



BENTLEY

Community Schools

Spring 2026

Learn today. Lead tomorrow.

BentleySchools.org



A MESSAGE FROM
Kristy Spann
Ph.D.

Superintendent

Reclaiming Childhood: Building a Phone-Free, Play-Filled Community Together

Dear Families,

As your superintendent, I am constantly looking at the broader trends affecting our students' well-being and academic success. If you have noticed that your own children are more anxious, easily distracted, or hesitant to engage in the real world compared to a decade ago, please know that you are not alone.

Recently, I have been reading a groundbreaking book that has profoundly shaped my thinking on this issue: *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt.

Haidt's research provides a clear, data-driven look at how the shift from a "play-based childhood" to a "phone-based childhood" has impacted kids' mental health. More importantly, his work offers a hopeful roadmap for how we, as a community, can fix it. The most exciting takeaway for me is that our district is already proving Haidt's theories right. We are seeing the incredible, positive impact of these concepts at both ends of our PreK-12 spectrum.

Haidt argues that between 2010 and 2015, childhood changed fundamentally. The rapid adoption of smartphones and addictive social media algorithms effectively "rewired" how children grow up, resulting in a loss of real-world play and a loss of mental presence.

Haidt proposes four foundational rules to help children reclaim their childhood. Here is how we are navigating them in our district, and how we can partner together:

See **SUPERINTENDENT** on 3

Kristy Spann, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Bentley
Community Schools
1170 N. Belsay Rd.,
Burton, MI 48509
(810) 591-9120

Summer Action Plan: Preparing Your Child for Fall Success!

While summer is a time for relaxation, it is also the perfect window to prepare your child for a strong, healthy school year ahead. School success goes hand in hand with being in school every day. Missing just a day or two every month can cause young children to fall behind in reading by the third grade, while teens who miss that same amount risk falling behind in their studies and missing out on graduation.

Instead of waiting for the first week of school to build a routine, you can use the summer months to create an

intentional action plan. Here is how you can use the summer to lay the groundwork for your child's well-being, learning, and long-term success.

Your Summer-to-Fall Action Checklist

1. Build Routines Early (Nutrition, Sleep, and Exercise)

Don't wait until August or September to enforce school-year habits. Daily routines reduce stress for students and create a vital sense of safety and security.

- **Gradual Bedtimes:** In the weeks leading up to the first day of school, gradually ease your child back into a regular bedtime and morning routine.

- **Bedroom Screen Ban:** Practice keeping screens out of the bedroom and limiting their use right before bedtime.

- **Morning Fuel:** Plan out healthy breakfast options; in the fall you can rely on us to serve healthy breakfast options in the morning to fuel their day.

- **Stay Active:** Keep your child active for at least 60 minutes a day during the

See **SUCCESS** on 11

POWER DOWN & PLAY: Kick Off a Summer of Wellness with Us!

As the school year winds down, it is time to trade screen time for green time! The school district is thrilled to invite all of our students, families, and neighbors to *Power Down & Play: A Summer Resource Fair*.

This community celebration is designed to help our families reset, recharge, and rediscover the joy of being present. We believe that true mental health is built on a foundation of simple, powerful habits: moving often, eating well, sleeping deeply, and playing together. This event is your one-stop shop for the tools, resources, and inspiration needed to build a resilient, healthy home life while school doors are closed.

Event Details

Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Time: 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Location: Bentley High School
(1150 N Belsay Rd, Burton)

Admission: Free! Come hungry and ready to play.

What to Expect

In a world that is always "on," our goal is to help our families unplug from devices and tune back into nature and each other. We have packed the evening with activities, support, and fun for all ages:

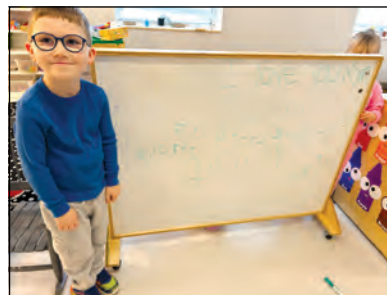
- Let the kids loose in a giant, inflatable obstacle course,

See **PLAY** on 11



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Early Childhood



Rooted in Nature:

How a Unique Preschool Partnership is Reshaping Early Childhood Education

In an era increasingly dominated by screens, virtual interactions, and structured indoor environments, a powerful counter-movement is taking root in early childhood education. At the forefront of this shift is a collaborative initiative between **Bentley Community Schools** and the **Genesee County Parks**. Led by early childhood and environmental experts—Chelsea Horton (Director of Early Childhood Programming at Bentley), Nicole Ferguson (Chief Park Naturalist at Genesee County Parks), and Emily Buccaneer (Environmental Education Assistant & Day Camp Director)—the Nature-Based Preschool program is proving that nature is not just a destination for an occasional field trip, but a foundational classroom for development.

A Growing History of Collaboration

The partnership began during the 2016 school year with the launch of the “Bentley Nature Begindergarten”. Recognizing its immediate value, the program expanded the following year by adding a second classroom through the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). By the 2018/2019 school year, nature-based learning had successfully expanded into traditional Kindergarten and GSRP classrooms.

Though a temporary shutdown occurred during the 2020 pandemic, the program successfully restarted in 2023 with a single GSRP classroom in collaboration with the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD).

Today, the program is on an aggressive path of growth to meet

community demand:

2024/2025: One PreK classroom serving 18 children.

2025/2026: Expanded to three PreK classrooms serving 42 children.

2026/2027 (Goal): Adding an additional GSRP classroom to serve an additional 18 children.

Cultivating a “Sense of Place”

One of the core tenets of the curriculum is fostering a “sense of place”. Program leaders emphasize that the Genesee County Parks shouldn’t be viewed by the students as an external destination, but rather as an extension of their homes.

Research highlights that children who build a strong connection to their local environment display significantly higher levels of self-worth, civic belonging, and academic resilience. Furthermore, establishing emotional bonds with nature during early childhood is identified as the single strongest predictor of adult environmental stewardship. If communities want future leaders who care about preserving green spaces, that foundation must be built when they are four years old. The program effectively replaces concrete boundaries with a greener, larger, and more permanent neighborhood.

Corrective Therapy for the Digital Age

The transition to nature-based learning addresses a growing modern crisis: physical and social developmental delays masked as “staying safe inside”. Current generations have seen a massive decline in outdoor play; today,

only 27% of children regularly play outside, compared to 80% in the previous generation. Concurrently, high screen exposure has left many children scoring lower in fundamental locomotor skills (running and jumping) and object control (catching and throwing).

The preschool curriculum serves as a vital physical intervention. Data show that every 30 minutes of active outdoor play directly predicts a measurable increase in foundational motor skills. Navigating the varied, uneven terrains of the wilderness builds developing bodies in a way flat indoor flooring cannot, providing the physical fuel required for subsequent academic success.

Learning Without Walls: The Curriculum

Far from being unstructured “free time,” the curriculum thoughtfully weaves academic subjects into outdoor exploration, scaling from highly structured to completely experiential learning.

Mathematics: Students explore concepts ranging from rolling dice for probability to utilizing non-standard units of measure—such as finding the “longest worm” or measuring by “hugging trees”. More active play, like flinging sticks, introduces fundamental concepts of velocity and trajectory.

Science and Technology: Children study animal behavior, look at animal winter habitats (hibernaculae), build wilderness shelters, and identify natural engineering solutions along the trails. They also learn to utilize physical tools like magnifying

glasses, tweezers, and simple communication devices.

Literacy and Social Studies: Daily storytelling sessions are conducted outdoors, prompting students to explore plotlines and early reading patterns via natural puzzles. Social studies, history, civics, and geography are introduced by examining maps and discussing how various creatures live, adapt, and interact across time.

Creative and Emotional Expression: Albert Einstein once noted that “creativity is intelligence having fun,” a concept fully embraced on the trails. The forest setting provides an expansive perimeter for children to safely express behavioral urges—such as yelling, throwing items, and exploring independently—that societal constraints often restrict indoors.

Bridging the Equity Gap

Ultimately, the Bentley and For-Mar partnership serves as an equity bridge. It operates on the belief that a child’s zip code should never dictate their right to a healthy brain and a strong body.

The program also acts as a catalyst for broader community engagement. By hosting dedicated “Family Days” on the For-Mar Nature Preserve property, families are invited to share in the joy of the partnership and establish a vested interest in their local ecosystems. By demonstrating the profound link between human health and green spaces, the program invites the entire community to claim the Genesee County Parks as a lifelong classroom.

Barhitte Elementary

Rounding Up Our Future Bulldogs Class of 2039: KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION REMINDERS

Barhitte Elementary held their Rodeo Round Up/ Kindergarten Registration event on April 15, 2026. Our incoming 26-27 Kindergarten students toured the building (led by current Kindergarten students) and participated in some fun activities. If you missed the event, you can still register your child online at www.bentleyschools.org. If you have any questions, please call the Barhitte office at 810-591-9661.

Watch Us Grow: Kindergarten’s Busy Spring Adventures

Our Kindergartners have had a busy spring full of exciting learning opportunities. They have taken trips to For-Mar and the Children’s Museum. In class they had a visit from Flint Institute of Arts. They observed caterpillars growing into butterflies, but that wasn’t the only thing growing! Our Kindergartners showed how much they are growing too, by reading, writing books, working and playing well with their classmates, and doing challenging math problems.



Pretzels, Play Dough, and Puppies: A Fantastic Year in Mrs. Mojica’s First Grade!

This year, Mrs. Mojica’s first graders enjoyed many exciting learning experiences and special visitors! Fireman Dave visited to teach us about fire safety, and For-Mar helped us learn about animals and their babies.

Students had hands-on fun practicing place value with pretzels and marshmallows while learning tens and ones. We explored long “a” words using play dough and built sight words with Wikki Stix. Students also worked with buddies to complete a “How To” writing project about blowing bubbles.

To strengthen number skills, we practiced writing numbers to 120 with a fun “pass the paper” activity. We also had the opportunity to visit with a therapy dog, which was a special experience for many students.

One of the highlights of the year was learning about the butterfly life cycle. Students observed the butterflies daily and then released them once they were ready.

It has been a wonderful year full of fun, learning, and memorable experiences in first grade!



Bentley Middle School

BMS Bands Showcase Musical Excellence at Festival and Spring Concert

On Thursday, March 5, 2026, the BMS 7th and 8th Grade Bands, along with the BHS High School Band, traveled to the University of Michigan-Flint to participate in the District 3 Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association Band and Orchestra Festival. The 7th and 8th Grade Band performed three selections for a panel of MSBOA judges and an audience: *Ambassador March* by Larry Clark, *Colliding Visions* by Brian Balmages, and *Affirmation* by William Owens.

Following their prepared performance, the band participated in the sight-reading portion of the festival where students were given only five minutes to study a new piece of music before performing it for an additional judge. The band delivered an outstanding performance and earned a Division II rating, equivalent to a "B" grade. This achievement earned each band member a commemorative medal recognizing their hard work, dedication, and musical accomplishment. Congratulations to the BMS 7th and 8th Grade Bands on their excellent performance.

On Thursday, May 14, 2026, the BMS 6th–8th Grade Bands presented their Spring Concert to a full audience of family members and friends. The concert program featured approximately 17 musical selections, ranging from short 30-second pieces to more advanced works lasting several minutes. Students worked diligently to prepare for the performance, and their effort was evident



throughout the evening's diverse and engaging repertoire.

Selections performed included *Skip to My Lou*, *The FNAF Theme*, *This Old Man*, *The Bluey Theme*, *Above and Beyond* by James Swearingen, and *Spring from The Four Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi. The audience and performers alike created a supportive and appreciative atmosphere that made the evening especially memorable.

The after-school club "Rock Dawgs" opened the concert with six songs, including *Come As You Are* by Nirvana, *Punkrock* by Teddybears, and *Nothing Else Matters* by Metallica.

Eighth Grade Students Visit Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills

On Friday, May 15th, our eighth grade students participated in an educational field trip to the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills. The experience provided students with



an important opportunity to deepen their understanding of history, human rights, and the consequences of prejudice and intolerance.

Throughout the visit, students explored exhibits that shared the stories of Holocaust survivors, examined historical artifacts, and learned about the events that took place during World War II. The museum experience encouraged thoughtful reflection and meaningful discussion about the importance of empathy, acceptance, and standing up against hatred in all forms.

Middle School Social Studies teachers Mrs. Mannor and Mr. Smith accompanied students on the trip and were available throughout the day to help answer questions, guide discussions, and provide additional historical context. Their support helped students connect classroom learning to the real-world experiences and stories presented at the museum.

A Bright New Light: Welcoming Mrs. Aisa Castro to Bentley Middle School

Bentley Middle School has a vibrant new energy in its halls this year. Joining the Special Education department, Mrs. Aisa Castro has quickly transformed her classroom into a space of rigorous learning, deep compassion, and rich cultural exchange, becoming a beloved figure among students and staff alike.



Mrs. Aisa Castro

Mrs. Castro comes to Bentley from the breathtaking, coffee-growing Cordillera region of the Philippines. She arrived in September on a cultural visa, bringing nine years of teaching experience and a Master's degree in Special Education. An extraordinary linguist, she speaks four languages: Tagalog, Ilokano, Ibaloi, and English.

As part of her visa, she has shared her heritage with students through presentations featuring traditional Filipino dress, foods, and customs, bridging continents right here in our school.

Step into Mrs. Castro's classroom and you will find a perfect balance of warmth and high accountability. She is incredibly kind and loves to laugh with her students, but she also expects them to reach beyond their grasp. Upon her arrival, she set a clear standard, "My classroom is not a place to take a break. The students are here to learn!"

Outside the classroom, Mrs. Castro enjoys singing, playing volleyball, and games. Her world became complete this past February when her husband and three-year-old son joined her, and she is already eager for her son to become a future Bentley student.

Mrs. Castro's impact has resonated deeply with the Bentley staff. Ms. Crane, a paraprofessional who works closely with her, shares, "She brings a light to the building, her room, the kids! She is so compassionate and it's been fun to have her share her culture with us."

Ms. Zedan, Director of Special Education, echoes this admiration, "Mrs. Castro has been a wonderful addition to the Bentley Middle School staff. She has shown her compassion and expertise in the area of supporting students with special needs as well as becoming an integral part of the special education department."

In just one school year, Mrs. Castro has proven that dedication and compassion are universal languages. Bentley Middle School is incredibly fortunate to have her expertise and her bright light guiding our students.





Collin Alvarez
Mott Community College,
Computer Science



Aniah Cross
Mott Community College,
Psychology



Chloe Besson
Northern Michigan University,
Fishery and Wildlife Management



Alessandra Bird
Ferris State University,
Correctional Social Worker



Cole Bowman
Mott Community College, General
Studies then Coaching Education



Gage Buckley
Mott Community College,
Wildlife Studies program



Lillian Burger
Paul Mitchell's for
Cosmetology



Amyah Cannoy
Workforce



Zachary Cherny
Workforce



She'Niya Cochran
Saginaw Valley State
University, Dental Hygiene



Chloe Connie
Mott Community College,
Dental Hygiene



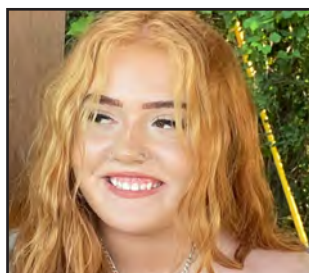
Logan Diederich
Columbia College Chicago,
Music Composition



Lia Edgington
Michigan Technological University,
Environmental Engineering



Anthony France
Mott Community College,
Automotive Studies and play basketball



Jade Fuller
Mott Community College,
Medical Field



Jacey Garza
Saginaw Valley University,
Social Work • Writing/English



Lorenzo Gatica
Mott Community College,
Business Administration





Kenzye Goings
*Receptionist at Ortho Michigan
and pursue the Medical Field*



Annaliyah Guimaraes
Real Estate



Christopher Hodges
Tire Technician doing OTR



Kaydenze Hurlburt
*Plumber/Pipefitter for the
Local 370 Union*



Zachary Iverson
Workforce



Jordan Jarrell
Workforce



Abigail Jones
*Oakland Community
College, Sonography*



Caleb Jones
*Mott Community College,
Video Game Design*



Madeline Jones
*Mott Community College,
Early Childhood Education*



Jayden Khan
Electrician



Noah Keener
Residential Electrician



Cameron Laclair
*Michigan State University,
Zoology*



Robert Martinez Jr
*Painting Apprenticeship
Program*



Christopher Maynard
Carpentry and Woodworking



Braylyn McComb
Barber

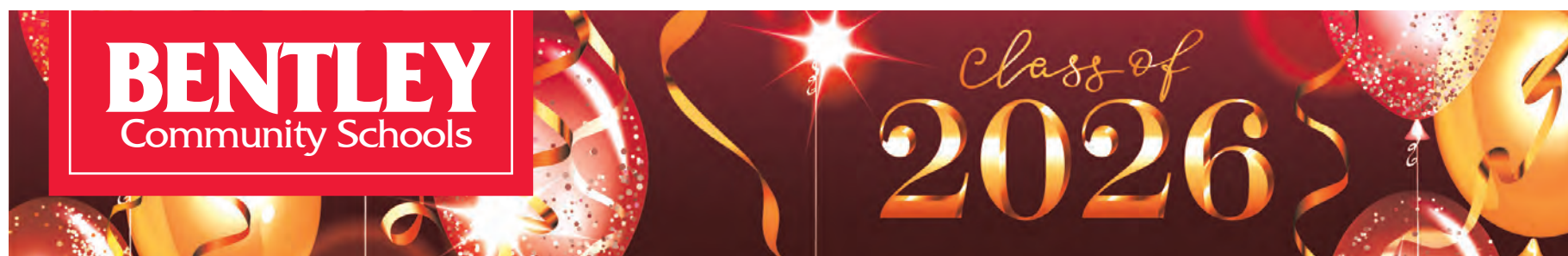


Cameron Miller
*Oakland University,
Psychology*



Ayden Moran
*Mott Community College,
Welding*





Morgen Morrish
Mott Community College,
Science



Isiah Mudge
Mott Community College - Ferris
State University, Forensic Biology



Brian Olivera
Kettering University,
Electrical Engineering



Ethan Perkins
Mott Community College -
Wayne State, Medical Schooling



Jada Pinson
Wayne State University,
Business



Leslie Piper
Oakland University,
Accounting and Business



Gabriel Prast
Saginaw Valley State University,
Business Management



Kathleen Robinson
Central Michigan
University, Photojournalism



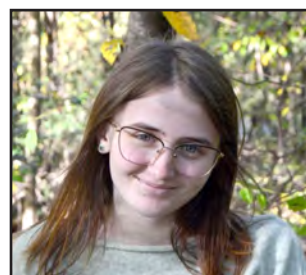
Abigail Rose
Saginaw Valley State University,
Pre-Law / Political Science



Jeramiah Sorgi
Saginaw Valley State
University, Chemical
Physics



Jordan Walker
Delta Community College, General
Studies and Play Basketball



Victoria Wares
Mott Community College,
Science then Psychology



Jae'Lynn West
Mott Community College,
Criminal Justice



Alexis Williams
Mott Community College,
Sonography



Justin Zajechowski
Mott Community College,
Electrical



Celebrating a True Bulldog: Happy Retirement, Principal Bednarski!

After 25 years of dedicated service to Bentley Community Schools, our very own Scott Bednarski has announced his retirement, effective June 30th, 2026.

A proud 1994 graduate of Bentley High School, Scott returned to his roots to give back to the community that shaped him. Over the past two and a half decades, he has impacted generations of students and families across the district, serving faithfully as a teacher, coach, and administrator. He has truly left his mark on nearly every building in our



district. Scott's leadership, heart for our students, and unwavering dedication have made Bentley feel like a true home. While we will miss his presence in our hallways, we are incredibly grateful for the positive impact he has made on our entire community.

Please join us in thanking Principal Bednarski for his 25 years of service and wishing him the absolute best as he begins this exciting next chapter!

**ONCE A BULLDOG,
ALWAYS A BULLDOG!**

SUPERINTENDENT

Continued from Page 1

More Independence, Free Play, and Real-World Responsibility

- The “Why”: Children build resilience and overcome anxiety by doing things on their own, making mistakes, and figuring things out.
- What it looks like in our schools: At the preschool level, we intentionally allow kids to engage in rough-and-tumble play under close supervision. We understand the immense value of letting kids navigate these tricky situations themselves. We use these real-world moments as the foundation for teaching them how to problem-solve and play appropriately.
- What families can do: Keep this momentum going at home! Encourage unstructured free play with neighborhood kids where they have to negotiate rules and resolve their own conflicts without an adult immediately intervening.

Phone-Free Schools

- The “Why”: When kids have phones in their pockets, they are constantly pulled away from learning and face-to-face peer interaction.
- What it looks like in our schools: We instituted a strict no-cell-phone policy during the school day, and the feedback from our high school students has been profoundly moving. Our students shared that their initial anxiety about not having their phones lasted anywhere from a few weeks to a month. But once they pushed past that hurdle, the upsides were undeniable.
- Students recently shared that they are now engaging in far more conversation

with their peers, feel less stressed, and are more engaged in class. In fact, some students admitted that they are voluntarily using their phones less outside of school now because they finally see the value of being unplugged. Interestingly, they also told us: “If you had asked us beforehand if we wanted this policy, we absolutely would have said ‘No!’”

- What families can do: Help us maintain these boundaries. Support our policy by saving non-urgent communications with your child for before or after the school day.

No Smartphones Before High School

- The “Why”: Brains undergo massive development in middle school, making the intense social comparisons afforded youth through social media apps which are accessible on smartphones too much to navigate.
- What families can do: Delay giving your child a fully connected smartphone until 9th grade. Knowing that our high schoolers struggled with phone anxiety for a month before seeing the light proves that delaying this exposure protects younger minds. If communication is necessary for logistics, opt for a basic flip phone or a kids’ smartwatch that only allows texting and calling.

No Social Media Before Age 16

- The “Why”: Social media platforms are designed to be addictive, displacing sleep, face-to-face socialization, and real-world hobbies.
- What families can do: Keep kids off platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat until they are at least 16. Use this time to help them develop a strong

2026-27 School Year CALENDAR

AUGUST 2026

Aug 17 Staff – Welcome Back
Aug 18 Staff PL 8:00-3:00
Aug 19 Open House 4:00-6:00 PM
Aug 20 Staff PL 8:00-3:00
Aug 24 Students’ First Day – ½ Day
Aug 28 No School

SEPTEMBER 2026

Sep 4-7 Labor Day Recess
Sep 25 Homecoming Game

OCTOBER 2026

Oct 7 Students ½ Day; Staff PL
Oct 14, 15.....Parent Teacher Conferences
Oct 16 No School
Oct 30.....Students ½ Day; Staff
Compensatory PL; End 1st Marking Period

NOVEMBER 2026

Nov 3 No Students; Staff PL
Nov 25 - 27 Thanksgiving Recess

DECEMBER 2026

Dec 21-Jan 1 Winter Break

JANUARY 2027

Jan 4 School Resumes
Jan 14.....End 1st Semester
Jan 15.....No Students;
Staff PL & Records Day
Jan 18.....No School—MLK Day

FEBRUARY 2027

Feb 11 Students ½ day; Staff PL
Feb 12-15 Mid-winter Break
Feb 24-25 Parent Teacher Conferences
Feb 26 No School

MARCH 2027

Mar 17 Students ½ Day; Staff PL
Mar 25 End 3rd Marking Period
Mar 26-Apr 2 Spring Break

APRIL 2027

Apr 5 School Resumes
Apr 14.....Students ½ Day; Staff Work Day

MAY 2027

May 26 Students ½ day; Staff PL
May 31 Memorial Day

JUNE 2027

June 9 Students’ Last Day ½ Day /
Teachers’ Records Day

SCHOOL HOURS

BARHITTE ELEMENTARY

STUDENT DAY: 8:25 AM – 3:20 PM
STUDENT ½ DAY: 8:25 AM – 11:40 AM

BENTLEY MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS

STUDENT DAY: 7:30 AM – 2:25 PM
STUDENT ½ DAY: 7:30 AM – 10:45 AM

sense of real-world identity first, grounded in the real-world friendships they are actively building in our hallways.

The honest feedback from our high schoolers proves that kids want to be freed from the digital tether—they just need us to be the adults who set the boundary. But this is a collective problem that requires a collective solution. No single parent wants to make their child the “odd one out,” but when we act together, we can change the norm.

Because I believe this book is so vital to the future of our community, I am hosting a Superintendent’s book club for any and all parents and community members who are interested in reading *The Anxious Generation* and discussing how we can practically implement these ideas in our homes and community.

If you would like to join me, please send me an email at kspann@bentleyschools.org with the subject line: “book club”. Once we see how many are interested, I will follow up with dates, times, and structure.

Thank you for your partnership, your trust, and your dedication to making our district a place where children can truly thrive. I wish you all a healthy, happy (and unplugged) summer!

Warmly, — Dr. Kristy Spann

FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Fueling Student Success: FREE MEALS & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Our Food Services Department offers a wide variety of healthy lunches that meet all state and federal guidelines, ensuring students get the fuel they need to succeed in school, and these delicious meals are free to all students. All three locations feature a diverse selection of options, including a fresh salad bar. Our dedicated and friendly cafeteria staff are committed to providing a positive dining experience for each student. They go the extra mile to meet all students’ needs and preferences. With participation over 80% daily, our program is a huge success! If you’re looking to make a difference in the lives of children in our community, we encourage you to join our team. Contact Jean Kish at (810) 591-9536 for more information.

Bentley High School



Between the Stations: Discipline, Safety, and Growth Define Bentley Skeet Shooting

In skeet shooting, success isn't measured just by the shatter of a single bird, but by the discipline found between the stations. This season, the Bentley Skeet Team has stepped onto the field with a renewed focus that goes beyond high scores. From perfecting our leadership to mastering the mental game, the current state of the squad is defined by a relentless drive to turn every 'lost' bird into a lesson learned. Safety is at the forefront of our routine as we provide rookie and veteran shooting competitors alike with a safe and fun sport that anyone can engage with, not just the fastest runner or strongest lifter.

Our students show commitment to improvement both on and off the field. During practice they encourage one another and support each other through every celebration after a "busted" target to the exasperated sighs of a miss. One thing remains constant about the Bentley Skeet Team: our commitment to providing a safe, engaging, and challenging environment where students can cultivate a lifelong passion for shooting sports. During his 25-year tenure, Coach Folke Boman has been instrumental in developing not only elite marksmen, but also a culture of discipline and sportsmanship that defines our program.



A MESSAGE FROM Principal Dickerson

NO MAGIC WAND:

How Structure and Accountability Transformed Bentley High School

Everywhere you look, you can read an article about the current state of K-12 education in this country. The same themes continue to dominate the headlines: teacher shortages and retention, classroom disruptions, and declining reading and math scores.

The million-dollar question is: how do we fix these issues? The truth is, there is no "magic wand." If there were, everyone would already be doing it.

Here at Bentley High School, we have taken a unique approach over the last decade, an approach that is not always "shiny and new," but one that has produced positive results for both our students and staff.

The reality is, it did not require a new program, expensive initiative,

See **STRUCTURE** on 12



Leading with Heart: How Bentley's National Honor Society is Transforming Our Community

The future looks bright thanks to the dedicated members of Bentley's National Honor Society (NHS) chapter. These students consistently demonstrate that leadership extends far beyond the classroom, balancing their academic schedules with a commitment to community service. Whether they are organizing two annual blood drives in partnership with the American Red Cross or raising critical funds for the "Dimes for Diapers" initiative, these young leaders are tackling real-world challenges with heart. Their efforts ensure that local families have the resources they need and that our healthcare systems remain supported through vital donations.

Beyond fundraising, our NHS students are active fixtures in the fabric of our town. You may have seen them cheering on racers at the Hot Fudge Run, ensuring a safe and spooky experience at the Halloween Trunk-or-Treat, or rolling up their sleeves to preserve our local environment at the For-Mar Nature Preserve. During Reading Month, they take the time to inspire the next generation by sharing stories with younger students, fostering a love for literacy that will last a lifetime. We are incredibly proud of their spirit of volunteerism and the lasting impact they continue to make on our community.

More Than Just Lifting: Bentley Powerlifters Build a Culture of Success and Support

The Bentley Powerlifting Program had another strong showing in 2025-2026. This season's powerlifting team demonstrated what consistent hard work and dedication can accomplish.

Beyond success on the lifting

platform, our athletes supported one another, pushed each other to improve, and represented our school with humility and pride. From first-time lifters to state level competitors, every athlete contributed to a culture built on

accountability, encouragement, and perseverance.

As coaches, we are incredibly proud of the growth this team showed throughout the year and look forward to more success in the 2026-2027 season!



PLAY

Continued from Page 1

challenge your neighbors to a game of cornhole, and enjoy classic outdoor games.

- No need to worry about cooking! We are providing a delicious, complimentary dinner for all participants to enjoy as we gather as a community.
- Walk away with more than just memories. We will have free book giveaways, “Spin for a Win” prizes, and vital tools to help you stay active and mindful all summer long.

Games, Crafts, and Interactive Stations

There is something for everyone to enjoy! Bring the whole family out to experience:

- **Creative Crafts:** Bracelet making, kindness rocks, sensory bottle making, and a planting table.
- **Active Fun:** Jump ropes, hula hoops, frisbees, rocket launchers, a bubble station, and a sidewalk chalk area.
- **Giant Lawn & Table Games:** Connect 4, Twister, Jenga, Checkers, Ladder Ball Toss, Kerplunk, Yahtzee, and Tetris.

Connect with Local Resources

We are proud to host dozens of incredible local organizations dedicated to supporting your family’s mental, physical, social, and financial well-being. Stop by their booths to gather information, ask questions, and stock up on summer resources.

Whether it’s discovering new mindfulness techniques, accessing utility assistance, or learning about local nutrition, this fair is about embracing a summer of resilience.

Come share a meal, connect with your community, and let’s kick off a healthy summer together!

Program Funding Notice: This program is proudly funded by the Genesee County Community Mental Health Millage funds. Your tax dollars at work to support local families.

SUPPORT SERVICES & SAFETY

- Genesee County Sheriff Dept
- Burton Fire Dept
- Voices For Children
- Ennis Center for Children
- JWB Autism Support Services
- Catholic Charities
- Alzheimer’s Association

EDUCATION, YOUTH & RECREATION

- Flint Cultural Center (Sloan/Longway)
- Genesee County Parks (For-Mar)
- Little Bulldogs Robotics
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- GISD ESOL Program
- Mott Community College
- MSU Extension

HEALTH, WELLNESS & COMMUNITY

- Free Sports Physicals!!
- Cedar and Sage Therapy
- Easterseals MORC
- Genesee County Prevention Coalition
- Molina Healthcare
- Financial Plus FCU
- Sovita Credit Union
- Michigan Works! / Jobs for Michigan Graduates
- emPower Genesee (Help with Consumers Energy bills)
- League of Women Voters
- Journey Through the Seasons
- Crime Stoppers
- Therapy Dogs
- Army & Navy Representatives

SUCCESS

Continued from Page 1

summer to maintain physical stamina. Play ball, bike ride, swim, fly a kite...the options are endless!

2. Lock in Medical and Wellness Care

Summer is the ideal time to schedule healthcare appointments so your child doesn’t have to miss crucial instructional time in the fall.

- **Annual Physicals and Vaccines:** Ensure your child visits their provider for an annual physical and receives all required shots and recommended immunizations before school starts. This would also be helpful for fall sports!
- **Dental Visits:** Schedule one of your child’s bi-annual dentist visits during the break.
- **Manage Chronic Conditions:** If your child has a chronic issue like asthma or diabetes, use the summer to have their doctor complete the required school forms so they can carry necessary medications.
- **Secure Resources:** If your child lacks health or dental insurance, reach out to Mrs. Gaby at (810) 591-9522 (even over the summer) to get connected to resource options.

3. Plan Ahead for School Anxiety

If your child frequently misses

school due to anxiety, remember that staying home can actually worsen the situation and cause them to feel disconnected. Use the quiet summer months to build a proactive strategy:

- **Recognize the Signs:** Take time to observe if your child shows persistent symptoms of anxiety, such as trouble sleeping, continuous negative thoughts, irritability, or unexplained stomachaches and headaches.
- **Start the Conversation:** Talk openly with your child over the summer. Try to understand what makes them anxious about school, reassure them that they can face their fears, and avoid using punishment, which can worsen anxiety.
- **Coordinate Summer Outreaches:** Reach out to the principal or social worker before the year begins. You can design a gradual return-to-school plan or explore if a 504 plan is needed to support them on day one.

Facing tough challenges like a lack of stable housing, access to food, or something else? You are not alone, and there is no need to feel embarrassed. Reach out to Lisa Gaby, our School-Family Liaison, by calling (810) 591-9522 or emailing lgaby@bentleyschools.org so we can partner together and connect your family with supportive resources!

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Athletics

It's great to be a Bulldog!

Bentley Athletics continues to build a strong culture of pride, dedication, and success. Thanks to outstanding coaches committed to player development on and off the field, the future of Bulldog Athletics is incredibly bright.

Fall & Winter Highlights

Football: The Varsity team made tremendous strides developing young athletes. With rising participation and intense offseason weight room training, the program is strongly preparing student-athletes for collegiate opportunities.

Girls Volleyball: The program continued its resurgence, earning 12 victories—its highest total since 2019. Excitement is already building for upcoming summer workouts.

Boys Basketball: The Bulldogs finished second in the division and qualified for the inaugural GAC Championship Tournament under Coach Collins' comprehensive development program.

Bowling: Following a heavy graduation loss, both teams entered a rebuilding year. Despite challenges, bowlers competed hard and showed steady improvement.

Cheer Program: A staple of school spirit across fall and winter, our cheerleaders dedicated countless hours to summer preparation, consistently earning praise for their sportsmanship and positivity.

Spring & Year-Round Success

Boys Volleyball: In its historic, inaugural season as an officially sanctioned MHSAA sport, the team earned immediate victories over larger schools and is proud to have hosted the Regional Tournament on May 22nd.

Powerlifting: Coach Horton continues to elevate fitness for all students. This season, sophomore Tyler Johnson captured the JV State Championship in his weight class



with an incredible 1,250-pound combined lift.

Baseball: Competing with pride and class, the team benefits from a year-round development program and Bentley's dedicated indoor training facility and batting cage.

Softball: The program extended its elite tradition of excellence, securing its fourth consecutive GAC Championship and maintaining an undefeated conference streak spanning over four years.



Track and Field: Participation numbers are steadily growing under Coach Mills, with numerous student-athletes setting personal records and placing among top event competitors.

The Athletic Department remains deeply committed to enhancing our facilities and providing the best possible experience for our student-athletes. Thank you for your unwavering support. GO BULL-DOGS!

STRUCTURE

Continued from Page 10

or outside consultant.

It was something much simpler. Our approach is built on three foundational principles: structure, discipline, and personal accountability. Those three words have been at the forefront of everything we have done for the last ten years, and our students and teachers are better off because of it.

By committing to this approach, we have seen:

- improved test scores in all areas;
- improved AP test pass rate;
- more students going on to college;
- 4-year graduation rate in 90% range and a 6-year rate approaching 96%;
- major decrease in student chronic absenteeism;
- significant decreases in both major and minor discipline incidents;
- little to no chronic teacher absenteeism;
- minimal staff turnover; and
- overwhelmingly positive feedback from guest teachers who enter our building.

Ten years ago, we were viewed as one of the lowest-performing schools in the area. Today, we have steadily climbed towards one of the top 10-performing schools in the county. We consistently maintain some of the lowest discipline and suspension rates in the county.

More importantly, you can feel the difference the moment you walk through our doors.

You can see it on the faces of our students and staff every single day. The school is safe. Students are learning. Guest teachers (on the rare occasion they are in the building) feel respected and valued. Staff members enjoy coming to work. The best part of all of this: it did not cost us a dime.

We accomplished this with the staff. We have a great group of people who choose to work together toward one common goal: giving our students the best high school experience possible.

In education, we often search for the next big thing. Sometimes the answers are much simpler than we expect them to be.

- **Clear expectations.**
- **Consistency.**
- **Accountability.**
- **Relationships.**
- **Structure.**

That is not flashy.

But it works.

Do not take my word for it: just ask a former student, current student, teacher, or guest teacher. Here are some of things you would hear:

"I hated school before I came to Bentley, but now I come every day."

"Without Bentley, I would probably be on the streets, but the staff gave me the encouragement to reach higher and once I did...I never looked back."

"One of the most respectful schools I have ever subbed in. I will come back whenever you need me."

"Hands down the best school I have subbed in all year...count me in whenever needed."

"I never thought I would enjoy coming to school until I came to Bentley."

"We always do a temperature check and whenever we talk about Bentley High School it is always sunny and 70."

"I never thought I would graduate let alone go to college, but the staff at Bentley made me believe in myself and next fall I will be the first person in my family to go to college."

"The staff helped transform my kid from someone who did everything to miss school...to someone who never misses school."

"I was bullied and harassed so much at (former school) and have not had one issue since coming to Bentley."

"Best decision I made transferring here for my Senior Year...I wish I would have come over earlier."

"By far the best small school in Genesee County."

"(insert school) just threw me out. I was always told I was a bad kid and would not amount to anything... Bentley helped me believe in myself!"

Ultimately, Bentley High School proves that when you invest in people and principles rather than programs, you don't just fix a school—you transform a community.