bunch of questions, so I thought I’d write a book just to answer the questions and (then) thought, ‘guys who write books*

also speak, and I have a story.’

Q: What are your messages about?

A: *Especially with middle and high school kids, kindness and empathy are huge. It’s like a universal value and principal that’s a virtue. Couple that with hard work and perseverance. I use my personal story – a lot of cool things, but all those cool things have like five heartbreaking, uncool things to go with it, so I share the ups and downs (and) positive choices. To me I (also) love reading books. It’s one of my favorite things in the world to do. We’re in a school, so I drive on if you’re having these problems or thoughts and disbeliefs and fears in your mind, then books are a huge way I get through those things and so can you.*

Q: What do you hope students get from your story?

A: *I learn from a lot of different and successful authors, speakers and people in general. A lot of people have black and white, one-two-three takeaways, but I want to touch their hearts. I want to connect with them as human beings, so the next time they think, ‘I can’t do this,’ they hear a sound bite. If they take like 10 seconds or a concept of just keep going... that’s why I do this stuff.*

**Photo by eighth-grade student Tyler Harter*



Youth author Daniel Weaver

When Daniel Weaver got to writing his book, he tapped

into the minds of the characters to tell the story “Found by Time” that helped create their journey from beginning to end.

“Found by Time” is a book the now eighth-grader wrote last summer between his sixth- and seventh-grade years. It was later published by Ready-AimWrite Kids, a branch of the Harrisburg-based company ReadyAimWrite Publishing, owned by author Stephen Kozan.

This makes Daniel the second Bellefonte Area Middle School student to write and publish a book through Kozan’s publishing company. In 2018, Annie Cernuska, now also an eighth-grader, wrote a book called, “The Hunter Voyage.” You can learn more about it, here: www.basd.net/Page/14174

Calling it a “very interesting story,” Daniel’s experience writing was one he said he wasn’t expecting, but came after Kozan visited BAMS during the 2018-19 school year and presented what’s called a Flash Fiction contest to the sixth-grade student body. The Flash Fiction contest allows students to submit work to Kozan with the potential of being professionally published based on their ideas. More than 100 students participated.

“In fifth-grade, that’s when Annie did it, but I didn’t because I kind of thought that wasn’t for me,” Daniel, 13, said. “Then last year I was like, ‘you know what? I have a couple ideas that might be cool. I probably won’t get it, but at least I’ll try for it,’ and I did.”

Kozan selected a short story that Daniel wrote as one of the five finalists. The group was then asked to further expand their ideas with a 150-word synopsis, and Kozan selected just one as the winner with the opportunity for that student to write and publish a book based on that idea.

Daniel was the winner.

“First of all, when I heard I was in the top 5, I was like, ‘are you sure you got the right person?’” Daniel said with a laugh. “That was amazing. Out of that many people he chose me.”

With help and some direction from sixth-grade English teacher Sam Hubley, Daniel said he began writing during the summer – something he explained was “more difficult” than he thought it would be.

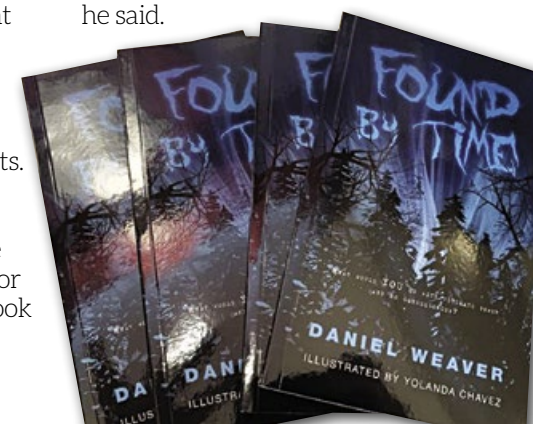
“I give so much respect for those people who write hundreds of pages,” he said. “It takes so much effort and time, and when I was writing, I thought it was tough, but had a lot of support and just began coming up with ideas as I was typing.”

His goal was to complete two chapters a day until he was finished with the book, and writing in 20-minute increments with 20 minutes breaks in between. He submitted the final draft to Kozan and an editor just before school started in August.

“I was so happy the day I finished – I’ll never forget it,” Daniel said. “I was like, ‘wow, that was really something.’ That was quite a journey because I kept thinking it was summer and I should be relaxing, but knew I had to do this and get it done.”

Despite the obstacles, Daniel said “everything about it” was a great experience.

“The opportunity was a great life moment for me, and just being able to learn all the skills I learned from this with writing and managing time and making deadline was totally worth it,” he said.



SYNOPSIS

**Provided by ReadyAimWrite Publishing and used with permission*

Infinite knowledge, the ability to control time – some forbidden gifts are too dangerous for any single human. What would you do with ultimate power and no consequences?

Anthony is just like any other college kid, until a strange dream and even stranger legend sends him and his friend Isaiah on a scouting trip into the woods. But when the boys find what they’re looking for and this “legend” proves all too real, unexpected things start to happen...and Anthony and Isaiah are changed forever.

When the boys realize the raw potential of these untested powers, they are forced to consider their own true natures. With these new abilities, they could help their fellow humans... or cheat on their math exams. Anthony and Isaiah must look deep inside themselves and make a choice: Will they use their new powers for mischief or for good?

Soon, Anthony and Isaiah are embarking on a magical journey with an unlikely destination: time itself. They have a mission to complete. They also have questions, and this time, they want answers:

Where did these powers come from in the first place? Who is behind the disembodied voice Anthony keeps hearing? What perils will befall the boys on their journey through time? Can they brave the dangers and political intrigue of this new world...or will they be lost in time forever?

Zoom team photo

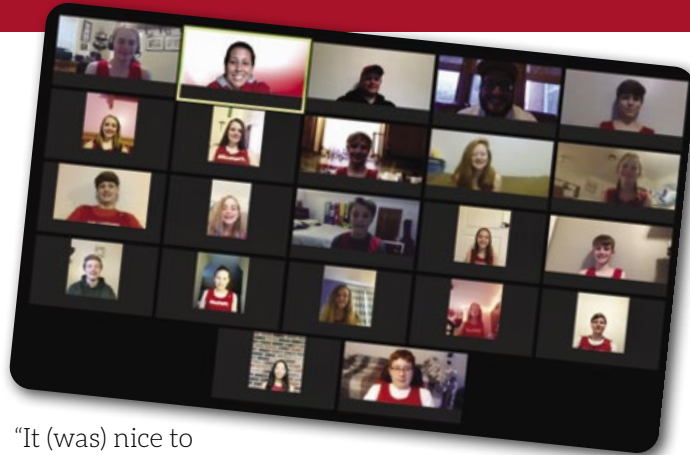
Bellefonte Area Middle School track and field coaches Patrick McDermott, Brit Milazzo and Chad Wiler were only two weeks into practice with their 37-member team when they heard the news that school would be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the time, the governor's orders were for just two weeks. So, McDermott, a school counselor at Pleasant Gap Elementary School who works with the team's throwers, made the decision to hold regular meetings with the team via the Zoom video platform. They met twice and provided the student athletes with weekly optional workouts to keep the team in shape, so when the season resumed it wouldn't feel like they skipped a beat.

And then news came that school would be closed another two weeks and then another two weeks after that and then a final closure order by the state through the end of the school year. The PIAA, Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, followed the governor's guidance and mandated that all sports seasons also cancel.

Teams were not allowed to physically meet nor were coaches allowed to ask for students to do required training, but the program still held its Thursday-night Zoom meetings as a way to keep in touch with the kids willing to join – something members of the team said they enjoyed.

"We're still a team even if the stay-at-home order separates us," said Milazzo, an administrator with the district who primarily works with the team's jumpers and sprinters.



"It (was) nice to see them and catch up and have some laughs."

Their Zoom meetings averaged about 32 team members each week.

In April, the coaches decided that if a physical team picture wasn't an option, then they'd create one the best they could by virtual means instead, and set the April 23-meeting as one where students could wear their track uniforms and smile for a team photo while Milazzo took a screenshot on her computer. This was made possible with help from district instructional technology specialist Arlin Roth who provided instructions for how to capture the image via the Snip and Sketch app. Information about the optional activity was relayed to families before the meeting.

It included 22 members of the junior high track and field team. Many student athletes could not join due to internet connection issues, but some sent individual photos of themselves wearing a Bellefonte track pinnie. That was sent to members of the team, along with BAMS teacher and yearbook adviser Dave Gregor, who included it in the end-of-year slideshow to recognize the school year.



"Hello, BAMS!"

While school was physically closed in the spring due to the governor's orders as a way to limit the spread of novel coronavirus, faculty and staff were still strong in their efforts to connect daily with students to provide a variety of services and supports.

At Bellefonte Area Middle School, faculty and staff took videos of themselves sending messages of encouragement – and entertainment – to students who they couldn't be with the remainder of the school year. Those clips were sent to the school's Vice Principal Mike Baughman, who created "Hello, BAMS!" videos just about every day. The goal was to spread positive messages to students and their families during a time that was stressful for many.

To see the videos, visit the BAMS Facebook page or click on the "video" link in the "school news" tab of the district's website, www.basd.net.

**In technology education and engineering teacher Jordan Eccher's video, he encourages students to find the positives in the situation and to try something new, along with busting a few "not-so-sweet" dance moves.*



BELLEFONTE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT • 2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR

July '20						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August '20						
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September '20						
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27	28	29	30			

October '20						
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November '20						
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29	30					

December '20						
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27	28	29	30	31		

End of MP 1: 10/28

January '21						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February '21						
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28						

March '21						
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28	29	30	31			

End of MP 2: 1/18

April '21						
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May '21						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June '21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

End of MP 3: 3/26

	First and Last Day of School
	Professional Learning Day (No school for students)
	Act 80 Day (No school for students)
	Clerical Day (No school for students)
	School Closed/Holiday (No school for students)
	Vacation/Weather Makeup Day

Graduation Date: June 4, 2021
Senior Awards Night: June 2, 2021

Parent/Teacher Conferences: November 6, 2020

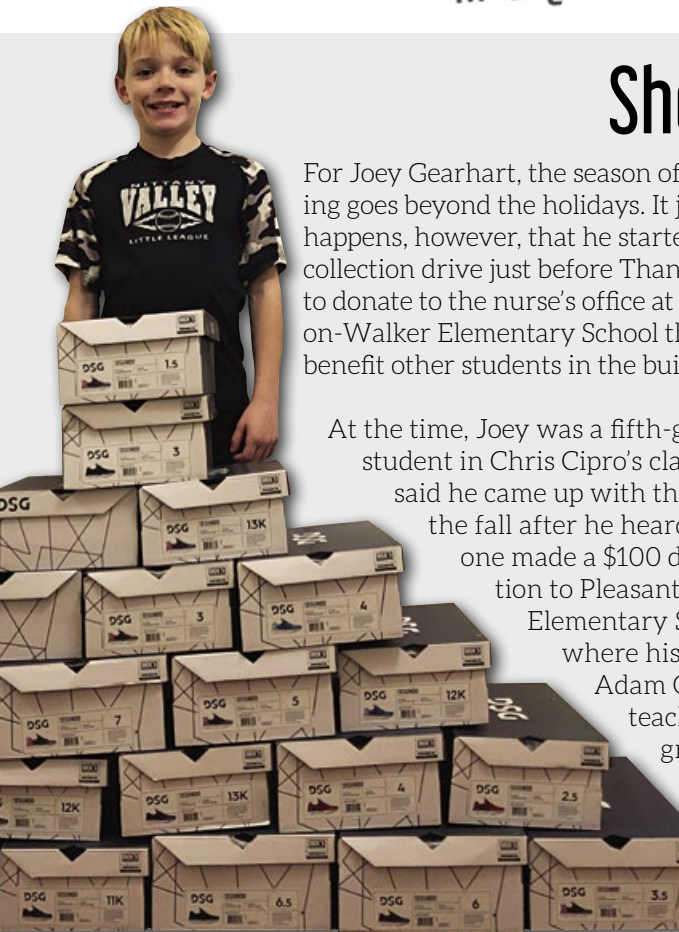
Snow days will be made up in the following order: March 11 and 12, 2021 (any additional days will be added to the end of the school year)

Staff Opening Day (no students): August 17, 2020

Staff Trade Day: May 28, 2021

New Teacher Induction: August 11, 12, 13, 2020

Shoe donations



For Joey Gearhart, the season of giving goes beyond the holidays. It just so happens, however, that he started a shoe collection drive just before Thanksgiving to donate to the nurse's office at Marion-Walker Elementary School that could benefit other students in the building.

At the time, Joey was a fifth-grade student in Chris Cipro's class and said he came up with the idea in the fall after he heard someone made a \$100 donation to Pleasant Gap Elementary School where his father, Adam Gearhart, teaches fifth grade.

With that donation, they

purchased 10 pair of sneakers at Dick's Sporting Goods to donate to Pleasant Gap.

"I realized on that day that I should do that for my school for kids who need them," Joey said. "Then people started donating money and stuff."

By the middle of December, more than \$200 was raised. By the new year, more than \$1,100 was raised – and that number climbed. He collected more than \$2,400 by March.

Before spring, Joey was able to use the money to buy new shoes – a total of 150 sneakers and a pair of work boots – and donate them to Marion-Walker and other schools within Bellefonte Area School District. The work boots were given to a student at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology where his mother is the early childhood education instructor. He also made donations to other local districts including Bald Eagle Area, Keystone Central and Philipsburg-Osceola.

"It feels really good to give back," Joey said. "There are kids in the world that don't get stuff, but they deserve it."

Poster contest



Three upcoming sixth-grade students from Bellefonte Area School District have artwork featured in the 2020 calendar by the Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority, including the calendar cover by Riley Santostefano, who attended Pleasant Gap Elementary School at the time of the contest.



the county. With a theme "Feeding our Friends," 16 posters were selected – among "hundreds" of entries, according to CCRRA education coordinator Amy Schirf.



Winners

• Emma Burger • Chloe Hartswick • Riley Santostefano

Honorable mentions

• Maya Patel • Hailey Vinnedge • Alyssa Weiss



*Photo from spring 2019

Wax Museum

When students enter fourth grade at Bellefonte Elementary School, they get the chance to be a part of an annual class project that puts them in character of someone more famous. The project is called the Wax Museum and has been a staple at the school since the 2014-15 school year. This spring's project, however, was canceled due to the state-ordered school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teacher Lauren Whitman said during English and language arts classes, students are able to select a person to research – likely a historical figure. They're tasked with writing a biography about the person they selected to become experts on and then create scrips for the final Wax Museum project at the end of the lesson that also comes at the end of the school year.

Staged around the auditorium at Bellefonte Elementary, students dress as their figure with props at their site. Frozen still, they become activated when a guest presses a button. Once triggered, the student gives a speech about who they're representing. Students and staff, in addition to family members of the fourth-graders, are invited to the event.

"It's definitely an exciting project," Whitman said. "The kids are motivated to do it because they've chosen the person they want to research and they're interested in them in one way or another."

The figures include athletes, astronauts, historical figures, actors and more.



Memorial

Steve Klein has roots that run deep at Bellefonte Elementary School. It's one of the reasons he takes his fourth-grade class outside at the end of each school year to help maintain the grounds around the school's memorial. It was created in memory of four individuals with connections to the school.

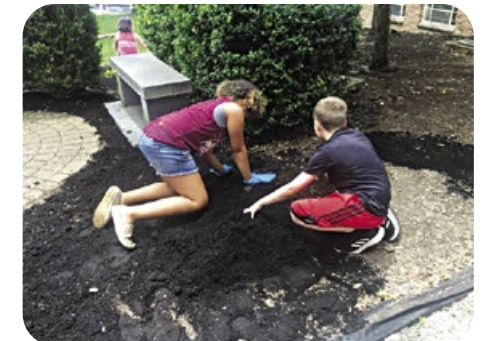
His classes spend time weeding the area and then laying mulch around the memorials that recognize former second-grade teacher Deborah Saylor, former fifth-grade teacher Jean White, former first-grade student Grant Bodle and former Principal Ott Kantner. Students in Lauren Whitman's fourth-grade class also help with the mulching process.

Sensory walk

A sensory walk is new to Pleasant Gap Elementary School. It was created in the 2019-20 school year by music teacher Jessica Cetnar. According to learning support teacher Kate Kohler, the space-themed sensory walk allows students to move around and help regulate their emotions. There is also a section where participating students can move their hands up a wall, which encourages stretching.

"We use it as a break activity for our kids at school if they need help regulating their bodies (and emotions) and just an integral break as part of their day," she said.

Autistic and emotional support



*Photos taken spring 2019

Klein said Saylor was his mentor when he began teaching in 1995.

"Thinking about her now still makes me wishy-washy," Klein said about his emotions. "I have a connection with this building that runs deep and I thought I need to do something to maintain this. We do it now because it's the right thing."

He's been participating in the project with his class for more than 20 years. The class activity this year, however, was canceled in the spring due to the state-mandated school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school's maintenance and grounds crew, on the other hand, made sure landscaping efforts were completed with mulching, weeding and more.



teacher Holly Williams added that it's also a good way for students to work on gross motor skills by jumping, tiptoeing and spinning through the motions, in addition to enhancing spatial relationship skills that some students work on through occupational therapy and other support services provided by the school.



Connecting with students



Covone

Just about any teacher at Bellefonte Area School District will say how much they missed their “kids” this spring. By “kids,” they mean the students in their classes that they taught throughout the school year.



Downs

And like most other teachers, those at Benner Elementary School worked daily to connect with students when Gov. Tom Wolf issued a mandatory closure of all schools in the commonwealth due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With Benner Elementary fifth-grade classes, teachers Laura Covone and

Nick Downs used a combination of email, Google Classroom, Google Meet and Zoom video applications to touch base with students, beyond on-line education through the distance learning program. In fifth-grade across the district, students work with multiple grade-level teachers on curriculum. At Benner, Covone teaches math, science and social studies, while Downs teaches English and language arts.

“My favorite way to connect is Zoom,” Covone said. “I had about 75 percent of the two fifth-grade classes attend. It was so great to see the kids that I started to tear up when they started popping into the meeting. They loved it and even asked how often I would be having the meet-

ings, so my grade-level partner and I, along with our student teachers, (hosted) two meetings a week.”

Covone held Zoom meetings on Thursdays, while Downs hosted it on Tuesdays.

“It’s been very positive,” Covone added. “I feel like parents know we’re still working to reach kids and parents, and some have even reached out to tell me how appreciative they are.”

And while school was physically closed, when asked what teachers missed most about not being with students, Covone said, “Two things – a sense of normalcy and routine for not only the kids, but for all the district staff, and just being with the kids and my coworkers. I miss them all.”

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Other teachers at Benner Elementary School took time to answer questions about the closure and how they stayed in touch with students and families.



Lata Anantheswaran, second-grade teacher

Question: Like many teachers, you took the time to connect with students. You indicated it’s something you enjoy. Do you see they appreciate it, as well?

Answer: I have had positive responses from parents. Parents shared with me that their child had a big smile when they talked with me over the phone! Everyone really appreciates all that we (tried) to do for the students at these uncertain times. I connected with my parents through Bloomz, a parent-teacher app – posted announcements that included educational resources in math, English-language arts, science and social studies that their children could use

during this school closure. I (also) had Zoom meetings with my students. We were all very excited and happy to see each other. The students shared what they had been doing at home. It was comforting to see their smiley faces and be able to talk with them.



Nicole Harris, second-grade teacher

Q: What did you miss most about not being in school?

A: Where do I begin? Since not everyone was able (to) join our Zoom chats, I missed seeing them. I missed hearing their jokes, listening to their giggles and I missed teaching them. There’s something special about helping children learn and seeing their faces when they reach their ah-ha moments. While I missed seeing them succeed in the classroom, I know they’re learning to succeed in different areas of life – at the very minimum, they’re learning love, patience and cooperation.



Kimberly Rosenberger, kindergarten teacher

Q: What words of advice did you have for families during this break?

A: I would tell parents and students that this is a rare opportunity to spend a lot of time together as a family and not to waste it or ruin it by stressing out. I would tell them to enjoy being together doing simple, everyday things like reading together, playing games together, going outside and enjoying nature together. I would advise them to come up with some kind of daily schedule that works for everyone, so the expectations are clear for when parents are free to interact and play, and when they need to be busy doing work or other chores. Children are very adaptable and can usually cope pretty well when they know what to expect. A daily schedule with familiar routines and clear expectations can help them feel safe and secure, despite all the uncertainty going on around them.



*Photos provided by Rider

Biological sciences

When Sierra Rider was in Andy Caruso’s eighth-grade science class, she didn’t know what her future held professionally. Fast-forward about eight years and she had the opportunity to go back to Bellefonte Area Middle School to work with Caruso and Jim Nye’s sciences classes to speak with students about what her biology research included during her undergraduate studies at Lock Haven University. It’s one that took her on a journey across the country.

She was among three students from the university who stopped by the school to interact with the students. The others were Olyvea Welch and fellow Bellefonte Area High School grad Zachery Stephens. Welch, a Central Mountain High School alumna, graduated in December with a degree focused on microbiology.



Zachery Stephens

Stephens, a BAHS Class of 2015 alumnus, graduated from Lock Haven in May with degrees in biology and chemistry. His research included general protein studies of molecules responsible for the propagation of prostate cancer and its genesis in fruit flies. His undergraduate research led him on a fellowship at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, N.Y. Future plans include continuing education at the University of Virginia to obtain a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences.

The eighth-grade science class lesson was spearheaded by Nye as a way to expose students to the types of work scientists are involved in.

“I wanted kids to learn how science is actually done and how research works, and to observe successful Bellefonte graduates involved in scientific studies,” Nye said. “I was able to set this up because of my recent sabbatical at Lock Haven University where I earned a (Bachelor of Science) degree in



Sierra Rider

biology and had several classes with the (student) speakers.”

Rider, a member of the Bellefonte Area Class of 2016, graduated in December from Lock Haven with a major in biology and minor in environmental sustainability. She spoke to middle school students about her research that took her to Vermillion, South Dakota, for 10 weeks last summer. She said it was funded through a National Science Foundation grant that allowed her to study the impacts of invasive tree species and the breed success of birds that were nesting along the Missouri River.

“Birds like cottonwood trees, but since it is flooding because of the dams, the cottonwoods aren’t able to reproduce, which means they’re dying or too immature to support a bird’s nest,” Rider said. “The birds are (instead) selecting Russian olive trees, which are really invasive to the state. We looked to see if it provided a better or worse (habitat) for the birds.”

Each year varied, she said.

Rider also said she conducted other undergraduate research on the impacts of an unused reservoir on brook trout populations in Harveys Run in Castanea, Clinton County. There, she said, is a dam with two tributaries that feed into it. Rider’s work looked at temperatures of the water with stats collected every hour of every day from the two tributaries.

With her research, Rider plans to pursue graduate studies at Bucknell University on full grant funding, and hopes to continue her research work for the Department of Environmental Protection or Environmental Protentional Agency.

“It’s important,” she said. “For what I do, it’s ecology based, and with all the stuff about climate change, it’s important to understand what we’re doing and how we can reverse or how we can find alternative means to fix what we’re doing. It’s a chain – trophic cascade. When you take something out of the food change that can affect everything else.”

Employee Spotlight randomly features faculty and staff from Bellefonte Area School District. Organized by district Public Relations Director Brit Milazzo, in partnership with the human resources department, the goal is to promote the people who make the district what it is. Each season, an employee from the district's administration, professional staff and support staff are randomly chosen for the feature.

You may find more features, here: www.basd.net/Page/14058



Jennifer Brown: Principal, Bellefonte Elementary School

Some people spend a majority of their lives searching for their calling. For Jennifer Brown, principal at Bellefonte Elementary School, she knew education was it since she was a kid.

"I don't even know what I would do if I wasn't here," Brown said. "I can't imagine doing anything else with my life."

Her interest in education and teaching came when she was in grade school. Brown said she often gravitated to students in her classes who struggled, and made it a mission to help them.

"I had this love of the underdog and that's why I wanted to be a teacher," she said. "I wanted to make all kids feel good and show them they're better than they may think, and now I want each kid to experience success and that same goodness."

Heading into her fourth year as principal of the downtown-Bellefonte school, Brown has been with Bellefonte Area School District for 21 years, including 14 years in administration. After graduating from Lock Haven University with a degree in special education, she landed a job at Bellefonte Area High School, where she also graduated from a few years before.

There, she was primarily an emotional and learning support teacher, before becoming the department head. When she obtained her master's degree from Penn State, Brown moved her way up the principalship rankings – first as the vice principal at Bellefonte Area middle and high schools, and then principal at the high school. About four years ago, she transferred to Bellefonte Elementary on West Linn Street.

Calling her role "the cheerleader for the building," Brown said her position as principal includes acting as the instructional leader of the school, and also providing support to students, teachers and other staff members with resources they need to succeed.

"The single most important thing is making relationships – the intangible things that can't be taught in the classroom," she said. "The rapport you have with colleagues and students is crucial. If we don't have that, then we don't have (anything)."

Brown attributes some of her education style and success to mentors in her life, such as former high school teacher Steve McCulley who she described as "kind and understanding, yet structured with high expectations."

Now, she walks into school experiencing something rewarding just about every day, including watching students achieve their highest level of success.

Kim Dombek: Building secretary, Bellefonte Elementary School

Kim Dombek, building secretary at Bellefonte Elementary School, is the kind of person who likes being social. She said one of the things she appreciates most about her job is that it brings something new every day with a group of students and colleagues she enjoys being with.

And that's why during the state-mandated school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she found herself missing it – a lot.

Luckily, she added, she did her best to stay busy by volunteering to hand out food at the YMCA in Bellefonte that served as one of the free meal sites for community members. They might not have recognized her in a hat and facemask, but she said there was joy in seeing the kids there that she normally would have seen in school every day.

"I really missed working," Dombek said. "I missed seeing the students and (being) in the routine. You go to work and it's never a boring day at an elementary school."

Dombek started working at Bellefonte Elementary more than 20 years ago after taking a 12-year hiatus from work to take care of her family. She first began substituting at schools within Bellefonte Area School District, before getting hired at Bellefonte Elementary School – first as a cafeteria aide, then at a job in the kitchen, followed by a position as attendance clerk and now her current job, which she's held for more than 10 years.

"It's good to know what other people's jobs are so you have a little bit more empathy and understanding," she said.

A day in her life includes day-to-day responsibilities that help the school's principal and professional staff with what they need. In addition to daily clerical duties, she maintains student files, helps with kindergarten registration, checks absences and makes sure all class vacancies are filled. Dombek is also a member of the school's Crisis Team and district's Safety Committee.

The State College native has been living in the Bellefonte area with her husband and two daughters for more than 35 years. Now grown, Dombek said her daughters live in Florida and Washington State where she regularly visits. She also enjoys cooking, trying new recipes and using seasonal vegetables from her garden to make meals, in addition to actively being outdoors and walking nature trails at places such as Bald Eagle State Park.



Kelly McManus: Eighth-grade math teacher, Bellefonte Area Middle School

At one time, Kelly McManus believed he'd be in the computer science field. That was until he realized just how "awful" he said it was being at a computer regularly for eight hours straight. He added that the brief time he spent in the insurance industry after graduating from Penn State "trumped sitting in front of a computer" for that long.

With a new plan for his future that was realized sometime after his junior year in college, the now longtime teacher is heading into his 16th year in eighth-grade math at Bellefonte Area Middle School. It's where he's spent all of his professional teaching career.

"One thing I can say about teaching is that it's not dull at all," McManus said. "The biggest appeal is that it's new every day, and my approach is all about consistency with the kids, so they know what to expect and keep them engaged and moving forward."

McManus received his undergraduate degree in math from Penn State, and master's degree and teaching certificate from Bloomsburg University.

Known around school to many students as the "cool" teacher, McManus, said he prides himself on a mix of learning, while having fun and getting to know the students on a personal level.

"I would definitely say that trying to connect with the kids and find out what their interests are is important," he said. "I kind of pride myself on remembering those things very well and having those personal connections with them throughout the year."

Outside of school, McManus said he's the handyman at home doing his part to finish home improvement and woodworking projects. He also said he enjoys boating with his family at Bald Eagle State Park and on the Niagara River near Buffalo where his wife, Emily, was raised. She is also a teacher in the district – Spanish at Bellefonte Area High School. They have two children – a daughter heading into first grade at Bellefonte Elementary School and a 4-year-old son.

Trevor Montgomery: Third-grade teacher, Pleasant Gap Elementary School

In high school, Trevor Montgomery was the kind kid others looked up to. As a student-athlete and someone who enjoyed coaching, the third-grade teacher at Pleasant Gap Elementary School said because of that, teaching just fell into place.

"I did a lot of helping out with different sports programs and working with little kids, and I really enjoyed that," he said. "I think I always had this vision in my head that it would be kind of cool to be a teacher. That's what steered me toward this path." Also, a father of two young children and husband to a fellow elementary teacher at Bellefonte Area School District, education is something he often brings home – his 3-year-old daughter Kennedy, he said, "loves to play school."

"She's really into it – playing with us and her baby dolls – and I think she understands that we're teachers," he said. "She'll say things like 'see you after school.'"

Montgomery, a native of Bethlehem, graduated from Lock Haven University in 2011 with degrees in elementary and special education. He and his wife, Kacie Montgomery, then got married and began looking for teaching jobs. Kacie is a first-grade teacher at Benner Elementary School.

This school year, Montgomery has been working with student teachers from Penn State. For them, and all students aspiring to become teachers, the best advice he has is to "always do what's best for the kids."

"Think about your kids and your class, and what's the best way to deliver the content," Montgomery said. "It's OK to modify or change something to make it appropriate for them. You'll learn you sometimes have to adapt or change things because kids learn differently, and that's OK."

Time management and organization are also tips he has to be successful in education.

Montgomery has coached with the girls' basketball teams at Bellefonte Area High School and with the boys' basketball program at the middle school. While he's not coaching anymore, due to spending more time with his family and baby boy Everett born in December, Montgomery said he still enjoys playing and watching basketball. He also said he enjoys spending time with family, being outdoors and taking summer vacations at Surfside Beach, South Carolina.



Judy Ripka: Secretary to the principal, Bellefonte Area High School

When asked what the most important thing is in Judy Ripka's life, she immediately said her family. When asked what some of her favorite activities are, she enthusiastically said spending time with her grandchildren.

The proud grandma of five – and one on the way in July – is a longtime employee of Bellefonte Area School District having worked from 1999 to 2017 as the accounts payable clerk at the district's central office before transferring about four years ago to Bellefonte Area High School as a secretary in the main office. Prior to fulltime work at the district, she was also a substitute working in the cafeteria, as a paraeducator, in the life skills classrooms, with the custodial staff and more.

Ripka said the wide range of jobs has helped prepare her the past few years in one that presents something new just about every day.

"It's neat getting to know the kids," she said. "The teachers, too – I love the teachers here. Every day is different, which keeps things going."

Her regular daily job duties include working with accounts for teachers, helping teachers purchase things that benefit curriculum, helping organize graduation, monitoring the lost-and-found, working with stocking and inventory of the supply closet, posting information on the marquee at the high school, scheduling meetings and more. Growing up, graduating from and working at Bellefonte Area has given Ripka a special appreciation for the district, which she described as "close-knit" and "like family."

But as much as she enjoys the daily work grind, nothing is more valuable to her than family. Cooking and baking are other activities she said she enjoys, which also brings the family together for events such as weekly Sunday dinner – and, of course, dessert.

Ripka, a Pleasant Gap native, also enjoys being active and outdoors, going to the Centre County Grange Encampment and Fair, and taking care of her family's 80-acre farm in the Penns Valley Region of Centre County.

*Logo provided by the College Board



AP District Honor Roll

Bellefonte Area School District was placed on the College Board's 10th annual Advanced Placement District Honor Roll for what they said is proven "significant gains in student access and success." The district is among 250 other school districts from North America that were honored.

According to a report from the College Board, the district was required to show an increase in the number of students participating in AP programs, while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP exam scores of a 3 or higher. Reaching these goals, the report added, shows that the district is successfully identifying motivated and academically-prepared students who are ready for AP.

Bellefonte Area High School Principal Mike Fedisson said 184 high school students were enrolled in 24 AP classes in the 2019-20 school year.

"With more students participating and succeeding in AP in this district, more students are getting a head start on college by earning college credit during high school," Trevor Packer said in a prepared statement. He's the senior vice president of AP and instruction at the College Board. "We are pleased to honor the teachers and administrators who have worked to clear a path for more students of all backgrounds to advance through AP."

To get the honor, districts must have followed these requirements

*Information provided by the College Board

- Increase participation and/or access to AP by at least 4 percent in large districts, at least 6 percent in medium districts and at least 11 percent in small districts.
- Increase or maintain the percentage of American Indian or Alaska native, black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students taking exams and increased or maintained the percentage of American Indian or Alaska native, black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students scoring 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam.
- Improve or maintain performance levels when comparing the 2018 percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher to the 2017 percentage unless the district has already attained a performance level at which more than 70 percent of its AP students earn a 3 or higher

School safety measures

Bellefonte Area School District has a priority to make sure staff and students are safe while in school. Much of the district's safety information is protected to avoid information that could be released and therefore may be detrimental to the safety of school populations, as it could provide insight that enables a perpetrator to move more easily through the system.

Publicly-shared safety and security procedures

- ALICE protocol and training
 - ALICE – alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate – is an active shooter civilian response used at the district and practiced by employees and students.
- Engage regularly in a variety of drills
- Security cameras present on district grounds, and in district buildings and facilities
- Daily use of two school resource officers through Bellefonte police
- Locked and secure vestibules with a two-door entry system
 - All doors to district building are locked with a single visitor access point that utilizes School Gate Guardian to check in visitors. The check-in system conducts a background check of the guest

prior to further entrance of the building. Those guests are given a printed badge with their name and destination.

- Break-resistant safety film on the glass of school offices
- Classroom doors that are closed and locked when students are present
- 50 additional two-way radios provided to staff, under a grant through Act 44
 - Read more, here: www.basd.net/Page/14415
- Lettered and numbered exterior doors of district buildings, for emergency services
- Use of the SchoolGuard app
 - Used among district employees to push out information about an emergency or threat to others in the building who use the app, and easily and automatically contacts authorities.

Elementary building project



2009

2009: A feasibility study was conducted by Hayes Large Architects. This was an evaluation of district buildings, including elementary schools. However, the company didn't look at equity, nor how education could look in a new or renovated structure. The plan was nixed by the school board after a masterplan projection was reportedly too costly for the district.

2011

October 2011: The Bellefonte Area school board approved the \$4.5 million purchase of 107.57 acres of land behind the high school, with the intent of building school facilities on that land.

2016

Feb. 23, 2016: Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates was hired for \$12,500 to conduct a feasibility study of the elementary buildings. Final results of the study were presented publicly in 2017, which showed the firm carried out its survey under the assumption facilities would be replaced on a one-to-one basis, rather than identifying what enhancements needed to be made to improve education in a new space. It did, however, show existing buildings were scored so poorly that the board decided to limit spending on the schools and instead plan to construct a new building, renovate existing buildings or a combination of options.

2018

2018: The district consulted with Pennsylvania Financial Management to help the district look at financing options up to 10 years to fund an elementary building project.

2019

Fall 2019: The board and district focused on a plan that best met district needs in a way that limited conflict of interest with third parties involved. Through its original request for proposal, the board realized they wanted to instead separate processes leading to construction and/or renovations by:

- 1) having an engineer firm that could survey the buildings and help determine a variety of needs, and then
- 2) hire an architect separately in the design phase to meet those needs.

In that RFP, building design costs could be supported, but the district did not have a path forward to tell the designers how to go about doing it. Having one company involved in both processes could have potentially created a conflict of interest with a design created to suit the company's needs rather than what works best for the district.

2020

Feb. 25, 2020: With a vote of 6-3, the board approved to retain Hunt, an architect and engineering firm, to conduct a needs assessment for district elementary buildings. It came at a cost of \$59,400. A needs assessment is the evaluation of a building's condition and space, to determine the remaining life of the facility and recommend upgrades to infrastructure and function that could best serve the district and community using it. It also looks at optimizing utilization of existing buildings and bring equity across the district.

March 24, 2020: The board announced that a facilities committee was reestablished with about 20 members from the board, community and school district. The goal of the committee is to assist Hunt in understanding concerns from different focus groups in the district, as

well to communicate and facilitate public meetings and options available.

April 2020: Hunt developed two educational space plan options based on evaluation results; meetings with the committee; and feedback from principals, other staff and the public.

May 12, 2020: Hunt presented the educational space plan options. Several podcasts unveiling information were conducted before, during and after this phase to provide information to the community directly from those involved.

Summer 2020: Hunt will continue work on the needs assessment and meet regularly

with the district, board, committee and community. To date, the board and district are pleased with Hunt that went far beyond previous studies. They took the time to understand equity, worked diligently with stakeholders and looked at the project holistically. When their process is done and the district feels like it has enough information, a building option will be voted on.

Post 2020: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, if all went as planned, then opening a new building and/or finished renovations would have been completed by the fall of 2023. However, with the financial strain and other obstacles from the impacts of novel coronavirus, it has delayed the intended timeline of possible construction, renovations and projected opening.

Options

1. Rebuild Bellefonte Elementary School
2. Combine Bellefonte and Benner elementary schools
3. Combine Bellefonte, Benner and Pleasant Gap elementary schools
4. Combine of all four elementary schools
5. Build a new structure and renovate other schools.

On the web

To learn more about the proposed elementary building project, visit this link: www.basd.net/newelem. You can find the building condition survey, a Q&A that includes answers to frequently asked questions, provide community feedback, learn about the facilities committee, listen to podcasts and more.

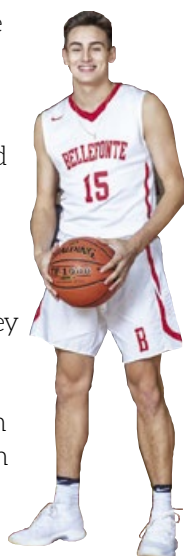


James Franklin

Penn State football Coach James Franklin stopped by Bellefonte Area High School for a meet and greet with faculty and staff. He even took time to take photos and sign autographs. The visit was part of a tour he participated in with other school districts that serve Centre County.

1,000 points

Class of 2020 graduate Ben McCartney is among six Bellefonte Area High School basketball players in history to score at least 1,000 points in a career. He hit the mark on Feb. 5 at a game against East Juniata, and ended with a total of 1,098 points. McCartney was also named a first-team Mountain League All-Star.



500th program win

With a 54-30 win against Philipsburg-Osceola on Jan. 22, the Bellefonte Area High School girls' basketball team, led by first-year head coach Marcus Toomer, captured its 500th program win. They ended the season with a 10-13 record. Sarah DeHaas, a junior at the time, was also named a second-team Mountain League All-Star.

100 wins

Wrestler Alex Coppolo nabbed his 100th career win as part of the program at Bellefonte Area High School. The feat happened during the District 6 Class 3A tournament where he had a third-place finish

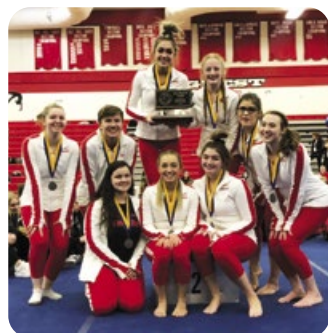


in the 132-pound weight category. He ended the season with 105 career wins, which puts him among the top 13 wrestlers in Bellefonte history. Coppolo also placed fourth in the Northwest Regional championship and was named a Big 7 Wrestling League All-Star. See a list of all-time wrestling win leaders, here: www.basd.net/Page/14992



State qualifiers

In April, PIAA announced all high school sports were canceled for the remainder of the school year, following the governor's orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That included winter sports championships that hadn't yet taken place. The swimming program at Bellefonte Area High School would have been represented by three of its student athletes - Harry Horner, Finley Musser and Kate Rarrick. See more swimming highlights, here: www.basd.net/Page/14993



Gymnastics

The Bellefonte Area High School gymnastics team finished the season with a 5-3 record. They qualified for the state meet in the Bronze division and placed second with a score of 125.991. Freshman Emma Matsko also qualified individually and placed first on balance beam in the Bronze division with a score of 7.983.



Northwest Regional champions

The 2019-20 wrestling team were named Northwest Regional champions for the first time since 2000. In addition, the season brought other highlights including members placing at district championships and were well-represented at PIAA state finals. The team was also Mountain League team champions for the third time in four years, and made team history for most individual place winners at the King of the Mountain tournament and Conestoga Valley Holiday Classic. This season's overall record was 14-4, while maintaining a second-quarter team academic average of 88.23 percent. Five members were also named Big 7 Wrestling League All-Stars. See more season wrestling highlights, here: www.basd.net/Page/14989

College commits

- **Julian Emel:** Football, Keystone College
- **Alex Coppolo:** Wrestling, Waynesburg University
- **Mason Grey:** Football, Lock Haven University
- **Ben McCartney:** Basketball, Penn College
- **Keeli Pighetti:** Golf, Bloomsburg University
- **Madison Steiner:** Basketball, Mount Aloysius College

**You may see more about additional student athletes who signed letters of intent last fall in Issue 44 of Red Raider magazine or online in the "School News" section of the district's website.*

The spring sports season was canceled by PIAA following orders from Gov. Tom Wolf due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bellefonte Area School District would like to recognize student athletes from the Class of 2020 who normally would have participated in spring sports.

Baseball



Nick Catalano



Shane Cronin



Gunner Fravel



CJ Funk



Mason Grey



Dylan Young

Softball



Taylor Kerr



Mallorie Smith

Lacrosse



Tyler Benner



Conner Bitner



Natalie Book



Demetri Butts



Linzy Fetterolf



Elizabeth Hargrove



Vincent Lawrence



Jillian McKee



John Nastase



Sarah Tobin

Track and field



Alec Bossert



Chelsea Robson



Owen Christopher



Phoebe Rowland



Tyler Cooke



Amber Shirey



Austin Craig



Charles Theuer



Nathan Long



Katie Uchneat



Logan Von Gunden

Special education at Bellefonte Area School District provides a compilation of services designed to meet needs of students identified with disabilities. There are 13 disability categories, and students may receive specific services based on needs while they're in public school.

The 13 disability categories

- Autism
- Deaf and blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

To learn more about special education at Bellefonte Area School District, please visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/12777

STAFF PROFILES

To meet other special education staff members, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14177

Rachael Davis: Learning support teacher, Bellefonte Area High School



Hi! I'm Rachael Davis and I'm a learning support teacher at Bellefonte Area High School and the transition coordinator for the district. I recently finished the Competent Learner Model coaching program and now will be a CLM coach for the district, as well.

I started at Bellefonte Area School District in the fall of 2015 and have filled a variety of roles. Currently, as the transition coordinator, I work with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerLink, ACRES, Skills and other service providers to give students exposure to employment and education options after high school.

Outside of work, I serve in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. Aside from that, I really enjoy volunteering – I am part of the Juniata Big Brothers Big Sisters program and have been partnered with my "little" for four years. My husband and I love being outdoors and we often go hiking, kayaking, fishing and mountain biking.

Megan Douty: Learning support teacher, Marion-Walker Elementary School



Hello! I'm the fourth- and fifth-grade learning support teacher at Marion-Walker Elementary School. I started working for Bellefonte Area School District in the fall of 2016. Prior to working in Bellefonte, I taught fifth-grade learning support for four years at Mifflin County School District.

I'm an alumna of Bellefonte, and my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Achuff, was my inspiration to become a teacher. I received a dual degree in elementary and special education from Lock Haven University because I truly believe that every student can learn; just not the same way or on the same day. I absolutely love what I do and love learning new ways to help my students.

In 2015, I earned my master's degree from Wilkes University as a PA reading specialist.

My family and I live in Zion. My husband Adam and I have a 2-year old son named Weston and a beagle named Lucy. We enjoy camping, hiking, traveling, spending time with family and attending Penn State football games.

Holly Williams: Autistic, emotional and learning support teacher at Pleasant Gap Elementary School



Hi! My name is Holly Williams and I am a special education teacher at Pleasant Gap Elementary School. I attended college at Penn State where I received my master's degree in special education with a focus on autism, applied behavior analysis and communication disorders.

I started teaching at Bellefonte Area School District in 2004, and currently provide autistic and emotional support for K-5 students, and learning support services for students in fourth and fifth grades. I'm also certified as a CLM instructional coach and work closely with staff to implement effective research-based strategies and tools to promote productivity and independence among our learners. Each student represents a unique combination of abilities and educational needs. I enjoy getting to know them and exploring ways to help them grow, learn and become productive residents in the community.

Outside of school I enjoy reading and spending time with my family, camping, traveling and attending Penn State football games.

Professional learning



At Bellefonte Area School District, employees are required to participate in professional development-type training to help build knowledge and skills. At the district, it's called professional learning that allows faculty to facilitate sessions for other employees.

For those involved in special education, it's a way to further build understanding of the subject area, while providing education to others.

"The regulations and requirements change constantly and we need to be updated on those," Special Education Director Gina MacFalls said. "It can also be highly litigious and we need to make sure we're following things the way they need to be followed. It's not just working with pockets of special ed – most (special ed) students are also part of general education classes and environments, so it's pertinent for all teachers to learn about."

Paraeducators are required to have at least 20 hours of professional learning annually. Administrators and professional staff members who are a part of special education must also abide by Act 48, which requires at least 180 credit hours during a five-year period to stay certified.

Special education-based professional learning includes:

- **Least restrictive environment:** Provides staff with an overview of the legalities regarding supports and services for students with disabilities in general education classrooms.
- **Positive behavior support:** Explains the process of creating and implementing a positive behavior support plan for students, while discussing law and research, analyzing components of behavior plans and identifying the role of a teacher in implementing student behavior plans.
- **Effective collaboration:** Applies effective communication strategies among teachers and paraeducators to avoid pitfalls and frustrations when providing services to students.

ICAN TALK CLINIC

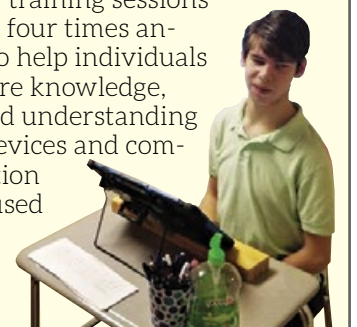
When life skills students at Bellefonte Area middle and high schools participated in the annual chili cookoff, they used their augmentative and alternative communication devices to help them interact with each other and the patrons who were a part of it. They were required to go to the store, buy ingredients, plan the meal, cook chili and hold a presentation.

The event was created as a way to promote activities based on facilitating communication skills using the devices, which allows a user to program vocabulary into it – including everyday words and that more specific to activities and events the student is participating in. Those with limited literacy skills can instead communicate using icons and images programmed into the device.

To help students at Bellefonte Area School District who have disabilities that prevent them from verbally communicating, the special education program provides them

with an assistive communication device and regularly works with the ICAN Talk Clinic of Pittsburgh to assist students, staff and parents with alternative communication means. Training is also provided for students, teachers, paraeducators and parents.

When a student is a candidate for an assistive technology device, representatives from the ICAN Talk Clinic meet with the involved parties; identify the students' needs, strengths and communication gaps; and determine the appropriate device that should be used. Once that is established, the district purchases the device and two-day training sessions are held four times annually to help individuals gain more knowledge, skills and understanding of the devices and communication means used by their students.



SAFETY - CARE

At Bellefonte Area School District, staff members are used to facilitate Safety-Care training with other district employees who may need to know the technique. Those in-district trainers are teachers Anita Caruso, Erin Cernuska and Erin Chapman, and special education secretary Macada Loner.

Safety-Care is primarily a verbal de-escalation technique and set of strategies teachers and other staff members can use to deescalate or calm down students when they are having challenging behaviors. There is also a limited physical restraint component, but the emphasis is on the verbal de-escalation aspect and what support strategies an individual can use with students when in need.

Director of Special Education Gina MacFalls said the district uses Safety-Care as the primary technique that would best serve the district with in-house trainers for easy management of staff certifications. Training is prioritized by employees who need it most, starting with recertifications and those who need to be initially trained. MacFalls said every paraeducator in the district was trained, whether they worked with general or special education students.

This information is also discussed with families who have children in the district with Safety-Care as part of their Individualized Education Plan. Safety-Care emphasized protocol with a goal to minimize, manage and prevent certain behavior.

RED RAIDER SPECIAL EDUCATION magazine

Gina MacFalls, district director of special education

*Dr. MacFalls recently resigned from Bellefonte Area School District to accept a position at Central Intermediate Unit 10. She participated in the Q&A while as the district's special education director. Jennifer Butterworth was approved as the new director.



Question:
What is special education?

Answer:
Special education is a compilation of services

designed to meet needs of students who have disabilities. There are 13 disability categories that students can have – and they can have a combination of those – and they receive service around their disability area to accommodate that while they're in public school.

Q: How are students identified for special needs?

A: What we have are things called 'high instance disabilities,' so some of those students who would have learning disabilities or speech and language impairment are the ones we have our greatest concentration in, with autism being the third.

What happens is they have to meet two criteria. They have to be eligible, which means they have to meet one of the federal definitions of those disability categories, and the other one is they have to need specially-designed instruction. They must have both of those conditions met. It's a safeguard, so that we're not just putting kids in special education without thoughtfully considering what those qualifications are.

It can happen at any age. We do have students who come through early intervention who already receive services, but at any time from kindergarten through grade 12, a teacher or a parent



can make a referral to have a student tested. If the parent puts in writing that they want to have their child evaluated for special education, we need to honor that and do the evaluation. If they are indeed struggling and if we're looking at the same kinds of things, we would then need to get their permission, called a 'permission to evaluate' and then we have 60 calendar days to complete that evaluation. That evaluation will tell us if they're eligible and in need of services. From there, we will write an Individualized Education Plan, which outlines for a year the services and accommodations and modifications the student would be entitled to.

Q: Special education isn't necessarily just for those with disabilities, but also who are considered 'gifted.' What is that?

A: It's special to Pennsylvania. It's not a federal mandate. In the (commonwealth) of Pennsylvania, we recognize students who have an IQ of 125 or greater, and we also look at multiple criteria areas (including) how they're performing in class, what their parents say, what the teachers say, if they have a special area of interest (and more). We also look at standardized test scores.



Q: How can families get more information about special education?

A: Generally, when they're in the public schools, the principal and classroom teacher would be their first source or introduction. They may also call the special ed office. Sometimes an agency might work with a parent and encourage the parent to call. Sometimes the physician's office might encourage the parent to call. When they are evaluated, we also give them a packet with information called a 'procedural safeguard,' so they have the information they need.

Q: How does special education services help with other support?

A: We have a number of students with autism and emotion disturbance who may or may not have learning disabilities or an intellectual disability. Their special education program might look very different than a student who's getting academic modifications. They might be on a positive behavior support plan where we talk to the teacher about how to approach the student. They might be on some sort of point system to manage their behaviors. We also have what are called 'related services,' so we bring in outside agencies like counselors and psychologists who we can write into the IEP, and we would pay for those services.



For students who are of work age, we are affiliated with agencies that do evaluations for job coaching for a student with more severe disabilities.

Q: What's the percent of students in the district who are served by special education?

A: It's 17.6 percent (as of Dec. 1, 2019). The Bureau of Special Education (through the state Department of Education) updates that every Dec. 1, and it breaks it down by state average and school district average. What it does is takes all of our students by disability category. Speech and language is our greatest percentage at 22 percent of our overall special ed population. We have about 10 to 11 percent of our population who has autism.

Q: What's the goal of special education?

A: To meet the needs of students with disabilities and giftedness. It is a very expensive program to run, so we try to be fiscally responsible, but also know that we are not going to quibble about a \$30 evaluation if a kid needs it. We try to base all our decision on data and what makes the most sense, so that if we do require things that may be out of the ordinary, we have the background to support that decision.

Q: How many staff members are part of the special ed team?

A: Including psychologists, speech therapists, special education administra-



tors, support staff and teachers, we're at about the mid-30s – our greatest numbers of teachers being at the high school.

Q: Talk a little bit about the staff.

A: They make my job so much easier. I think the people we get in acclimate well to the district – they're well trained, they seek advice, they take advantage of professional learning opportunities and collaborate well with one another, and I think that makes my job easier when I don't have to chase after people. They're great!

Q: As the director, what are your responsibilities?

A: I oversee everything, so I have the financial part of it; oversee students who go to private schools; I oversee the overall supervision of school psychologists and school nurses, speech and language therapists – I observe and evaluate them, as well; and then I also troubleshoot issues in individual (schools) on high-need cases, so I will attend those IEP meetings. I help to coordinate transportation, I will help do observations and help put behavior management programs together for students, and assist the principals and other curriculum directors for anything they need.

Q: What else should people know about special education at Bellefonte Area School District?



A: We also run Extended School Year, and that's in the month of July. We will work on Extended School Year and coordinate transportation for the summertime. Also, for a small population of students who have significant disabilities, they don't take the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) or Keystone exams; they take the PASA testing. We also have students who have significant communication needs. We work with the University of Pittsburgh, and they come in on a monthly basis to work with teachers, students and parents to not just put an iPad in front of a student, but figure out what device they need and program it with functional activities designed for that student to use for more than a play thing.

Pennsylvania Alternative System Assessment

PASA is the Pennsylvania Alternative System Assessment that allows life skills teachers to videotape students during the performance-based assessment as they perform tasks.

Extended School Year

Extended School Year is a summer school-type program for students who qualify – and to help maintain skills students have already learned throughout the school year. Students must have a goal in their Individualized Education Plan that takes into consideration what their disability area is. Students in special education often regress more than others during naturally-occurring breaks and may take a longer time to recoup those skills, according to MacFalls. Teachers collect data after those breaks, such as during the summer and longer holiday breaks such as during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

During Extended School Year, special education and general education teachers from the Bellefonte Area School District facilitate those classes in the summer for about three hours a day, and work with students to provide individual attention.



Bellefonte

Area School District

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