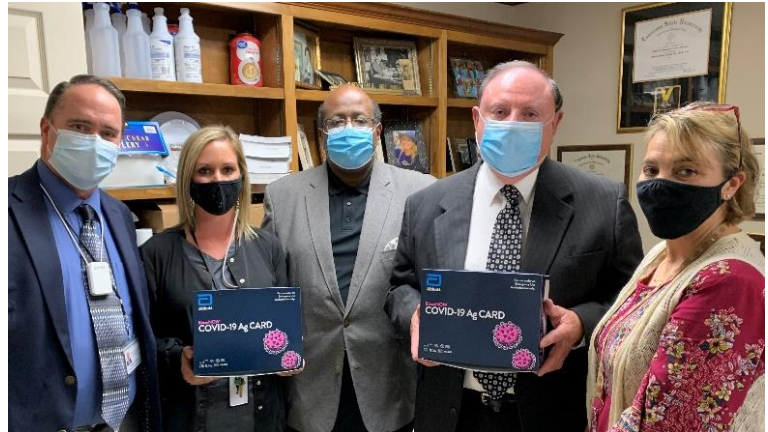


Evangeline Parish School Board Tackles COVID-19 Challenges with Teamwork

While school communities throughout Louisiana have felt the impact of COVID-19, [Louisiana Healthy Schools](#) is committed to reducing the spread of COVID-19 while continuing to support physical activity, nutrition, social emotional health and the management of students' chronic health conditions. With support from Louisiana Healthy Schools and partners, school systems across the state are also rising to the challenges of the 2020-2021 school year to ensure students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Evangeline Parish School Board exemplifies what it means to be a Louisiana Healthy School. This rural school system, located in the middle of the state, leads 12 schools serving 5,755 students. Of those students, approximately 74% of students are economically disadvantaged.

During the summer of 2020, the school system knew this year would bring a unique set of challenges. As they began planning, their primary goal was to “ensure a safe, healthy environment for all students and staff members and at the same time maintaining the academic focus.” This was their number one priority.



From left to right--Mike Lombas Assistant Superintendent, Linzy Landreneau Head Nurse, Darwan Lazard Superintendent, Dr. Charles Aswell Physician, Kelli Lafleur Special Education Director.

Kelli Lafleur, Director of Special Education, has worked for the school system for 19 years. Currently, she oversees student well-being, school nursing, supporting positive behavior, and ensures students receive specialized supports as needed. Kelli shared that leadership support and innovation have been critical to a successful start to the school year.

Like many school systems, Evangeline Parish School Board faced key challenges and questions that needed to be addressed. The school system identified four key topic areas critical to a successful year: 1) effective distance learning, 2) staff and student education on safety practices, 3) the continuation of well-being activities for students and staff members, and 4) mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Throughout the fall months, Evangeline Parish School Board tackled these challenges while remembering to prioritize a safe and healthy school environment for students and staff.

Evangeline Parish School Board took the following actions to address their key areas of concern.

- **Establishing a COVID-19 taskforce for the school system.** The group meets daily at 3:00 pm to review relevant data and address concerns.
- **Ensuring every school has a school nurse on campus.** Evangeline Parish School Board authorized and allocated funding needed to hire two additional nurses to ensure every school has a nurse on school grounds. The nurses come together each week to discuss strategies for overcoming barriers.

- **Creating a Well-Being Leadership Team at each school.** Funding provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is being used to support a coordinator whose role is to support the development and coordination of [well-being teams](#) at each school. The teams are in place to support screening of students and to ensure students' needs are addressed.
- **Promoting staff training and education.** The superintendent encouraged all staff to complete the Louisiana Healthy Schools' [COVID-19 Mitigating Strategies](#) training course developed by Children's Hospital New Orleans.
- **Piloting the BinaxNOW Rapid Testing Kits.** Evangeline Parish School Board is working in collaboration with local healthcare provider, Dr. Charles Aswell, to utilize the [rapid testing kits](#) provided through the Louisiana Department of Health.
- **Providing nutritious meals to students.** The school system's Child Nutrition Department continues to ensure students receive healthy meals. This includes providing box meal kits available for pick up.

The Evangeline Parish School Board understands that this work cannot happen in a silo, and teamwork is critical for success. Kelli Lafleur shared that "she has seen more collaboration, teamwork, and innovation" during this school year than in years past. The school system has utilized resources from the Louisiana Department of Education Strong Start and Children's Hospital New Orleans. In addition, the Evangeline Parish School Board has established a strong relationship with the Louisiana Department of Health's Regional Medical Director, Dr. Tina Stefanski.

As school systems prepare for the return of students after the holidays, Louisiana Healthy Schools knows that new challenges will arise. Still, it is critical to take a holistic approach when addressing the concerns of COVID-19 to ensure that each child is healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged, and has a solid foundation for long-term success. Evangeline Parish School Board exemplifies this approach through teachers, schools, families, communities, and governments working together to place the child at the center.

Strategies to Support the Whole Child While Reopening

Learn more about how your school system can support the whole child. Visit <http://wellaheadla.com/Reopening-Schools> for a curated set of resources, training opportunities, and technical assistance to support the whole child during COVID-19.

This includes free virtual self-paced training for schools through Moodle. [Click here](#) to register for the trainings on Moodle!