

OCTOBER 2024



Board of Education Updates

The Blair Community Schools Board of Education (BOE) held its monthly meeting on Monday, October 14, 2024, at 7:00 PM at the Blair Community Schools Central Office. The meeting covered several important topics affecting the school community.

A request from the Bear Cubs Volleyball Skill Development group to use gymnasium space on Sundays was denied by the BOE. The board felt this would open up Sundays to other group requests, and they felt it was important to continue the practice of reserving Sundays as family time in our community.

Two parents expressed concerns regarding bullying incidents and student safety within the district. At Blair Community Schools, we prioritize creating a safe and supportive environment where every student feels valued and protected, actively addressing concerns about bullying to ensure a positive and inclusive experience for all. Administration will be following up on these concerns and reviewing current practices around reporting and follow up.

The Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum was brought up in public comment, with some parents raising concerns about story topics within the curriculum. In response to these concerns, the board explained that CKLA is a research-based program grounded in the science of reading, designed to engage learners of all types with a wide variety of stories and genres. They acknowledged that all educational materials have the potential to be controversial but emphasized the need for professional judgment from teachers to determine what is appropriate for students. The CKLA curriculum was not approved at this time. The reading task force has been asked to review EL Education and Bookworms curriculum and will present their findings at the November BOE meeting.

The board approved plans for increased security measures, including the installation of security film on windows and updates to elementary school door locks. They also approved replacing the gym doors at the high school.

As always, the BOE encourages open communication between the school and the community as they work together to address these and other important issues.

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson



Dear Blair Community,

As we reflect on an exciting month, I want to take a moment to highlight the wonderful activities and learning experiences our students enjoyed throughout October! Our homecoming events truly brought the community together in celebration, fostering a strong sense of school spirit and pride. It was heartwarming to witness students, families, and staff unite in support of our athletes and performers, creating lasting memories and connections.

In addition to the homecoming festivities, our students participated in a variety of enriching field trips that significantly enhanced their classroom learning. From visits to our state capital and nature centers to hands-on experiences and career exploration initiatives in the community, these outings provided our students with the opportunity to explore new ideas and apply their knowledge in real-world settings. The enthusiasm and curiosity displayed by our students during these trips were truly inspiring.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to our community partners who made many of these opportunities available to our students. Their support and collaboration enrich our educational programs, ensuring that our students have access to valuable experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

I want to address the concerns shared at our recent school board meeting regarding reports of bullying. Our schools are built on a foundation of respect, inclusion, and community, and we are proud that the majority of our students experience a positive and supportive environment every day. We hold high expectations for our students as we work together with families and our community to foster responsible, respectful, and engaged citizens who contribute positively to society. With these goals in mind, we aim to tackle any issues directly and thoughtfully. Every student's well-being is important to us, and we are committed to ensuring that our schools are safe spaces for all.

The safety and well-being of our students are our top priorities, and we take these concerns seriously. We want our parents and students to feel comfortable bringing any concerns to our attention, confident that they will be heard and addressed. In response to recent reports from parents regarding bullying concerns, I will be meeting with our building administrators to review our current practices, including reporting systems, disciplinary procedures, and follow-up actions. Additionally, we will involve our student senate groups at each building to assess the school climate and provide their insights and suggestions for addressing any instances of bullying.

We also recognize the importance of hearing from you, our parents and guardians. Therefore, we will be holding a parent meeting in the near future to discuss these issues in more detail and listen to your valuable suggestions. Please know that we are committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment for all of our students, and I will provide an update on our progress in the November newsletter.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership in ensuring that our schools remain a positive and inclusive space for every child.

Sincerely,

Randy Gilson, Ed. D.

Superintendent, Blair Community Schools

Enterprise Turkey Events



As the holiday season approaches, we are excited to kick off our annual Turkey Donation Drive, organized through the Washington County Enterprise! This wonderful program encourages our students to get creative while giving back to the community.

Each elementary school will feature approximately 21 beautifully decorated boxes designed to look like turkeys. Our art teachers will select a grade level to lead the decorating process, incorporating various art concepts and skills into the lessons. This not only allows students to express their creativity but also instills a sense of responsibility and community spirit.

In a fun twist, first graders will also participate by providing their own "How to Cook a Turkey" responses. These delightful contributions will be collected on the same day as the turkey boxes, adding an extra layer of engagement to the project.

We can't wait to see the amazing designs our students come up with and to collect donations that will support those in need during this festive season. Be watching for this story in the Washington County Enterprise. Let's spread some holiday cheer together!

Books for Ownership Program

Blair Community Schools has been selected to receive a grant from Books for Ownership, a program from Reading Is Fundamental's (RIF) in collaboration with the Dollar General Literacy Foundation! This program is designed to empower children by allowing them to choose and keep new, age-appropriate books. Books for Ownership is built on a simple yet powerful idea: when children are given the freedom to choose their own books and have access to them, they become more engaged and enthusiastic readers.

Backed by resources for families, educators, and volunteers, the program ensures that the focus on reading extends beyond the classroom. Research shows that giving children the opportunity to select and own books leads to positive reading behaviors, such as increased motivation, frequency, and engagement. These habits contribute to better reading and writing skills, language development, and overall academic success. Studies have consistently shown that students with more books at home tend to perform better on reading assessments.

Through the Books for Ownership program, each K-5 student at Arbor Park and Deerfield Elementary schools will receive:

- Three new books to take home and keep (ordered through RIF's online bookstore, powered by Scholastic). A designated person at each school will receive login details to manage the ordering and distribution by March 2025.
- Bookplate stickers to personalize their new books, and bookmarks to encourage continued reading.

In total, this grant is providing over \$3200 of supplies for the elementary students of Blair Community Schools. Thank you to Reading is Fundamental and Dollar General Literacy Foundation for your support of our students!



Capitol Visits

This month, Blair Community Schools fourth grade students and the high school Business and Personal Law classes got to visit the Nebraska State Capitol! In 4th grade, students focus on Nebraska History, and the recent trip gave students a fantastic opportunity to experience it firsthand. They explored key landmarks, deepened their understanding of the state's history and government, and saw their learning come to life in meaningful ways.

One highlight was their visit to the Supreme Court room, where they had the chance to sit in this beautiful and historic space. It was a valuable and enriching experience for all!

In Business and Personal Law, students recently finished discussing constitutional rights and learning about the court system in the United States. To culminate these units, they were able to visit the capitol and listen in on some oral arguments in the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Students then entered the courtroom and were able to ask questions of the seven Nebraska Supreme Court Justices. They talked about their journey to becoming justices and the process they go through after hearing oral arguments before rendering their decision. The students got to see how the curriculum applies to the real world.



Blair Water Treatment Plant

On September 25th and 26th, Blair High School students in the Avenue Scholar Program had a unique opportunity to visit the Blair Water Treatment Plant and get an up-close look at the construction work happening on-site. During the visit, students not only observed the construction in progress but also learned about the various phases of such a large-scale project, from initial design to implementation. The tour highlighted the collaboration between different professionals, including engineers, project managers, and skilled tradespeople, showing students the diverse range of careers that contribute to a successful project.

A big thank you to Eriksen Construction for generously hosting the students and providing an inside look at what goes into a project of this magnitude. The experience opened the students' eyes to potential career opportunities in construction, engineering, and other related fields, giving them a clearer understanding of the skills and education needed for these paths. Visits like these are invaluable in helping students explore their future career interests and make more informed decisions about their next steps.

Alternative Curriculum Program



September was a busy month for the students in our Alternative Curriculum Program, but it was filled with so much fun! In September, students took two amazing field trips—one to Skinny Bones and another to Games on the Green. Both were full of adventure and great memories!

October kicked off with a wild and crazy Homecoming week, where students got to show off their creativity by dressing up and joining in the parade. The energy was incredible, and everyone had such a blast! The Homecoming Dance on Saturday was a huge hit, with everyone feeling included and having a fantastic time. It was a night we'll never forget!

We continued the fun by cheering on our softball team at sub-districts, and the school spirit in the student section was on fire! Thanks to everyone for keeping the excitement going. Let's make the rest of October just as awesome!

Camp Invention

We are thrilled to announce that Camp Invention will be returning next June, and we invite you to register your K-6 students for this exciting summer experience! Camp Invention is a nationally recognized program that offers a unique blend of hands-on activities, creative problem-solving, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) exploration designed to ignite curiosity and foster innovation in young minds. Here are some highlights of what Camp Invention has to offer:

- **Engaging Activities:** Your child will participate in fun, interactive activities that encourage critical thinking and creativity.
- **Innovative Learning:** The camp focuses on STEM skills through imaginative projects and teamwork.
- **Experienced Instructors:** Our dedicated staff are trained to provide a supportive and enriching environment.

Details for Registration:

- Dates: June 2-6, 2025
- Location: To Be Determined
- Grades: K-6

To register, please visit our website at [INVENT.ORG/CAMP2025](https://www.invent.org/camp2025) or contact Heather Dreibus at heather.dreibus@blairschools.org for more information. Spaces are limited, so we encourage you to sign up soon to secure a spot for your child. Sign up by December 31 using code GIFT35 to save \$35 and enter the Give the Gift of Camp Invention Sweepstakes - 10 lucky winners will win free registration!

We are confident that Camp Invention will be a memorable and enriching experience for your child, and we look forward to seeing them join us for a summer of discovery and fun!

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to reach out. Thank you for your support, and we hope to see your child at Camp Invention!



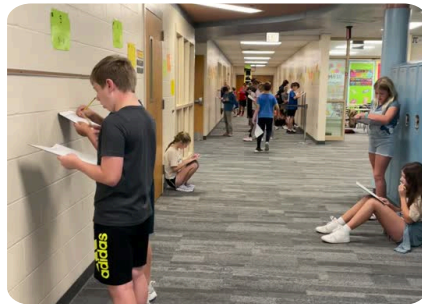
HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Blair High School

Homecoming week was a huge success! From spirit days to the big game, our students showed amazing school spirit and pride. The week wrapped up with the Homecoming Dance, which was a night full of fun, music, and lasting memories. A big thank you to everyone who participated and helped make it a memorable week.

We're also thrilled to announce the selection of our new class officers. These student leaders have already shown tremendous dedication, and we're confident they will make this year an amazing one for everyone. In addition, we had the pleasure of welcoming Steve Emt, two-time U.S. Paralympian, as a special guest at an assembly for our 10th & 11th grade students. Steve shared his inspiring journey of overcoming adversity and spoke to students about the power of decision-making. Thank you to our students, staff, and community for making this month fantastic. Go Bears!



Otte Blair Middle School

We had a great September at OMS with lots to celebrate!

OMS had its first Rare Bear Celebration of the school year on the 26th! We went through 15 boxes of ice cream sandwiches (we ran out and found other treats to give out to our last lunch). Over 480 Rare Bears were handed out to students. As a PBIS school, we love to recognize students following and exceeding expectations. Congratulations to all our students who received a Rare Bear! We will celebrate again at the end of October.

OMS has started a Student Ambassadors program to welcome students to Blair, build connections with students, and foster leadership skills. A select group of students met with our guidance counselors and new students last week, and they plan to meet once a quarter moving forward. Our goal is to reinforce the mission of making Blair Community Schools a place where all students learn!

We are looking forward to an awesome October!

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Arbor Park Elementary

As we welcome October, Arbor Park has been bustling with excitement and community spirit! Our 4th graders had a blast visiting the state capitol building, diving into how our government works. The Fun Run fundraiser was a hit, bringing out everyone's competitive spirit while raising money for our school playground.

We also had an amazing time at Desoto Bend Wildlife Refuge, where students got up close with nature and learned about local wildlife. To wrap it all up, our Book Fair Family Night was a wonderful way to celebrate reading together as a community. We can't wait to see what more this school year has in store!



Deerfield Elementary

We've had an outstanding October so far here at Deerfield! So far, we've earned over 6,000 tickets for being safe, respectful and responsible and we are so close to our next school wide celebration! We've also loved celebrating our Friday book winners each week and we enjoyed getting together in late September for our first awards assembly where we recognized 52 of our scholars for their kindness, grit and our student of the month.

Some other things we've enjoyed in October so far were dressing up for homecoming week and going to the homecoming parade. We also loved welcoming all of our families for parent teacher conferences to share about all of the learning and growth we've made so far this school year!

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



South Early Learning Center

Our Early Childhood staff recently hosted an ESU#3 Community of Practice with Ralston, Platteview, Bennington, Ft. Calhoun, and Louisville at South EC Center in Blair. We were able to have important collaborative discussions about high quality early childhood practices. Our staff specifically featured our Sensory Spaces and gave our guests a tour of the building. The event was a great success!

Sixpence held a Parent Engagement Activity on October 5 at Skinny Bones Pumpkin Patch. The turnout was great! Parents and their children were able to share this fun experience together.

Preschool Teachers are excited about progress that has been made this quarter. The staff enjoyed having Spirit Days during Homecoming week and are looking forward to seeing the kids dress up around Halloween. We appreciate your participation in helping your child grow in a safe, structured play-based learning environment.

BHS Class Officers: 2024-2025

Students at Blair High School voted for their class officers last month. Here are the results for the 2024-2025 school year. Congratulations to these outstanding student representatives!



- **Seniors:**

- President: Markus Popa
- Vice President: AJ Damme
- Secretary: Elizabeth Bray
- Treasurer: Maddie Walters

- **Sophomores:**

- President: Taytum Macholan
- Vice President: Jonathan Foged
- Secretary: Kaitlynn O'Neil
- Treasurer: Connor Morgan

- **Juniors:**

- President: Hannah Heuton
- Vice President: Abby Leggott
- Secretary: Claire Anderson
- Treasurer: Cassandra Mata and Ally Sullivan

- **Freshmen:**

- President: Madison Hiles
- Vice President: Lauren Bray
- Secretary: Anaveya Throener-Hamer
- Treasurer: Addison Greenwood



Blair Community Schools

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Fine Arts Upcoming Events



Blair Community Schools was thrilled to be recognized last April for the fifth year in a row as a Best Community for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation! This honor reflects the district's dedication to providing top-tier music education at all levels, thanks to the hard work and passion of our incredible fine arts educators.

We have a lineup of exciting events to showcase our talented students:

- **Recent Events:**

- Friday, October 4: Homecoming Parade performance
- Saturday, October 12: Elkhorn Marching Band Invitational

- **Upcoming Events:**

- Fall Choir Concert: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m. (High School Auditorium)
- Football Halftime Performance: Friday, October 25 @ 7:00 p.m. (Krantz Field)
- NSBA State Marching Band: Saturday, October 26 @ 5:00 p.m. (Lincoln, NE)
- Fall Musical: "Cinderella":
 - Thursday, November 7 @ 7:00 p.m.
 - Friday, November 8 @ 7:00 p.m.
 - Saturday, November 9 @ 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Winter Choir Concert: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.
- Winter Band Concert: Thursday, December 12, 2024

Come support our talented students at these exciting events, and thank you for your continued encouragement of the arts in our community!

Fire Safety Week

This week, our elementary schools are excited to participate in Fire Prevention Week, a time dedicated to teaching students about fire safety and prevention through engaging and interactive experiences.

- Monday, October 14: Firefighters visited our Kindergarten classrooms, sharing important lessons about preventing fires and being safe.
- Tuesday, October 15: First graders had a thrilling day as they meet local firemen and explore a real firetruck! This hands-on experience will give them the opportunity to learn about the roles of firefighters, fire safety tips, and how to act in an emergency.
- Wednesday, October 16: Second graders will also meet the firemen and check out the firetruck. With a focus on more advanced safety topics, they'll gain a deeper understanding of fire prevention and how they can stay safe at home and at school.
- Thursday, October 17: The excitement continues for our third graders as they explore the Smoke Trailer. This mobile unit simulates a real-life scenario in a smoke-filled environment, helping students practice safe evacuation techniques and understand the importance of fire safety at home.

Fire Prevention Week is a great way to teach our students about safety in a fun and memorable way. These important lessons help ensure our students are prepared to stay safe in case of an emergency. Let's thank our local fire departments for their time and dedication!





HOMECOMING 2024

Blair Community Schools celebrated Homecoming from October 1-5, 2024. Students enjoyed a week of fun dress-up days, culminating in a high school parade on Friday. A big congratulations to our Homecoming Court: Taylor Mostek, Brynn Ray, Hailey Roewert, Addie Sullivan, Nicki Wendt, Keenan Wyman, Mac Tupa, Brock Templar, Cooper Sorensen, and Hudson Loges. Special congratulations to BHS Homecoming Queen Nadia Davey and King Zeke Prochaska, with Aria Hayduck and Jackson Whitwer serving as crown bearers.

We appreciate your support of our students, and encourage you to join us to watch our students shine! **[Please click here for a full list of current activities and events.](#)**



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