

Dear BCS Community;

At the April 20, 2021, Board of Education meeting, our BOE committed to moving forward with combining athletic programs with Genesee Valley beginning next year. This has been a long, emotional process for everyone in the District. While everyone would prefer to maintain our own programs, the BOE is working to be proactive and develop a mutually beneficial relationship at this time rather than being forced or having no options to combine programs in the future.

The main goals of combining programs at this time are to:

1. Address programs with low participation in both schools;
2. Proactively prepare for reduced participants related to lower enrollment in various grade levels;
3. Maintain all current BCS programs and have a partner to combine rather than not have teams in the future.

Athletic Trends in Allegany County

There are 11 schools in the Allegany County League, and small districts in Allegany County are struggling with athletic numbers across the board and are combining programs with neighbor districts.

- This spring alone, five districts did not have enough athletes for modified softball and baseball, forcing last minute combiners for Friendship/Scio and Whitesville/Andover and Hinsdale has cancelled modified baseball. (BCS has just enough players to have each team this spring.) At the varsity level, Andover and Whitesville are going to try to have independent teams with 9/10 players on a team, Hinsdale does not have a varsity softball team, and Scio and Friendship are having last minute conversations because Scio does not have enough players for varsity teams.
- This winter, Friendship, Scio, Whitesville, and Hinsdale did not have JV boys' basketball teams and Andover had to cancel their season because they did not have enough players to finish the season. Fillmore and Scio did not have girls' modified basketball.
- The last pages of the attached Q and A show information on years and programs has not had over the last five years and programs for which the District has struggled with participation numbers.

This information is being provided as a background of what is happening with athletics in our county. Some of this year's challenges may be attributed to COVID, but trends have been discussed among AD's for the last three years. Schools are finding athletic combiners a necessary means to maintain opportunities for kids.

As the athletic committees from both districts reviewed the current student athlete numbers and enrollment numbers, each school had programs that would benefit from support from the other school. So, while BCS may have strong numbers for a specific program GV needed support in the area and vice versa. The only program showing strong numbers for both schools across the board is boys' basketball. I have attached an analysis of sports using the numbers of students from each school (identified by school color) who played sports this year attached to next year's grade level. This spread sheet is solely by grade level and does not account for students who would play at a different level (up or down) for each sport.

We will begin working on a lot of critical steps including coaches and organizing summer 'camps' to help students from both schools get to know each other and have the opportunity to try new activities.

Please do not hesitate to contact members of the Board of Education or District administration with any questions.

Josie Preston, BOE President

jpreston@belfastcsd.org

Randa Harrington, BOE Vice President

rharrington@belfastcsd.org

Becky Backer

bbacker@belfastcsd.org

Dan Borden

dborden@belfastcsd.org

Cecy Curcio

ccurcio@belfastcsd.org

Chris Enders

cenders@belfastcsd.org

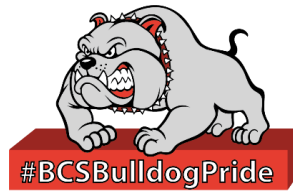
Patti Krotz

pkrotz@belfastcsd.org

Wendy Butler, Superintendent/ Athletic Director

wbutler@belfastcsd.org

March 4, 2021



Hello BCS families,

You are receiving this document to further communicate ongoing discussions that the BCS board and athletic committee have been having about an athletic partnership with Genesee Valley. A topic as sensitive as this, has not been taken lightly. Please take the time to review this comprehensive, informational document. As always, the BCS students are our district's number one priority. Please reach out to any or all board members listed below, and we would be happy to discuss this topic further. Thank you for your continued support.

-BCS Board of Education

Background

- Winter 2019 After being approached by Belfast parents concerned about athletes being moved to a varsity sport at a young age, not having enough students for a team, girls and boys playing on the same team, and looking at opportunities for athletic programs, during the Winter of 2019, BCS met with four neighboring school districts to gauge possible interest in combining athletic programs as some level. After the preliminary discussions, Genesee Valley seemed to be a natural partner to form a long term relationship to benefit students in both districts.
- Spring 2019 During the Spring of 2019, members of the athletic committees from both districts held preliminary discussions and decided to pause discussions.
- February 2020 February of 2020, Genesee Valley reached out to BCS to ask the District to look at combining athletic programs for the 20-21 school year.
- March 2020 BCS surveyed our students and community about combining athletic programs. The survey results indicated there was an interest in looking at options around combining athletic programs.
- March 2020 COVID stopped all conversations.
- Summer 2020 The Board of Education Athletic Committees from both districts resumed conversations about potentially combining athletic programs and identified procedures to gather stakeholder input. The athletic committee members met with Dale Skinner, the Athletic Director for Arkport-Canaseraga, to discuss the process, benefits, pitfalls, and planning of combining athletic programs because of his experience.
- Fall 2020 The Athletic Committees and school administrators from both Districts met with the varsity coaches and youth sport organizers from both schools.
- Winter 2021 Meetings were held with students in both Districts. In Belfast, all students in grades 9-12 were invited to share their thoughts and opinions.

The BOE would like to be able to work together and plan for combined athletic programs rather than be tossed into a combined situation and not have any influence over the process.

Questions and Answers

1. Why is BCS considering combining athletics?

BCS is looking at combining athletic programs to offer consistent programming for students, that allow students to participate and play sports at appropriate levels for their physical and social abilities.

The historical participation data for BCS athletics illustrates issues that would be addressed through combining sports:

- Having consistent programs every year
- Moving 7th or 8th grade students to varsity teams to ensure there is a varsity team
- Having students move directly from modified (and in some cases Little League) sports to varsity level sports
- Students playing sports with other students that are significantly physically stronger
- Concerns about younger students competing at a varsity level
- Wanting more opportunities for kids

A five-year breakdown of the sports and numbers for each sport has been provided after the Q and A.

While BCS has programs with strong numbers and participation, other programs have consistently struggled to have players or do not have large enough numbers in case of injuries. Some of the issues with participation are directly related to enrollment in the District, specifically the number of females in a grade level. (District enrollment information is also provided at the end of the Q and A.)

To address the needs of our students, BCS is working to build a solid relationship with only one other district, with mutual benefits to both, so that we can avoid potentially having to split our kids out to different districts that would be willing and able to accept them if we don't have the numbers.

2. Does combining athletics mean the District is looking to merge schools?

No, BCS is not looking to merge school Districts with anyone.

3. Will all sports be combined?

No, at this time, both schools are looking to start with sports/ programs that have lower numbers for both schools. At this point, boys basketball is the only program with strong numbers in both schools.

4. What additional sports may be available to BCS students?

The following sports would be offered to BCS students through a combined athletic program:

- Fall track and field
- Cross Country
- Tennis
- Golf
- Swimming
- Boys volleyball

5. What sports are currently combined?

BCS has been combined with Genesee Valley to offer Spring Track for several years. During the 2019-20 school year, the Districts combined Girls' Varsity Volleyball. (We previously had a combined program with Friendship but could not continue offering the program because there were not enough players even as a combined team.) This year, Girls' Varsity Cheerleading is being offered as a combined sport, with GV sending girls to Belfast to cheer.

6. How will the BCS fields/ gym be used?

Belfast has done several improvements to the facility over the last few years. The only way a conversation about combining athletics would not have been moved forward without a commitment from both Districts to use both school's facilities.

Games and practices will be held at both schools, which will increase access to fields and gyms for students at both schools.

7. What happens if there are too many athletes for a team?

The answer to this will depend on the level of the sport. If it is a modified program, an additional team may be able to be created. At the JV or Varsity level there could be tryouts. However, our BOE is adamant that there not be students cut from programs. It is important to remember that both schools are looking at combining athletics because both schools have struggled with numbers at different sports and different levels.

8. How will athletes get back and forth for practices and games?

BCS will provide transportation to athletes to and from practice when events are scheduled at Genesee Valley.

9. Will we still be bulldogs?

Yes! Belfast will continue to be the home of the Bulldogs. Pep rallies and spirit days will continue to be held in the District celebrating red and white Bulldogs pride.

10. Will there be new school colors/ mascots?

There will not be a change of school mascots or colors initially, Uniforms will be worn from both schools. If a change is recommended down the road, students from both schools will be involved with recommendations.

11. What happens if/when a team wins a championship?

Success will be celebrated in both school districts. Section V provides one championship trophy for a winning team. When a championship occurs, the Districts will split the cost and order a second trophy so each school has a trophy.

12. Who will coach?

Coaches will be hired by a committee from both schools.

13. Will combined sports play in a new league?

Section V sets leagues every year based on student numbers in grades 10-12. The current numbers of Belfast and Genesee Valley would have the teams competing as a D1 team rather than the current D2 status. D1 teams in the area are Fillmore, Alfred-Almond, Arkport-Canaseraga, Genesee Valley, and Mount Morris, several of which the District plays during the regular season.

14. What happens to players who have already been on a varsity team?

All athletes will play on teams that are aligned with their skills level.

15. How does combining benefit current players?

Combining sports will help address the need for subs on several teams that currently have a limited number of players.

Additionally, current BCS athletes will have access to additional sports that are not currently offered at BCS.

16. How would kids who are on teams who are on to be 'on a team' be able to participate?

As we have seen through the impact COVID has had on students' access to extracurricular activities. All students will continue to be encouraged to play and participate on a team. The access to increased sports would hopefully generate increased interest for students at all levels.

17. Will BCS students play?

Absolutely! Part of having discussion with multiple schools was looking for a school to partner with, not be taken over by. All athletes will have equal opportunities to play and show their talents.

18. What other schools have combined sports (that are not combined districts)?

Area programs that have combined some (if not all) athletic programs include:

- Andover/Whitesville
- Arkport-Canaseraga
- Avoca/Prattsburgh
- Bradford/Hammondsport
- Cuba-Rushford/Hinsdale
- Scio/Friendship

There are other small schools in the region having similar conversations with neighboring school districts. Unfortunately, many schools have seen a decline in student participation in athletics. As an example, only two D2 schools in Allegany County had JV boys' basketball this winter and other schools could not field modified basketball teams or had to cancel games because they did not have enough players.

19. What will happen if/when a team wins a trophy?

If/When a team wins a trophy, BCS and GVCS will each receive a trophy to display in the school.

20. Will the Vienna Scholarship continue?

Yes, the Vienna Scholarship will continue to be given to a BCS senior for as long as possible. The Vienna Scholarship is run by an independent committee.

BCS Athletic Data Breakdown

BCS Athletic Teams	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
Varsity Boys' Soccer	X	X	X	X	X
Varsity Girls' Soccer	X	X	X	X	X
Modified Boys' Soccer	X	X*	X*	X	X
Modified Girls' Soccer	X	--	--	X	X
Varsity Boys' BB	X	X	X	X	X
JV Boys' BB	X	X	X	X	X
Varsity Girls' BB	X	X	X	X	X
JV Girls' BB	X	--	--	-	--
Varsity Cheerleading	X	X	X	X	X
Modified Boys' BB	X	X	X	X	X
Modified Girls' BB	X	X	X	X	X
Varsity Baseball	X	X	X	X	X
Varsity Softball	--	X	X	X	X
Modified Baseball	X	X*	X	X	X?
Modified Softball	X	--	--	X	X
Modified Track				X	X

*boys and girls combined

Combined (with other schools)

Varsity Girls' Volleyball (w/ Friendship)	X	X	X		
Varsity Girls' Volleyball (w/ GV)				X	X
Track (w/ GV)	X	X	X	X	X
Varsity Cheerleading (w/GV)					X

#athletes

16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21**
22	21	22	21	22
16	13	16	16***	16
13	17B/6G	12B/4G	20*^	16
11	--	--	17	15
10	9	10	11	11
9	13	14	8	11
9	8	8	7	8
7	--	--	-	--
8	8	8	7	15
14	11	13	14	13
9	8	10	13	12
13	12	**17	15	17
--	14	**14	15	13
14	11B/1G	**14	11	12
10	--	--	12	12
			7*	6

***ended the season with 9/10

*^ended season with 12/13

6B/4F	6B/3F	7B/4F		
			2	3
1?	4	**10	2	5
				12B/3GV

BCS Enrollment Information (as of 3/8/21)

Current Enrollment Numbers

(as of 9/29/20)

(Boys/Girls)

PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
15	27	17	22	25	19	28	31	29	32	20	29	21	31	350
8/7	12/15	10/7	12/10	12/13	10/9	10/18	19/12	11/18	14/18	12/8	19/10	13/8	16/15	

BCS Three Year Grade Level Breakdown of Teams

		7	8	9	10	11	12
Varsity Boys' Soccer	18-19			3	8	4	7
	19-20			4	4	9	4
	20-21			4	6	3	9
Varsity Girls' Soccer	18-19		3	3	5	3	2
	19-20			4	4	6	2
	20-21		1	3	4	4	4
Modified Boys' Soccer	18-19	7B/3G	5B/1G				
	19-20	6	8	6			
	20-21	5	6	5			
Modified Girls' Soccer	18-19	--	--	--			
	19-20	9	5	1			
	20-21	7	7	1			
Varsity Boys' BB	18-19				3	4	3
	19-20				2	6	3
	20-21				1	3	7
JV Boys' BB	18-19			4	9	1	
	19-20			2	4	2	
	20-21			8	2	1	
Varsity Girls' BB	18-19		1	1	3	2	1
	19-20		1	1	3	1	1
	20-21			2	2	2	2
Varsity Cheerleading	18-19		1	4	1	1	1
	19-20	1		1	1	3	1
	20-21		1	3	3	3	3
Modified Boys' BB	18-19	8	5				
	19-20	6	8				
	20-21	6	7				
Modified Girls' BB	18-19	4	3	2			
	19-20	8	3	2			
	20-21	4	7	1			
Varsity Baseball	18-19			5	3	4	5
	19-20			1	3	6	4
	20-21			4	4	3	6
Varsity Softball	18-19		8	1	5	2	3
	19-20		1	3	5	5	1
	20-21			3	4	3	3
Modified Baseball	18-19	7	7	1			
	19-20	4	4	2			
	20-21	6	5	1			
Modified Softball	19-20	7	4	1			
	20-21	6	6				

Varsity Girls' Volleyball	18-19			4	0	2	1
	19-20				2		
	20-21					2	
Modified Girls' Volleyball	20-21		1				
Varsity Track	18-19	1	1	3	4	1	
	19-20					2	
	20-21			3			2
Modified Track	19-20	7					
	20-21		5				