

BELLEFONTE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUE NO. 44

RED RAIDER

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Editor's note: Information in this edition of Red Raider magazine was made in the fall to accommodate the early-December deadline. Other school-related information after that 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

Inspiring and preparing today's learners to embrace tomorrow's challenges

By Jon Guizar

While not often spoken, this is the challenge we face today. What are tomorrow's challenges? How can we, as a board, best support this mission? How can our community best support this mission?

By now, we are well on our way toward exploring the future of elementary education at Bellefonte Area School District. While no one person can tell us what the future of education will look like, we can join together as a team – One Bellefonte – to collaborate on a focused solution to our aging elementary buildings. We need to come together as we analyze trends at the local, state and even the national level. It truly does take a village to foster our children as they become the workers and leaders of tomorrow.

As we navigate this process, please consider engaging at every level. Insist on an understanding of the current situation, and join us as we bring positive ideas and potential solutions to the table. Realize that the decisions we make now will affect our community for decades to come. Understand that if your student is in second grade or higher, your input will likely not affect your child directly. Instead, we will use our knowledge and experience to impact real change for those who will follow.

As a board, we must be fully engaged in the process at all levels. We must analyze local data, as well as trends elsewhere in education. We must understand the heritage of our community and incorporate that into the opportunities that lie ahead. Once we complete that process, we must then choose a path forward – a path that can never be exactly what each individual desire, but rather, a path that embraces our heritage, our community and our mission.

As a community we must also be fully engaged and understand that, while negative feedback slows the process, it is positive ideas and critical thinking that will bring us to future-focused solutions.

Please join the district and its board of directors as we chart a path forward for our students and our community. This is your district and your voice.

Newly-elected school board members



Mark Badger



Julie Fitzgerald



Max Kroell



Homecoming

Homecoming dance



Homecoming parade



Homecoming royalty

Homecoming King and Queen Aaron Little and Mal Smith, both seniors, pose with last year's king and queen, Micah Heckathorne and Ashley Harter, along with fellow senior nominees Kara Mellott and Mitchell Holden and Olivia Reiter and Tyler Muse.

Bellefonte cheer



Zimmerman family

The Zimmerman family was chosen as 2019 homecoming honorees by Bellefonte Area High School student council, because of their dedication to the music program at Bellefonte Area School District. They are Jay, Jayme, John and Sue Zimmerman who have a combined 114 years of service to the music department going as far back as 1967. The Classes of 2021 and 2023 have also committed to making donations to the Kari Lynn Schlegel memorial band award in honor of the Zimmerman family.

Bellefonte football

The Red Raiders took on the Penns Valley Rams during the Homecoming football game Oct. 4 at Rogers Stadium. In his first carry of the game, senior CJ Funk surpassed 3,000 career rushing yards.



Bellefonte marching band

*Photos provided by Tracy Houser

Miss Bellefonte

As Miss Bellefonte, Abby Harper aims to defy stereotypes such as the one that comes with those associated with beauty pageant-type activities. The Bellefonte Area High School senior said it's her goal to just be herself.

"My main goal is to focus less on the superficial part of it," she said. "It's OK to be pretty and the Elle Woods-type (from 'Legally Blonde'), but I'm also just trying to be myself. A big thing for me is I love to read and I love being involved in school. I pass out bookmarks at parades. I don't hide my nerdiness, and I want young girls and boys to know that they can accomplish anything no matter who you are."

Harper was named Miss Bellefonte after filling out an application; submitting a headshot and resume of extra-curricular activities she's involved in; and who her escort would be - Conner Bitner. She was then selected by high school faculty and staff for the title.

"I think part of why I was so excited and honored to get it is because it's a huge compliment from teachers and staff," she said.

Being Miss Bellefonte was something on her mind since she was a child, but wasn't set on going for it until last year.

"I went into it not sure what to expect and not sure if I'd win," Harper said. "I wanted to run for Miss Bellefonte because for years I always looked up to the girls who have been in this position before. It's not superficial like people might think. Miss Bellefonte is different. She's a role model for young girls like me when I was little."

When asked what tips she has for someone wanting to someday be in her shoes, Harper encourages "being yourself."

"Don't let any doubts keep you from running," she said. "Get involved, be yourself and be kind."

When not at school, Harper can be found at community events that, so far, have included the Bellefonte Cruise; Bellefonte Arts and Crafts Fair; Centre County Grange Encampment and Fair, homecoming and Pleasant Gap Fire

Company parades; and more. She also participated in the 71st annual Flaming Foliage Festival in Renovo and was one of the individuals selected to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at a State College Spikes game in the summer. In November, she also was part of the Centre County Library's Storytime event.

In addition to Miss Bellefonte, Harper is also involved in many academic and fine arts programs such as Drama Club, marching band, choir, National and Spanish honor societies, Safety Club, Raider Revolution, dance team and is a member of the varsity golf team under direction of coach Jayme Zimmerman.

Harper has plans after high school graduation to pursue her studies in elementary education.





There's a class at Bellefonte Area High School that takes physical education to a new level by exposing students to a variety of skills, tools and activities they can use in everyday life. The class, Back to Nature, is facilitated by health and phys. ed. teacher Josh Diehl, and meant to provide students with a different kind of recreational learning than traditional health and fitness activities.

"Many students are not interested in traditional sports, and the outdoors provides a way for them to be active for a lifetime," Diehl said. "Many of our students don't have the opportunity to learn skills like camping and fishing, and this is a way for them to learn how to do it properly and safely. Not only are the students learning skills and new recreational activities, they are also learning sustainability, conservation techniques and the importance of nature and living things."

The class started this school year with 34 students from ninth through 12th grades who learn skills such as orienteering by using a compass and GPS, fishing, tying knots, survival skills, plant identification, first aid and CPR, and rock-climbing.

Anyone willing to contribute to the class may do so by contacting teacher Josh Diehl at jdiehl@basd.net. The class will accept monetary donations to purchase equipment for archery, rock wall and fishing. Resources and other materials are also appreciated, as they will be a source for students to reference and learn from. Diehl is also looking for volunteers to be guest speakers to demonstrate expert advice in a particular area or topic to help give students lifelike experiences.

National History Day

Bellefonte Area High School history teacher Chris Morris worked with students on lessons about World War I as part of U.S. 601 class curriculum. She said the topic intrigues her because it didn't just change European politics and society, it also impacted the rest of the world.

Because of that, National History Day recognized Morris with a scholarship to participate for free in the Legacies of World War I webinar series where she has the opportunity to engage in online courses with teachers from around the world to study more about the great war and bring what she's learned back into the classroom. Through this, the 114 teachers involved, including Morris, can also



earn graduate credit or professional learning hours.

The program is in partnership with the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and National History Day – a nonprofit organization based in College Park, Md. that seeks to improve history education.



The yearbook program at Bellefonte Area High School was given the 2019 Yearbook Program of Excellence award by Jostens. The 16-member student staff worked with adviser Andrew Weigold.

According to Jostens, the recognition honors yearbook staff that "reflect a broad representation of the student body while helping students develop 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, and information and communication technologies literacy."

"I have been the yearbook adviser at Bellefonte for six years, (and) each year our (members) embark on a journey to create a book that encom-

passes many events throughout the year, as well as showcase our school spirit on each page of the book," Weigold said in a prepared statement. "Our staff uses new techniques in order to finish the yearbook on time and also gets to add their own creative spin on their pages."

The award was presented to the Bellefonte yearbook program for achieving the defined criteria in three categories:

- Creating an inclusive yearbook
- Generating school engagement
- Successfully managing the yearbook creation process

National Elite Ms. Agriculture USA

As a teacher, Myken Poorman prides herself on being able to give her students hands-on experience and real-world application. She said she believes that to truly learn and be engaged in the learning process, you must make connections.

For the longtime agriculture teacher at Bellefonte Area High School, Poorman brings those elements of agriculture education to students that allow them to grow and gain more knowledge of the industry.

And now, she's able to expand her agriculture outreach beyond the classroom. Poorman was named National Elite Ms. Agriculture USA after also competing at the county and state levels. It's a title that gives her the opportunity to further promote the industry by traveling and meeting new people in the agriculture field, and educating people on its importance.

"I have a great platform to educate as an agricultural sciences teacher, but it only goes so far," she said. "I wanted to pursue this to show my students and my community that you're never too old to keep pursuing your passion, and that with hard work and dedication, you can achieve your goals."

Her mission is to educate others on the various aspects of the industry by giving hands-on, practical experiences; clearing misconceptions; educating with facts; and giving resources and support needed so people can make educated choices about what is best for them.

"I want people to understand that even if they don't live on a farm, they still need agriculture," said Poorman,

who is also the high school's FFA adviser. "In FFA, there's a saying, 'Without agriculture, we'd all be naked and hungry.' While it makes you chuckle, it's true. My goal is the same with this title as it is in my classroom."

which includes dissecting cow eyes; learning how to administer immunizations to animals; understanding care and safety, while working with animals; completing water quality studies; researching habitats and ecosystems; understanding international agriculture and policy; learning to weld and work with engines; and more.

"There are so many different parts to the agriculture industry, and it's my job as a teacher to find out what my students are interested in and give them experiences to learn and grow," she said. "I like to focus a lot on careers because I've had students in the past tell me they want to be a veterinarian, but they're not good with math and they can't touch the gross cow eyes. So, maybe being a vet isn't the best choice, however, I can teach them and we can research about the other careers available and education needed to work with animals."

Poorman's passion for agriculture came when she was a student at Penn State after changing her studies from environmental science to agriculture science, which she said was more aligned with her interests. After receiving a Master's Degree in agriculture extension and education, and earning a teaching certificate, Poorman said she found that passion to help others understand their connection

to agriculture.

"I tell people all the time, 'If you eat food and wear clothes, you have a connection to agriculture,'" she said. "It is an industry with so many different parts, and we rely on it every day."



FFA – formerly known as Future Farmers of America, but now just goes by its acronym – is a national youth organization that aims to promote the ag industry through education, outreach and leadership.

A student in Poorman's class can expect to learn all parts of the industry,



Snow sports

By Mackenzie Ebeling
Class of 2020

Many sports come to an end when winter begins, but members of Bellefonte Area High School's Ski Club, sometimes known as "snow sports," are just getting ready to hit the slopes. It's a chance for students interested in skiing or snowboarding to experience winter action sports.

The club is led by two district staff advisers and run by student board members who help oversee club details such as trip planning, budgeting and more. This year, there are more than 60 students involved in the club - an increase from 54 in the 2018-19 school year.

Advisers who enjoy Ski Club as much as the students is one of the reasons the club is successful. Co-adviser Ryan Pastva, who's also a math teacher at the high school, has been skiing and snowboarding since elementary school.

"I started in fourth grade when one of my older cousins took me to Blue Knob for the afternoon," he said. "She took me one more time before I was old enough to join Forest Hills Junior High Ski Club. I was hooked from that point on."

The teacher advisers and chaperones also agree that one of the best parts of being involved in the club is getting to see students in a new environment outside of the classroom and witnessing some students learn and participate in something new.

According to many student members, they admire social studies teacher Stephanie Seitz who often helps chaperone trips. She moved to Pennsylvania from California, where she first learned to snowboard when she was 16 years old.

"When I snowboard in Southern California at my local mountain, Big Bear Mountain, the weather will usually be between 30 (and) 40 degrees, but by the time we make it down the mountain and back to my parents' house in Los Angeles County, the weather will generally be around the 70s," she said.

Ski Club annually plans four trips in January and February to Tussey Mountain in Harris Township, a day trip to a nearby resort in upstate New York and a weekend trip to Vermont.

Senior Alec Bossert joined Ski Club in seventh grade and was able to attend the Vermont trip last year. With a home base in Rutland, Vt., the 13 students and five adults spent time at Killington Ski Resort.

"The gondola rides to the peak of the mountain (and) the runs down to the bottom were much longer than any other place we go to," Bossert said.

However, it's not all about the action sports itself that make the students enjoy Ski Club. Sophomore Mia Elmore's favorite part about the club is the Tussey Mountain trips with her friends. And for anyone new to the sport, longtime skier senior Tyler Muse, who has been a member of the school's snow sports clubs since sixth grade, said the lessons Ski Club teaches can apply to more than just being on the hills.

"Ski Club has taught me that no matter how many times you may fail, you just have to get up and keep going," he said.

Advisers

Public Relations Director Brit Milazzo
High school math teacher Ryan Pastva

Student board

President: Alyssa Packer

Vice President: Logan Gettig

Secretary: Tyler Muse

Treasurer: Elizabeth Marchini

Other members: Riley Clute, Shane Cronin, Logan Ellenberger and Mia Elmore

To learn more about Ski Club at Bellefonte Area High School, visit this link: www.basd.net/domain/111



Chain Reaction Club

Every time sixth-grade student Logan Rarrick and his partner, a Centre Crest resident, had a number called from their bingo board, he pumped his fist, clapped his hands and yelled "yeah!" in excitement. They got so close to getting bingo in the four rounds played, but never quite won.

That's OK. Logan said it was still a lot of fun.

He was among 38 students from Bellefonte Area Middle School who stopped by Centre Crest on a field trip to visit residents. It's something students regularly do as an activity with the Chain Reaction Club – a student organization, led by co-advisers and teachers Samantha Hubley and Jennifer Kerr, aimed at promoting positivity in school and the community. Kerr said this was the seventh year the program has participated in community events with Centre Crest, a Bellefonte-based nursing home and rehabilitation center.

Students spent time mingling with residents and then teamed up in pairs to play games such as bingo. Students from other schools within Bellefonte Area School District also take time throughout the school year to visit with residents.

Members of the Chain Reaction Club also partake in other activities such as organizing food drives for local food banks, supporting animal shelters, holding blood drives to benefit the American Red Cross, participating in the Buddy Program with students in the life skills classes and more.

In the fall, the group was instrumental in helping organize the annual Halloween-themed life skills dance hosted at the middle school with students from Bald Eagle, Bellefonte and Penns Valley area school districts.

You can learn more about the club, here:
www.basd.net/domain/1368

BAMS Book Club



When it comes to literacy efforts in Bellefonte, it takes a community.

Twelve Bellefonte Area Middle School students were part of a book club spearheaded by school board member

Donna Smith and secondary literacy coach Jackie Wynkoop to help foster a love of reading among students so it becomes a lifelong habit.

Through the BAMS Book Club, students read a variety of books, including "It Wasn't Me," by Dana Alison Levy who was able to Skype with students at the Centre County Library. Students were able to ask the author questions about the book, her writing process and more – perhaps the most interesting thing to students was that "the author just seemed like a regular person." She was even curious to learn about other books students have read.

"Dana was absolutely wonderful and offered really great insight to our students," Wynkoop said. "The students said that they really enjoyed talking with her and loved meeting up for the book chat."

Students interested in joining the book club shared suggestions and narrowed down the list to about 20 recommended books. It was then decided that "It Wasn't Me" would be the common book for all students in the club to read.

Described in reviews as a "sharp, humorous and heartfelt novel," "It Wasn't Me" follows the bond of students who band together during summer break, while working through the justice system to get to the bottom of vandalized student photographs.

Other books on the list were also made available for students to check out and read. Smith and Wynkoop also set up a FlipGrid account where students created and posted their thoughts about the books they read. By the end of the book club, 58 videos were submitted.

"The amount of time a child spends reading is the No. 1 predictor of reading achievement," Wynkoop said. "Students need to be reading every day. It's absolutely critical to their success in life."

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Veterans Day

There was a unique display at Pleasant Gap Elementary School on Veterans Day that took many students through a historical journey more than 100 years ago. Fifth-grade teacher Adam Gearhart brought in old military items, including a uniform his great-grandfather Harry Hicks wore during World War I when he was an infantryman in the U.S. Army. The display also included medals his grandfather was given for his service in World War II as a corporal in the Army while deployed in Africa and Germany. His grandfather, James Leroy Weyer, was also a recipient of the Purple Heart and Silver Star military decorations.

Little Bits

Students in Steve Klein's fourth-grade science classes at Bellefonte Elementary School worked with librarian Brenna Estel to use electricity kits. It was a way for the students to explore how electricity works as an extension of the fourth-grade science curriculum.

Klein said students were engaged in STEM and STEAM activities that utilized Little Bits. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math; the A in STEAM adds "arts" to the acronym. Little Bits are magnetic circuit components that, when connected in the correct way, will result in a completed circuit with a moving part or sound that might alarm.



Student ambassadors

There's a little extra help at Marion-Walker Elementary School with student ambassadors who are responsible for many building duties, in addition to annually organizing a community service project.

This school year, they're holding a fundraiser for Centre County PAWS – a Centre Region-based animal shelter that houses dogs and cats.

"A lot of people know about PAWS, but maybe don't do anything, so this raises more awareness about what needs to be done," fifth-grade student Aalyn Cernuska said. "Plus, combining little kids and adorable dogs is the cutest thing ever."

The 12-member group of fifth-graders regularly met to discuss details of the

campaign during before-school meetings. Fifth-grade teacher Colleen DeFonzo said the advisers facilitate the meetings and initiatives, but leave the rest in the hands of the students.

"It's really a multifaceted thing where they're helping out younger students and helping out around the building, and then trying to do something bigger," she said.

Student ambassadors

- Claire Brownson
- Aubrey Barnard
- Emma Burger
- Aalyn Cernuska
- Rebekah Dreese
- Maddy Fallon
- Kimber Hough
- Ryan Lombardo
- Cameron Ray
- Alexis Ripka
- Rorie Roan
- Pyrce Smith

Benner Garden

The garden at Benner Elementary School has a little bit of a new look, thanks to students from the carpentry and horticulture programs at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology.

The group stopped by the school to extend the garden by adding two more vegetable beds, making a compost pile and taking care of other needs. Penn State master gardener Pam Ford also stopped by to help educate students about the purpose of the pollinator garden.

The group included about 20 students from the high school and adult programs at CPI, including a majority from Bellefonte Area High School. Horticulture and landscaping instructor Joe Luther said the project was mutually beneficial for Benner

Elementary, and high school and adult students in both programs.

Second-grade teacher Lata Anantheswaran, who helps oversee the school garden, said students from each class also participated in pruning the pollinator garden plants, while watching the older students at work using large equipment.



*Photographed are Bellefonte Area juniors

To see more photos, visit this link:
www.basd.net/Page/14370



Kris Vancas, the principal at Benner Elementary School, was named the Pennsylvania 2019 National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals – an organization that recognizes accomplished elementary and middle-level principals from across the country as part of its annual NDP program.

A report from NAESP said Vancas is recognized for his “collaborative leadership style; empowering his staff to create an environment where students can excel; and for his dedication to students, staff and community.” Through this honor, Vancas also represented the Pennsylvania Principals Association at a conference and recognition ceremony in Washington, D.C.

“In a lot of ways I’m embarrassed, but also very flattered and very appreciative,” Vancas said. “I’m not the best principal in Pennsylvania; I’m not even the best principal in Bellefonte. I always say I work with such great administrators who are also so well-deserving of this, if not more. I look at this as an award for all the success the students, staff and parents have done in this school and district.”

National Distinguished Principal

Question: How do you work with other principals in the district?

Answer: *We have really close relationships. You get the principals together and it’s a tight group. We push each other – push each other’s thinking, challenge each other quite a bit – and that being said, there is a tremendous amount of respect for each other. Elementary principals meet a couple times a month about what’s going on in the buildings and different initiatives to make sure we’re attacking things similarly, so there is consistency among our buildings. I think we value each other’s expertise and opinions so much.*

Q: How do you work with teachers and other staff members at Benner?

A: *In this building, I really depend on teachers to make a lot of decisions to be independent and collaborative with each other and myself. In this building, I don’t feel like I need to come in and dictate every decision that needs to be made. We can empower staff to make a lot of those decisions. Its cliché to say, but it’s a real teamwork type of approach and I’m not a real top-down leader. I work with everyone to get feedback and try to have staff make many of the building decisions.*

Q: As a principal, what do you think is your biggest strength?

A: *I think the whole key to everything for me is about relationships with staff, kids and parents. I think that’s a real strength of our school. I think our teachers also build those same types of relationships and I think that’s why we have support and trust from the outside. We’ve built that rapport and trust with families, and they feel good about what we’re doing here and they should feel good! We’re far from perfect and we’re real people, as well. A lot of times parents have the idea that the principal*

might be more than what he or she really is. I hope they know I’m one of them – I’m a dad, so they see me at the ball fields and then at school, and it’s nice to balance that with our families, so they can respect the trueness from me and what we bring to Benner.

Q: How did you go from teacher to principal?

A: *I’m not so sure I ever wanted to leave the classroom, but became interested in the principal position after I participated in some interviews at Penns Valley (Area School District). As I was talking with candidates for the principal (role) at my school at the time, I realized this is interesting and something I could do. I took the coursework and planned on sticking in the classroom for five or 10 more years, because I enjoyed the kids so much, but an opening came up as a vice principal at Bellefonte Elementary (School) and thought, ‘what a great way to get started in administration.’ I did not anticipate at all getting the position and had the tough decision of leaving the classroom, but I feel like I made the right decision. I spent five years at Bellefonte Elementary and have a great appreciation for that school, and ended up being transferred here at Benner about seven years ago.*

Q: What’s the best part of being an educator?

A: *The best part is being around kids every single day and having fun and knowing you’re impacting kids. I was always in elementary schools. It’s the only place I really want to be. I don’t directly teach kids in the classroom anymore, but I’m here teaching them lessons differently. I know I get a chance to impact and help them, and that’s important. You don’t know the kind of day they’re having when they walk in, but you know you can positively affect them for the next six hours they’re here.*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



Teachers Go Global

Lauren Mrsa had an opportunity during the summer to give back to an African community that also gave her back so much in return. The second-grade teacher at Marion-Walker Elementary School traveled to South Africa and Zimbabwe with a group of other educators from across the country on a service trip with Teachers Go Global.

The initiative encourages teachers to volunteer in communities around the world to better understand cultural awareness through hands-on efforts that can then help bring a more global perspective into the classroom, which Mrsa said is a goal this school year with her 7- and 8-year-old students. After all, teaching often goes beyond just academics.

"I want to give them a renewed perspective of respecting people for their differences, and beauty in differences," Mrsa said. "I want to bring back an awareness of the world even though kids have a hard time conceptualizing the world. I want to be much more purposeful this year in exposing them to not only Africa, but other countries – that they're different and amazing, and help them be more appreciative of what we have and really try to bring a more gracious attitude to what we have in life."

This newfound perspective also coincides with the Fountas and Pinnell curriculum used at Bellefonte Area School District, which allows teachers the chance to expose students to more cultural material.

Mrsa learned about Teachers Go Global through online networking. She said she then reached out to a friend and founder of the program to see how she could get involved. That led her on a three-week journey through Africa touring two countries and participating in efforts that positively impact the community.

The first two weeks were spent traveling throughout South Africa; the final week was spent in Zimbabwe – living in a tent and waking up to wildlife, such as giraffe – and volunteering with an animal conservancy called Imire Rhino and Wildlife Conservation. There, she learned more about animals, such as elephants and rhinos; how to care for them; and environmental conservation that affects its surroundings. She also worked with Padding Africa to help make sanitary padding kits for girls without the resources.

During this time, Mrsa said she spent time with local youth in activities such as going to the library and reading together.

"It really taught me to be grateful," Mrsa said. "They were so kind. The energy was so positive and hopeful, and makes me so appreciative about what we have in this community, and I came back with a completely renewed perspective."



Educator Appreciation Day

Two teachers at Bellefonte Area School District were among 10 teachers honored during Educator Appreciation Day at the Penn State football game Nov. 30 against Rutgers. They were Bellefonte Area High School English teacher Ashlie Crosson and Bellefonte Elementary School second-grade teacher Amy Wilson. Crosson began teaching at the district in 2012; Wilson started at the district in 2014. Both were recognized after being nominated by current and former colleagues.



Crosson



Wilson

PSA: Influenza prevention

What's considered flu season starts in October and last through May, according to the state Department of Health, and Bellefonte Area school nurse Val Fulton annually provides faculty, staff, students and the community with tips to help prevent getting it. She was even featured on WTAJ with reporter Sam York to discuss the illness.

Fulton says the flu is a highly-contagious viral illness that usually peaks this time of year, although she added that Centre County had seen less cases of the flu during the 2018-19 season, with 77 reported diagnoses in the county as of last February.

For lowering exposure to the illness, Fulton recommends washing your hands, taking care of your health, cleaning up your work space and getting your flu shot. To also help with prevention, she spearheads an annual event at Bellefonte Area High

School in partnership with Penn State Health to bring a free flu-shot clinic to the Bellefonte community. Hundreds of flu shots were given to members of the public during this event the past two years.

You can learn more about the annual flu-shot clinic, and flu prevention tips, in this podcast: www.basd.net/Page/14708



*School nurse Val Fulton speaks with a reporter from WTAJ

In 2019, Fulton was named Northcentral Region School Nurse of the Year through the Pennsylvania Association of School Nurses and Practitioners. This honor comes for her "excellence in school nurse practice and demonstration of leadership in the area of school health," according to the state association.

Employee Appreciation Night

Thanks to Taylor Young, the senior ticket account executive with the State College Spikes, the organization honored employees from Bellefonte Area School District during BASD Employee Appreciation Night on July 26 during the game against the West Virginia Black Bears. District employees were able to sit together, watch the game, participate in on-field activities and more. Athletic teams from Bellefonte Area High School were also recognized, along with a pre-game performance by the cheer squad.

Those district employees who participated in on-field activities were Facilities Director Aaron Barto, Bellefonte Area Middle School Vice Principal Mike Baughman, Bellefonte Area High School secretary Judy Ripka and high school English teacher Jen Walter. Music teacher Jessica Cetnar also sang the national anthem, and now-retired Pleasant Gap Elementary School lead custodian Jim Shaffer threw out the ceremonial first pitch.



*Photos provided by the State College Spikes

Partnership with Engine of Central Pennsylvania to promote STEM initiatives

STEM Camp at Pleasant Gap Elementary School is just one more thing at Bellefonte Area School District that shows the importance of promoting STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and math. It's annually offered to elementary school students within the district.

It also provides the district with just one more thing to promote through its partnership with Engine of Central Pennsylvania that acts as a network with other agencies, institutes and organizations to share STEM innovation.

"It becomes a huge interchange of purposeful interactions," Superintendent Michelle Saylor said. "What the ecosystem does is help expand networks and see opportunities available and work together to create robust opportunities for kids in STEM."

According to the organization, Engine of Central Pennsylvania, a branch of Penn State's Center for Science and the Schools, has goals that include:

- Educating the community about the STEM mindset;
- Increasing the number and support cross-sector partnerships that develop innovative and relevant projects;
- Providing equitable access to STEM experiences for all students;
- Elevating ecosystem organizations' trans-disciplinary opportunities, resources and events that align with the Engine of Central PA vision; and
- Increasing the number of career-ready and well-informed citizens to meet the demands of future STEM workforce and community needs.

A STEM ecosystem, according to the organization, provides the foundation for offering a variety of learning environments so institutes can further develop skills and engagement in STEM subjects. Counties in the central Pennsylvania-based ecosystem are Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Cumberland, Dauphin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and Schuylkill counties, and allows member institutions to share and act as resources for STEM mentoring, workshops and more to better engage with each other to create a collaborative process with STEM initiatives in school.

Events and activities through STEM Camp are taught and facilitated by district teachers, and include lessons in magic, meteorology, making slime, levitating balloons, Morse code and code-wheel activities, mock crime investigation, animal science and more.

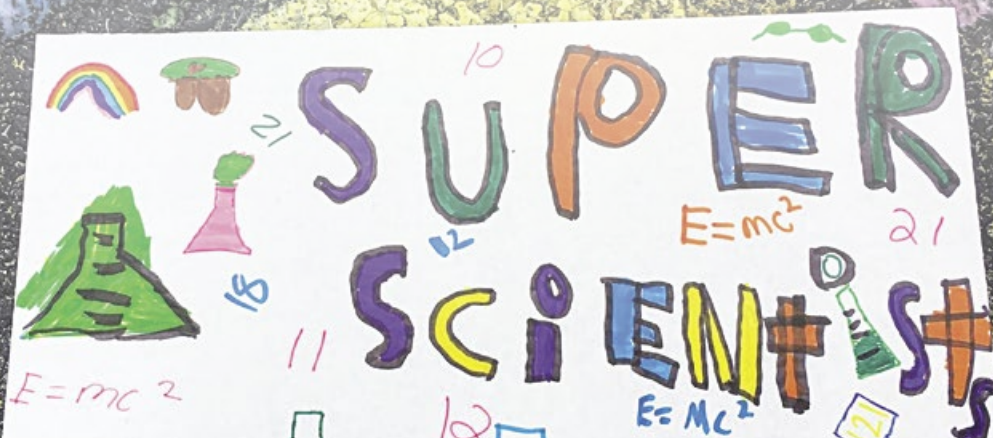


**Camryn Miller, a Pleasant Gap student, participates in an activity at STEM Camp*

The camp, started in June 2018, is made possible through a grant from the state. It allows the district to further promote science in the 21st century and to help build skills students need when they leave the district, camp organizer and fourth-grade teacher Stacey Miller said.

To learn more about STEM Camp from previous years, visit these links: www.basd.net/Page/14470 and www.basd.net/Page/13810

To learn about another effort made in partnership with Engine of Central PA called the IDEA Hub, turn to Page 15.



World languages

There's a saying that goes, "Languages are the key to the world," and Bellefonte Area School District aims to bring a more global perspective to education by offering a variety of world languages to students in the district as early as kindergarten. It happens throughout the school year in class, along with also offering kindergarten to sixth-grade students the chance to join a one-week World Language Camp.

For the sixth year, the camp was held at Bellefonte Area High School to help expose students to a variety of languages – many which are offered

at the district. Languages taught at camp were Chinese, French, Spanish and American Sign Language. In 2018, Russian was offered. All classes were also taught and facilitated by teachers at the district, and provided a foundation of learning new words through song, dance, games and more.

"The teachers always pick a new theme of what they are teaching in order to keep our returning students engaged," high school Spanish teacher Victoria Smith said.

Chinese and Spanish are offered to Bellefonte Area students starting in kindergarten. In the past, Chinese teachers have been graduate students from the University of Pittsburgh who also have a background in education. Last spring, the Bellefonte Area school board unanimously approved the hiring of a fulltime Chinese teacher.

French is also offered at the high school starting in ninth grade.

According Superintendent Michelle Saylor, offering a variety of world languages promotes a global culture of learning in a place such as Bellefonte and the rest of Nittany Valley that doesn't necessarily have a lot of cultural diversity.

"The most important thing that I hope student get from learning languages in the classroom is they start learning that the world, as large as it is, is a really small place," Saylor said.

Studies show that language is best acquired in the first five years of life, and has also been shown to improve concentration and memory, along with boosting creativity. Reading, writing and math skills are also generally better in bilingual children, according to those studies.

"Not only does language learning improve cognitive function, but it helps with critical-thinking, problem-solving, listening and multitasking abilities," Smith added.

Bellefonte Area students are able

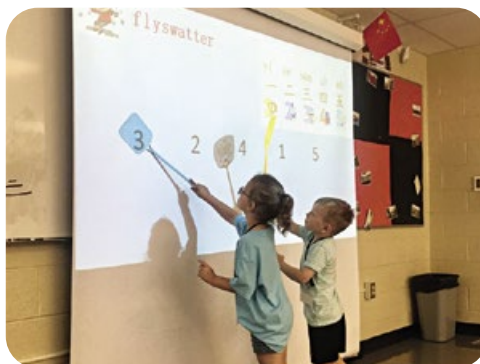
to take Spanish and Chinese 1 in eighth grade in order to receive high school credit. It also helps them achieve the highest level of Spanish in high school through an Advanced Placement course, which offers students the opportunity to earn 12 to 18 college credits.

In addition to being able to learn a second language with French and Spanish offerings at the high school level, Smith said students have the chance to earn college credits through Saint Francis University for language levels 3 and higher. If students qualify and choose to accept the invitation, they also have the opportunity to join French and Spanish honor societies that can further provide students with scholarships and other awards and honors.

With administrative support, teachers also offer a variety of field trips to enhance language and culture studies in their classrooms. Students can also travel to Spain and France on a department trip that happens every three years. The next trip is scheduled this summer with more than 40 students.

"Our department works to prepare students for the workforce, not just college," Smith said. "With the growing diversity of our country, having language skills other than English will help immensely in the job market and sustaining global competencies."

To learn more about global education at Bellefonte Area School District, visit this link:
www.basd.net/Page/14503





IDEA Hub

The IDEA Hub, created in the fall of 2019 with the Entrepreneurial Pathway Plan in mind, provides sixth through 12th-grade students with resources they can use to help their ideas become a reality. The space at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology is available after school and in the summer to students who attend CPI and its sending schools at Bald Eagle, Bellefonte and Penns Valley area school districts.

Students have the chance to work with experts and use resources to develop ideas they have worked on in class or independently – by networking and strengthening skills needed to enhance their vision. It also aims to

support student endeavors through its acronym, which stands for innovation, design, entrepreneurship and action.

A future vision includes extending IDEA Hub opportunities through mobile and stationary experiences to students within the Engine of Central Pennsylvania region, northern tier and beyond.

“We really felt like it was necessary to do that,” Bellefonte Area School District Superintendent Michelle Saylor said. “We’re starting out with our students, but all students essentially are our students. When we talk about equity, it’s about access to opportunities for all students.”

The area that was once used to house the masonry program at CPI, now called the IDEA Hub, includes an open floor, two separate classroom spaces and a loft that users can access by a set of stairs.

The IDEA Hub is made possible from a one-year \$10,000 grant through the Pennsylvania Statewide After-school Youth Development Network. PSAYDN is an initiative that provides support to groups wanting to offer out-of-school resources for youth to enhance innovation and creativity.

To learn more about the IDEA Hub, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14783

Alexander Doeblen

It would be nice to have readily-accessible resources to try constructing different ideas such as a card shuffler that uses a rubber belt to move the cards in a less damaging way than typical card shufflers. Having the input from others within the IDEA Hub would be an extremely valuable resource.



Gavin Hosterman

I can go there once a week to get help for planning and getting ideas for starting a solar company and learn skills to do that.



William Kothe

It will help me come up with some ideas as to how to improve the process of laying carbon fiber, because at the moment it has not been mechanized and is still done by hand.



Mission

To provide opportunities for students by expanding and deepening their understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Vision

The IDEA Hub is a collaborative organization comprised of three Centre

County school districts and CPI in partnership with local businesses and educational institutes dedicated to providing students with afterschool and summer opportunities, which foster mind and skill sets including communication, empathy, grit, reflection and teamwork

to solve problems using the entrepreneurial design.

Goals

- Fostering creativity, risk-taking and resilience
- Providing opportunities and experiences for all students
- Supplying onsite, mobile and satellite experiences

- Creating a network of human and material resources

Partners

- Corbett, Inc.
- Engine of Central Pennsylvania
- Penn State
- Siemens

WE ASKED STUDENTS: • What does innovation mean to you? • What’s your interpretation of design?
• How would you describe entrepreneurship? • What do you think of the word action?

See the video responses, here: www.basd.net/Page/14791

WHAT CAN A LITTLE INNOVATION DO FOR YOU? Video production teacher Carla Cipro speaks with students at Bellefonte Area High School who plan to use the IDEA Hub to enhance ideas they created in teacher Ryan Myers’ business class. See promo video, here: www.basd.net/Page/14791

SAFE SAY SOMETHING

Bellefonte Area School District, in partnership with the state, launched the Safe2Say Something helpline through the Safe2Say Program. The initiative, mandated by a state law known as Act 44, is an anonymous reporting system designed to help students and staff recognize warning signs of individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others, including through social media.

It went into effect in 2019.

The program trains students and school staff members how to recognize those signs and signals, and to “say something,” either by using the Safe2Say Something hotline and/or applications or to tell an adult or trusted adviser. Specifically, the program educates participants to:

- Recognize the signs and signals of at-risk behaviors – especially within social media;
- Take every sign and signal seriously; act quickly to get help by talking to a trusted adult; or report it anonymously through the S2SS Office of the Attorney General 24/7 Crisis Center, mobile app or website; and
- Respond to and manage the submitted tip via a school-based multi-disciplinary educator and administrator team.

To learn more, visit www.saysomething.net or download the mobile app for Apple and Android devices. The Safe2Say reporting system may be accessed by calling the crisis center at **1-844-5-SAYNOW**.

**Graphic provided by Safe2Say Something program and used with permission*



Act 44

Bellefonte Area School District purchased new equipment to enhance safety and security measures at its schools, including buying new two-way radios for its school resource officers and staff. This comes with help from a \$25,000 grant the district received through Act 44, which requires public school districts in the commonwealth to enhance safety and security measures through the use of an administrative school safety and security coordinator.

In this role, Aaron Barto, who also acts as the district’s facilities director, oversees safety and security policies, district compliance with state and federal school safety and security laws, coordinates a variety of trainings for staff and students, and more.

“We have already done a lot of things up to this point such as having secure vestibules, locked doors, one entry point into each building, closed-circuit TVs (security cameras), SROs,” Barto said. “It also requires this individual to oversee and work with the SROs, and to provide resources for student and staff training, and make sure we have met those requirements with at least three hours of training every five years in a variety of categories.”

Mandatory training includes matters related to:

- Situational awareness, trauma-informed education awareness, behavioral health awareness, suicide and bullying awareness, and substance abuse awareness; and
- Emergency procedures and training drills such as fire drills, natural disaster drills, active shooter drills, hostage situation drills and bomb threat drills.

The district already requires its staff members to participate in mandated suicide and reporter training and more, which is often more than three hours per every five years, Barto said.

The district also provides additional resources for faculty, staff, students and the community with the Safe School Helpline and Safe2Say Something programs.

Barto said he will soon work with the state Department of Education on approved trainings. PDE has yet to come out with a list of those trainings. For now, the district will continue to offer training for these components and document its safety and security training initiatives.

Act 44 – signed into law June 22, 2018 – is a state-mandated statute for improving school safety and security by requiring an administrative coordinator to oversee, organize and provide resources about safety and security training for staff, in addition to reviewing all district policy as it relates to state and federal laws.

To learn more about safety and security efforts at Bellefonte Area School District, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14625

International travel

Bellefonte Area School District has a philosophy to help its staff and students become global citizens so they can better function in a global society. It comes with a goal to allow as many different staff and students as possible to travel internationally.

That's one of the reasons why a 10-year international travel plan was created in 2015 after a trip to China. Since its inception, staff and students have traveled to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain. In October, students and staff took a third-ever school trip to China, and in the summer, 43 students will have the chance to travel to France and Spain on a language department-sponsored trip with its largest group yet.

"It became clear that to have this vision and make it a reality, we needed a plan," said Karen Krisch, principal at Marion-Walker Elementary School who also helps oversee the travel-abroad initiatives. "The neat thing is that kids gush about their experience of traveling and it gives them a new take on the world and life, and it's something they can even use on a college resume. Many colleges are encouraging international travel and that's trickling down into (secondary) schools."

Global travel at Bellefonte Area School District was started with inspiration from the Chinese Exchange Initiative that allowed Krisch and Superintendent Michelle Saylor to travel to China as a way to form a relationship with its two sister schools – No. 4 and No. 20 middle schools in Shijiazhuang, China.

The trip in 2015 allowed staff and students to spend about two weeks in



**Teacher chaperones and students on a trip to Ecuador in 2018*

the East Asia Country – first staying with host families, doing some local touring and working with the school. The remainder of the time allowed the group to tour other parts of the country by experiencing culture, food, language and more.

Krisch said that trips are organized with an educational aspect in mind for students to experience culture, foreign language, service learning and specific curriculum. All trips are also planned with help from a taskforce made of elementary, middle and high school teachers, and use Education First Educational Tours – an agency aimed at providing groups with educational experiences, dedicated support and safety management at group-rate prices.

While abroad, the group works with a guide from EF Tours that helps with details such as language barriers and safety protocol. All chaperones are also trained on travel etiquette, safety measures, culture, public transportation in a foreign country, organization, passport and visa information, group travel and more.

"At any given time, we have four trips in mind – one done, one going,

one recruiting for and one ready to launch," Krisch said. "Eventually, we might be looking into domestic travel, too, and opening up trips to middle school (students)."

Recruitment starts 18 months to two years ahead of time. Future trips include Australia, Ireland, Japan and Scotland. And Krisch said her biggest tip to students is to select a destination they might not be able to go on otherwise in the future. Parents and chaperones also work together to form a fundraising plan to help offset costs of the trip. EF Tours additionally establishes a donation page for each student traveler.

Trips and excursions are at the discretion of the superintendent.

Per policy 121.2, trips and excursions may be altered or canceled in response to declared states of emergency, terror alerts, other safety concerns and/or information issued by the Department of Homeland Security that could impact the trip and more.

To see photo galleries of past trips, visit this link:

www.basd.net/Page/14503

Employee Spotlight randomly features faculty and staff from Bellefonte Area School District. Organized by district public relations specialist 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 these features, here: www.basd.net/Page/14058

Charleen Casbourne: Paraeducator, Bellefonte Elementary School

Char Casbourne wears a lot of hats – mom, personal care aide, artist, hockey fan and jokester at Bellefonte Elementary School. Laughing a lot and keeping a positive attitude is something the second-year paraeducator said she prides herself on.

"I think I bring a sense of humor and positivity every day to work in what I do partially because there are moments that are tough and you have to dig deep," she said. "It's a feeling of success when you go in and out of it positively, so I really do believe I can help those around me. It's about finding the little moments that make you happy."

Casbourne began working at the district in the 2018-19 school year as a personal care aide assigned to an elementary student. That came after subbing in the district for nearly 10 years.

"The best part comes when a kid realizes what you're doing for them, and they connect to you and show their emotion," Casbourne said.

While she said working with students is something she was meant to do, where another passion lies is with art. Casbourne studied at the Parsons School of Design in New York City and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh before becoming a professional artist specializing in acrylic painting.

"I make art because I love to make art," she said. "It's both an outlet for stress relief and it's fun. ... There are no rules so everyone can do it."

Some of her work can be found on a locker mural on the second floor of Bellefonte Elementary School – a transitional piece she said features a variety of recognizable artwork.



Kathy Ellenberger: Cafeteria staff member, Marion-Walker Elementary School



If you have the chance to meet Kathy Ellenberger, she might joke around and tell you she grew up in an igloo and rode a dogsled to school. After all, the cafeteria staff member at Marion-Walker Elementary School is from a small city in Alaska about 350 miles north of the Arctic Circle, where that's a common misconception.

Ellenberger brings that sense of humor to her job, working with a group of people who she says "has a lot of fun." And some of her favorite parts of the day is running into students, giving them nicknames, encouraging them to take their fruits and veggies, and recognizing them on their birthdays.

Despite growing up in the remote Alaskan town of Barrow – now known by its Inupiaq native name of Utqiagvik – that had no paved roads because of the permafrost and only way in and out was by airplane, Ellenberger said she considers herself "more of a city girl."

After graduating from Barrow High School, she left to attend Penn State. It was one of three colleges she applied to with others including Johnson and Wales and Northeastern universities. She's lived with her husband John and two kids, Logan and Mackenzie, in the Bellefonte area since 2005 and worked for Bellefonte Area School District since the spring of 2017.

"Even though it was secluded and everyone knew everybody's business, I still had a lot of opportunities," Ellenberger said.

She traveled to Austria at the age of 16 with the Rotary's exchange program and attended language camps. By the time she was in high school, she accumulated more air miles than many adults do in a lifetime.

First interested in being a police officer, Ellenberger received a grant from the Department of Justice to work at the police station in her hometown with law enforcement officials on domestic violence issues – one of the many jobs Ellenberger has held.

"They have summer jobs for students within North Slope Borough to get paid," she said. "It's all part of the mayor's program, and in high school it gave me the chance to work in wildlife, shipping and receiving, law departments and other roles."

In addition to her many interests, Ellenberger also enjoys crocheting, cooking and baking, and traveling, but said it has been more than a decade since she's been to the Last Frontier. Most family trips, she added, are planned around food.

DISTRICT HAPPENINGS

Sommer Garman: Principal, Bellefonte Area Middle School

Being a natural leader is one of the things that makes Sommer Garman the ideal person to oversee Bellefonte Area Middle School as its principal – a position she's held for more than seven years after what she said was a “curvy path” to get there.

“I love administration and being the one responsible for helping people figure out what to do and how to do it and offering advice,” Garman said.

Garman, who grew up in Curwensville, graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and minor in Spanish. Thinking she'd be an elementary Spanish teacher, she took an internship in Mexico where she taught fourth grade. But her early path in education led Garman to instead work for a private company in alternative education to teach at a residential treatment facility for disruptive youth in Pittsburgh.

“I've had my hair ripped out, been stabbed with pencils, seen a student come in with bullet holes through his body – it was just an eye-opening experience, and I fell in love with these kids... my heart went out to them,” she said.

After two years, she headed back to central Pennsylvania with her husband, and landed a job with the same company to serve Huntingdon Area School District. That led her to program director and then head of the district-based alternative education program before becoming an assistant middle school principal in Huntingdon and eventually at Bellefonte Area School District.

“This is my favorite age level,” Garman said about those in junior high. “For them, I just want school to be a fun, enjoyable place, especially at middle school because I think it's the toughest time in life.”

Garman, the mother of two girls, is also principal of the Bellefonte eLearning Academy – the district's cyber education program – and leads the district's Professional Learning campaign that provides staff with professional development-type opportunities facilitated by professional staff.



Marisa Maines: Third-grade teacher, Bellefonte Elementary School

At the end of each school year, Marisa Maines, a third-grade teacher at Bellefonte Elementary School goes back to saved emails from the parents of former students who thank her for positively affecting their child. And that, she said, is the most rewarding part of being a teacher.

“Every spring it comes to a head where everything is so hard, there is so much pressure and the kids are so wound-up, and I kind of think, ‘why am I doing this? Am I even making a difference?’ But every year I've taught, I had a parent reach out to tell me how much of an impact I had on their kid,” she said. “Even knowing I can make a difference in one kid in one year is something special.”

Maines' passion for teaching came in college when she switched majors to elementary education at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Born in Bucks County near Philadelphia, Maines moved to Houston when she was 13 years old.

It was by happenstance that she met her now-husband who was working at Rice University in Houston, but was born and raised in State College. She said they connected through their love of Phillies baseball and Penn State football. Wanting to head back to Pennsylvania was her inspiration to apply for a teaching position at Bellefonte Elementary where she started in 2016.

“I really like third grade, because the kids are cute and sweet and haven't yet developed an attitude, but they're independent enough that I can communicate with them like I would with an older student,” she said.

When she's not in the classroom, you can find Maines on the sidelines helping coach the Bellefonte Area Middle School girls' soccer team with head coach and teacher Erin Cernuska. She also has a Boston terrier puppy named Barkley and attends all Penn State home football games.

Alex Tucker: Sixth-grade science teacher, Bellefonte Area Middle School

Alex Tucker knew teaching was in his blood since he was a kid. It all started with science experiments conducted in his grandma's kitchen with help from his uncle who was also a science teacher.

“Growing up, we always had dinner at my grandmother's, and I had younger (siblings), and after we got done eating, we were all hyped up,” Tucker said. “To have some fun and get us focused, he would always have these kitchen science experiments afterwards that held our attention and allowed us to solve problems and face challenges using things we found in the cupboard.”

Now, the sixth-grade science teacher at Bellefonte Area Middle School aims to bring the same kind of fun to class that his uncle brought to him. He also incorporates things like art into science class with help from wife and BAMS art teacher Nicole Tucker. One of the class's fall activities included drawing pastel nebulas.

“I try to have some sort of lab with every lesson,” he said. “We work on things like space exploration and model rocket kits, and it's always a great privilege for them to work toward something like that.”

Tucker, a Lansford native, earned his undergraduate degree in elementary education from Kutztown University and received his master's degree from Wilkes University. He's been teaching for 11 years, including five at Bellefonte Area School District. The Tuckers also have a daughter Cora, born in 2018, and are happy to be members of the Bellefonte community and experience more of what the area has to offer.





Blue Band

In the fall 2019 season, Blue Band at Penn State boasted seven graduates from Bellefonte Area High School. They were

Noah Gaus, Lizzie Giacobe, Stephen Giacobe, Zack Mothersbaugh, Lissi Przybys, Gehrig Schuster and Brandon Snook. With more than 300 members, the marching band is the largest recognized student organization at the university's main campus.

According to the Blue Band website, the Penn State Athletic Bands program "provides resources and opportunities through music education to support student learning, artistic expression and leadership development for student success at Penn State and beyond." The program also includes academic and music ensembles within the College of Arts and Architecture, which provides service to the university and athletic department, with a commitment to the development of student musicians.

Led by Director Gregory Drane since 2015, the marching band is most known for supporting the Nittany Lions football team during games, and its epic halftime shows.

Lizzie Giacobe, Class of 2019 **Clarinet**

"Being a part of the band at Penn State means the world to me. Band has always been a second home to me with a second family and that is no different at Penn State. There may be more people, but they are now more than 300 of my closest friends. It is such a honor to keep the Blue Band legacy going with my new Blue Band family. Game day by far is the best part about Blue Band. The rush that I got coming onto the field from the tunnel during my first pre-game is unlike any other feeling I've experienced. There are so many game day traditions scattered through the Blue Band that I am still learning about. I will never forget my game day experiences with the Blue Band. Being in the band is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I will cherish every minute of."

Zack Mothersbaugh, Class of 2016 **Trumpet**

"Being in the Blue Band was the main reason that I went to Penn State. It means so much to me to be able to play and create friendships with so many amazing musicians who are really such a great group of people to be around."

Being in the Blue Band has been one of the best experiences of my life. One of the best parts of being in the Blue Band is coming out of the tunnel on game days. There is no experience like that. I have also loved seeing the look on kids' faces when I give them a high five or even acknowledge them, because I remember being that excited to see a member of the Blue Band up close."

Lissi Przybys, Class of 2019 **Majorette**



"I've wanted to be a Penn State majorette since I was 7 years old. I imagined myself marching downfield, and worked as hard as I could to be a part of this legacy. The best part of being in Blue Band is being a part of something bigger than myself. Having sisters from not just my current team, but also all the alumni, is a feeling that can't quite be explained."

Brandon Snook, Class of 2019 **Snare in drumline**

"It means everything for me to be a part of the Blue Band. It has been a dream of mine to be in the Blue Band since I was a little kid. I had started watching the band at PSU football games and when I started playing percussion in fourth grade, I knew I wanted to be a part of that when I got older. There are too many amazing parts of Blue Band to be the best, but playing with the band in front of over 100,000 people is a feeling that is out of this world and no one will understand that feeling until you're there experiencing the moment."



Gehrig Schuster, Class of 2016 **Baritone**

"It means I am part of something bigger than myself. It is a really special and unique experience to be able to perform with 300-plus other students. Marching out of the tunnel in front of 110,000 fans (is the best part of being in the band)."

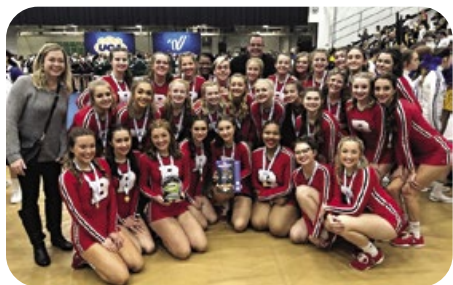
**Bellefonte Area High School graduates Noah Gaus and Stephen Giacobe, who are also involved in Blue Band at Penn State, did not reply by deadline to several requests for comment.*





Football: District champions

With a, 35-21, win against Clearfield, the Red Raiders football team was named District 6/9 Class 4A champions. They played 7 p.m. Nov. 8 at Bald Eagle Area High School's Alumni Stadium. The Red Raiders also beat Clearfield, 28-19, in a regular-season game Sept. 27.



Cheerleading: Nationals

The cheer squad at Bellefonte Area High School competed in the Game Day competition Nov. 10 at Slippery Rock University and took first place. This allowed them a bid to the Universal Cheerleaders Association National High School Cheerleading Championship on Feb. 7-9 in Orlando, Fla.



Cross-country state qualifiers

After the District 6 Class AA race on Oct. 26, two cross-country runners from Bellefonte Area High School qualified for states on Nov. 2 in Hershey. They were juniors Mia Elmore and Austin Melius.

Missing chain

When a Bellefonte Area High School football player lost a chain his mother gave him on Christmas 2016 before she died, it brought two communities together to help in the search. According to coaches, it was lost during the game Oct. 11 against Central in Martinsburg. After the game, members of the Bellefonte and Central communities teamed up to look for it. When they didn't find it that night, members of the public went back to the field the next day.



"I am extremely thankful for everyone that helped and can't thank them enough," said the player who wished to remain anonymous.

100-goal milestone

Bellefonte Area High School senior and varsity soccer player Mal Smith hit a milestone on Sept.

11 by scoring her 100th career goal as part of the team – making her the school's all-time leading scorer in soccer. Smith went into the game against Tyrone with 98 goals and scored Bellefonte's first two goals of the game in the second half. Smith also had two assists on the night. The Red Raiders beat the Golden Eagles in sudden-death overtime, 4-3. Smith was honored Sept. 17 before the home game against Clearfield, where she notched two more goals. Smith ended the season with 26 goals, 13 assists and 68 shots on goal.



Letter of intent signing

Two Bellefonte Area High School student athletes signed their letters of intent the afternoon of Nov. 21 committing to play a sport in college. They are seniors CJ Funk and Mal Smith. Funk committed to play Division I baseball at the University of Pittsburgh. Smith committed to play Division III soccer at Penn State-Altoona.

Fall Mountain League All-Stars

Cross Country

Chase Ebeling, Mia Elmore, Austin Melius and Amaya Rothrock

Football

First Team: JD Besch, Julian Emel, CJ Funk, Trevor Mauk and Isaiah Nadolsky
Second Team: Max Barrier, Trae Bauman, Jalen Emel, Nick Kreger and Ethan Rossman

Girls Golf

Rianna Morris

Boys Soccer

Second Team: Zach Copertino, defender; Daniel Persiko, forward

Girls Soccer

Mountain League MVP: Mal Smith
Second Team: Midfielders Mia Johnson and Madison Steiner

Light up the Field

It's not every day that marching band practice at Bellefonte Area High School is open to the community. But hundreds gathered at the newly-opened Rogers Stadium on the first night of the Light up the Field event that celebrated its opening and included an exclusive look at the band's show, called Fantastic Fantasy, led by Band Director Caleb Rebarchak and drum major Keeli Pighetti.

The night also included vendors, an information booth, a food truck, cheerleaders who welcomed guests, various activities for families and the chance for community members to walk around the facility. The event continued on a second night with the recognition of athletic programs and a concert by Velveeta.

By Aug. 23, the football team opened its season with a home game against Jersey Shore that also recognized the 20th anniversary of the 1999 team that won was districts.

Rogers Stadium is home to the football, soccer, lacrosse and track and field teams, in addition to other athletic and extracurricular programs from the district that have the opportunity to use it.

Rogers Stadium, named in 1992 for longtime football team physicians J. Coburn and Hugh J. Rogers, includes closed bleachers that seat nearly 4,000 people, two concession stands, restrooms, team rooms, an official's room, athletic training room and more. It is also ADA compliant with a parking lot on the south end of the field. The track and field area is named in memory of two late BAHS graduates – Jeremy Herbstritt and Lt. Jonas Panik – and longtime coach Dave Schaub who still volunteers with the track and field program. There is an eight-lane track with throwing and jumping areas. The lights will also be used to light up the field when necessary and will also be open for community use during non-student activities and events.

The bleachers are set up on east side of the field to allow the Borough of Bellefonte to access a water main behind the stands allowing repairs without any disruption to the field, track and stands.

To learn more about the Rogers Stadium construction and renovation project, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14694. To donate to the capital campaign, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14094

Thank you

Bellefonte Area School District would like to take a moment to thank those who made the inaugural Light up the Field event possible. It helped the district kick off the opening of the Rogers Stadium complex – home to the football, soccer, lacrosse and track and field teams, in addition to other extracurricular and athletic programs from the district that have the opportunity to use it for other activities.

A special thanks to Holly Wilson, the legislative aid for Rep. Kerry Benninghoff (R-Bellefonte), who was the force behind making the event possible, in addition to Bellefonte Area school board members Kim Weaver and Rod Musser, and former board member Bob Lumley-Sapanski, who was also the chairman of the committee.

An appreciation to others include, but not limited to:

- BAHS cheerleaders
- BAHS marching band
- Aaron Barto, district facilities director and safety coordinator
- BASD athletic programs – athletes and coaches
- BASD custodial crew
- BASD school board
- Ken Bean, district director of fiscal affairs
- Bellefonte Arts and Crafts Fair
- The Bellefonte business community
- Bellefonte Intervally Chamber of Commerce
- Bellefonte Reads
- Rep. Benninghoff
- Donors who contributed to the Capital Campaign
- DJ Jordan Emely
- Eric Funk
- Keith Hamilton
- Bonnie Hampton
- Brandon Hearn
- Mike and Peggy Herbstritt
- Patti Hillard
- Kay Kustanbauter
- Local media and news outlets from Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton and Lycoming counties
- Seth Miller, BAHS track and field coach
- Deb Moore, district athletic director
- Parent Teacher Organizations from elementary schools across the district
- Skip Reichert
- Michelle Saylor, BASD superintendent
- Students groups from Bellefonte Area middle and high schools
- Various booster clubs
- Velveeta
- Victorian Signs
- Weis Markets
- Bonnie Walter of Bonnie Blues

**Photo provided by Superintendent Michelle Saylor*



Pride, Tradition, Excellence: A COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Giving Levels

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\$250,000 plus

Letterman's Circle
\$100,000 - \$249,999

Varsity Circle
\$50,000 - \$99,999

Loyalty Club
\$25,000 - \$49,999

All Star
\$20,000 - \$24,999

Platinum
\$10,000 - \$19,999

Gold
\$5,000 - \$9,999

Silver
\$2,500 - \$4,999

Bronze
\$1,000 - \$2,499

Friends
Below \$1,000

All donors that give \$1,000 or more over the five year pledge period will be recognized at the stadium as a supporter of the project, unless you elect for your gift to be anonymous.

For further information please contact Campaign committee member Bellefonte Area School District at 814-355-4814.

PLEDGE AGREEMENT

I, _____, accept the invitation from Bellefonte Area School District to join in support of the capital campaign, and hereby pledge and agree to contribute in the sum of \$_____.

My gift shall be paid in the following manner (please check one):

- ☐ One time donation
☐ Donation over 5 years

Donation Schedule

- ☐ Quarterly (Jan/Apr/July/Oct) — all months apply
☐ Semi-Annually (o Jan/July) or (o Apr/Oct) — choose two
☐ Annually (o Jan o Apr o July o Oct) — choose one month to receive invoice
☐ Other — Payment & schedule: _____

Invoice starting month/year _____ / _____ Today's date _____
(Jan/Apr/July/Oct)

Name _____ Date _____
Print

Preferred Address _____
This is my ☐ Home ☐ Work

Preferred Phone _____

Preferred Email _____ This is my
☐ Home ☐ Office ☐ Mobile

Signature _____

Checks can be made payable to the Bellefonte Area School District and mailed along with a completed copy of this form to:

318 North Allegheny Street
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Bellefonte Area School District
318 North Allegheny Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823
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What is a charter school?

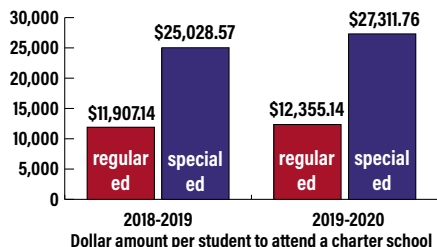
A charter school is a school that is publicly funded, but privately operated. Charter schools claim they are tuition-free, however its funds come from taxpayer dollars paid to the resident's home public school district that is responsible for the tuition of those students who live within the district's boundaries, but attend a charter school. Bellefonte Area School District offers transportation up to 10 miles from the district's border for students attending a charter school.

Charter schools were established more than 25 years ago, after the passing of the charter school law, as a way to create alternative and more flexible education with specialized curriculum often by focusing on a set of skills or studies, rather than the whole. Commonly created by nonprofit groups, charter schools are generally for-profit enterprises and have appointed board members who may be paid for their roles, rather than elected officials as you would see at public school districts across the commonwealth. Bellefonte Area School District is served by nine elected school board members.

You can learn more about the Bellefonte Area school board, here: www.basd.net/domain/30

Charter school funding

In the 2018-19 school year, Bellefonte Area School District funded tuition for 10 charter schools in the amount of more than \$2.523 million – an increase from more than \$2.384 million in the 2017-18 school year and \$2.018 million from the school year before that. The district has \$2.75 million budgeted for charter school costs in the 2019-20 school year – about a \$2 million increase from five years ago. From the 2013-14 school year to the 2018-19 school year, Bellefonte Area School District has spent nearly \$12 million on charter school tuition.



See a breakdown of charter school costs by Bellefonte Area School District, here: www.basd.net/Page/14466

Local charter schools

There are brick-and-mortar charter schools in Centre County. Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School also has an office at 1700 S. Atherton St., State College.

- Centre Learning Community Charter School
- Nittany Valley Charter School
- Wonderland Charter School*
- Young Scholars Charter School of Central Pennsylvania

*Wonderland Charter School closed after a lawsuit against the school due to inadequate education including issues with student achievement, lack of staff certifications, improper compensation and staffing, and more. A three-month investigation also found ethics violations and discrimination against special education students. To read more about the lawsuit and closure, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/14465

GRADUATION RATES

A 2019 report from the Education Week Research Center shows that charter schools "have suffered from chronically low graduation rates" of less than 50 percent since the 2010-11 school year. Education Week further reports about low graduation rates specifically at cyber charter schools that also fail to successfully graduate at least have its students.

At Bellefonte Area High School, the graduation rate is 98 percent of students who start at the school the beginning of their senior year and graduate on time; and 92.8 percent of students who start at the high school in their freshman year and graduate within four years, according to data from the PA Future Ready Index. The state average is 86 percent.

You can learn more about charter school graduation rates, here: www.basd.net/Page/14504

*The article about low graduation rates specifically at cyber charter schools can be found, here: www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/04/18/many-online-charter-schools-fail-to-graduate.html. You may also see more detailed information about Pennsylvania cyber charter school graduation, here: www.thenotebook.org/articles/2018/06/14/pennsylvanias-cyber-charters-consistently-recieve-poor-academic-scores

Charter school law

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, all schools in the Bellefonte Area School District have 100 percent highly-qualified teachers under the No Child Left Behind act, and all professional staff are 100 percent certified by the state to hold and practice in their positions. Professional staff includes counselors, librarians, nurses, psychologists and teachers.

In Pennsylvania, Charter School Law requires only 75 percent of professional staff members of a charter school to hold appropriate Pennsylvania certification.

In order to be counted toward the 75 percent, an individual must hold an active and valid professional certification and must be properly certified in all areas or subjects they are teaching or hold an emergency permit for the proper area or subject being taught.

According to policy, when authorized, the charter is the legally binding agreement between the chartering school district and a charter school. A charter may be renewed for five-year periods upon reauthorization by the chartering school district. Conditions placed on a charter school by a chartering school district must enable the district to exercise oversight of the charter school, be consistent with the provisions of CSL and be mutually agreed upon. The local brick-and-mortar charter schools are located in the Centre Region of Centre County within the boundaries of State College Area School District.

Learn more in this link about state-mandated charter school policy: www.basd.net/Page/14467
You can review cyber charter school policy, here: www.basd.net/Page/14517

RANKINGS

According to Niche.com, a Pittsburgh-based ranking and review website, charter schools in Centre County didn't receive a ranking higher than Bellefonte Area School District for the 2018-19 school year — which is in the A's. The same can be said for the other charter schools from around the commonwealth funded in part by the district. Niche works on rankings by rigorously analyzing dozens of public data sets and millions of reviews to produce comprehensive rankings, report cards and profiles for every K-12 school, college and neighborhood in the country.

Bellefonte Area School District

Grades K-12. The average student-to-teacher ratio is 13-to-1 at schools within Bellefonte Area School District. That is lower than the 17-to-1 national average.

- Teachers: A
- Clubs and activities: A
- Health and safety: A
- Food: A
- Resources and facilities: A
- Academics: A-
- Sports: B+
- College prep: B+
- Administration: B
- Diversity: C

Centre Learning Community

Grades 5-8. The average student-to-teacher ratio is 11-to-1.

- Teachers: A
- Academics: B-
- Diversity: C
- Overall rating: B-

Nittany Valley

Grades K-8. The average student-to-teacher ratio is 6-to-1.

- Teachers: A
- Academics: B
- Diversity: B
- Overall rating: B

Young Scholars

Grades K-8. The average student-to-teacher ratio is 10-to-1.

- Teachers: B+
- Academics: B
- Diversity: B
- Overall rating: B

Other Niche ratings of charter schools where funding was contributed by Bellefonte Area School District in the 2018-19 school year:

21st Century Cyber Charter School

- Overall rating: B-

Agora Cyber Charter School

- Overall rating: C+

Central Pennsylvania Digital Learning Foundation Charter School

- Overall rating: C-

Commonwealth Charter Academy

- Overall rating: B-

Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School

- Overall rating: C+

Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School

- Overall rating: B+

Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School

- Overall rating: C+

Sugar Valley Rural Charter School

in nearby Loganton, Clinton County was not given a score. Niche stopped ranking schools less than a grade D. Sugar Valley was among 15 charter schools in the commonwealth that fell below that rank. Information reported also showed that only 38 percent of students are at least proficient in reading and 21 percent of students are at least proficient in math.

BeLA vs. Cyber charter schools

Cyber charter schools are established when the state Department of Education grants the cyber charter applicant a charter. Oversight PDE is responsible for the oversight of cyber charter schools that it has chartered, including decisions whether to renew, non-renew or revoke the charter.

In Pennsylvania, most cyber charter schools operate with expired state agreements. In an investigative report published in 2019 by the Philadelphia Inquirer, it found that 10 of 15 cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania are operating with expired charters. Bellefonte Area School District is in support of cyber charter school reform after finding that cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania fall in the bottom five percent.

The district also offers its own cyber program, called Bellefonte eLearning Academy, with many benefits that can't be found at cyber charter schools. BeLA students have the option to work one-on-one with a certified teacher, participate in district-sponsored extracurricular activities, attend Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology and more. He or she also graduates with a Bellefonte Area diploma.

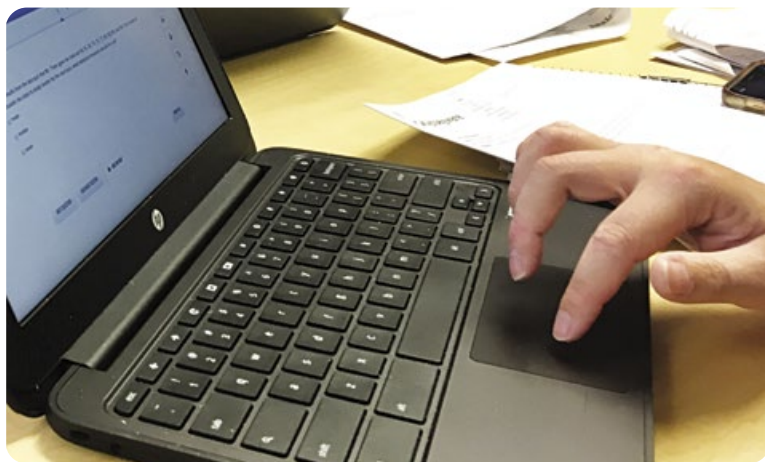
A report by Education Week shows that graduation rates for cyber charter schools often fail to graduate at least half of its student body. **Figure 1** shows graduation rates of cyber charter schools attended by student living within the boundaries of Bellefonte Area School District, which tuition was paid for by the district in the 2018-19 school year.

There is a near-100 percent success rate for students passing classes through the district's BeLA program. Cyber Education Coordinator Rebecca Leitzell said that's because the program is set up in the best in-

terest of the student to boost his or her success.

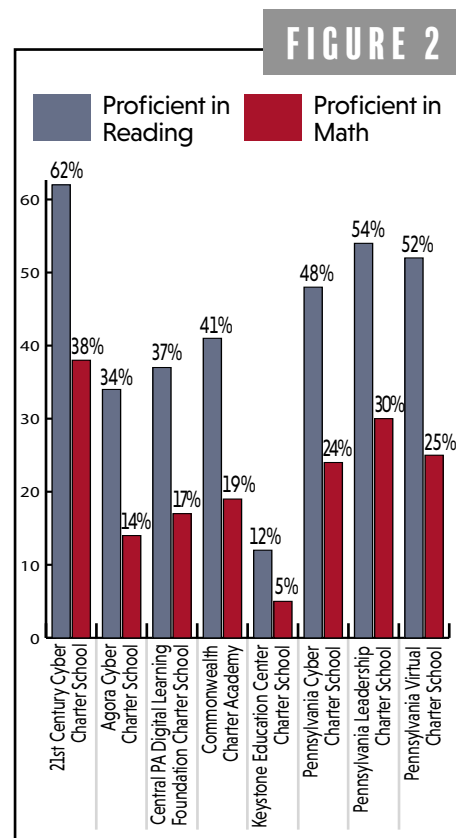
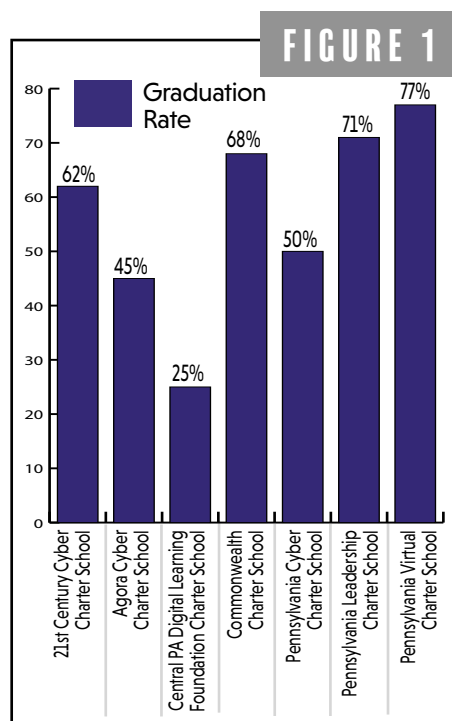
"If students struggle in BeLA, we meet to discuss alternative options to ensure student achievement," she said. "We do not allow them to continue with online learning and fail."

Information also shows that 100 percent of BeLA students who took state standardized tests have scored proficient or advanced. According to data from Niche.com, a Pittsburgh-based rating and review website, of the cyber charter schools funded by Bellefonte Area School District in



the 2018-19 school year, none have higher statistics. **(Figure 2)**

To learn more about the BeLA program, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/13986





Response from the Pennsylvania Department of Education

**Photo provided by Leslie Elder*

Editor's note: The public relations director for Bellefonte Area School District had the chance to speak on-the-record with Nicole Reigelman, the communication director for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, regarding why many cyber charter schools across the commonwealth are still operating with expired charters.

When Gov. Tom Wolf was elected to office in 2014 and then started in 2015, there was no infrastructure in government for charter and cyber charter schools. In the first year of his arrival in office, the state Department of Education began laying the groundwork to establish a division of charter schools to help build a foundation in the department. That, Reigelman said, “took some time setting up.”

By December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed that helped build guidance for school improvement – a measure to use when evaluating cyber charter schools when they apply and/or send in renewal applications, Reigelman said. ESSA is a federal guideline for how public education is operated and how students learn and achieve while publicly educated.

“In order to facilitate a thoughtful process, we wanted a good plan in place, and ESSA created a good opportunity to create infrastructure in total for evaluating all schools,” Reigelman said. “We are using that same infrastructure to (also) evaluate all cyber charters.”

In November of 2018, the state Department of Education launched the Future Ready PA Index and soon after identified schools for the federal school improvement designations: Comprehensive Support and Improvement and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement designations which are a way to evaluate school and student group performance, including charter and cyber charter schools. According to the PDE website, the CSI designation is for schools “facing the most significant challenges in academic achievement, student growth and other areas” and ATSI is a designation for “schools in which performance by one or more student groups is at or below the level of the CSI schools.”

“After we put that in place, the school improvement plan, that’s when we really started getting to the backlog ...

also introduced a new application for renewal for cyber charter schools so that we can have a standard application that gets to the heart of the data we want to consider,” Reigelman said.

Since last year, PDE has renewed two of what they said were the “higher-performing” cyber charter schools.

“While there was a backlog, we are sifting through it,” Reigelman said. “If it’s a cyber charter school that’s performing better, then we’re taking care of those. With others, we examine the options related to the individual school’s performance and assess if the school is up to standard for our students.”

She also added that PDE is working with cyber charter schools that are underperforming to potentially surrender their charter.

Cyber charter schools renewed in 2019

- 21st Century Cyber Charter School
- Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School

“The bottom line is, we wanted to be thoughtful in our process, and thought takes time,” Reigelman said. “With ESSA passing, it was the perfect opportunity, even if it slowed us down a little bit, but we were able to do it in alignment of all our schools. We’re playing a little bit of catch-up, but we’re beginning to get through that now and we have the process.”

To learn more about Pennsylvania legislation for charter school reform, visit this link:

www.basd.net/Page/14468

Learn more in this link about charter school renewal and termination:

www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter%20Schools/Pages/Charter-Renewal-and-Termination.aspx



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