



Blair Community Schools

Where all students learn.

NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Board of Education

Blair Community Schools is pleased to announce the results of the recent Board of Education election. Kari Loseke, Denise Cada, Nate Larsen, and Melaini Sturhm will begin their four-year terms, while Bob Schoby will serve a two-year term. Ginger Fredericksen did not rerun for a seat on the board but will be filling the vacancy from resigned BOE member, Tim Welch, for the remaining two years of his term.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to departing board members Brandi Peterson and Deb Parks for their years of service and dedication to Blair schools. Their efforts have greatly impacted the success and growth of our district. As we look to the future, together, we will build on past achievements and continue to provide exceptional opportunities for all Blair students.



Stand Up to Bullying Anti-Bullying Presentation

Parent Session:
Tuesday, November 12th
BHS Auditorium, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
All parents invited.



Building Kindness & Unity: Anti-Bullying Presentations

Blair Community Schools is hosting several important Anti-Bullying Presentations this week, aimed at fostering kindness, empathy, and community unity! These sessions are designed to empower students, teachers, parents, and staff to create safer, more inclusive spaces.

We invite all parents to join us for the parent session on Tuesday, November 12, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson



Dear Blair Community Schools Families,

Your child's safety drives every decision we make at all Blair schools. Today, we announce significant enhancements to our student safety programs, backed by strong data and powered by your partnership.

We invite all parents to attend our Bullying Prevention Parent Meeting on Tuesday, November 12, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium. This session is designed to inform you about our new procedures, listen to your concerns, and work collaboratively toward removing bullying and harassment from our school buildings. Together, we can build a more inclusive and respectful environment for all students.

We are implementing a new Bullying and Harassment Reporting System, accessible through this link [BCS Bullying & Harassment Reporting Form](#). We strongly encourage all students, parents, teachers, staff, community members, and administrators to use this system to report any incidents of bullying or harassment.

Going forward, all reports of bullying and harassment will begin at the Central Office, which will oversee each report with thoroughness and consistency. Here's how our new centralized reporting process works:

- **Lead Investigations with Assigned Teams:** The Central Office will assign at least two trained administrators to investigate each report, ensuring a professional, impartial approach to gathering and assessing information.
- **Provide Resources and Procedures:** Our team will supply each investigative team with a structured set of procedures and a standardized set of questions to ensure all parties—victim, accused, and any witnesses or bystanders—are fairly heard and their perspectives documented.
- **Structured Support Plans:** If an allegation of bullying is confirmed, we will implement a structured support plan for the aggressor to address behavior changes and accountability.
- **Simultaneously, a support system will be put in place for the victim to provide resources, counseling, and ongoing monitoring to ensure their well-being.**
- **Ensure Accountability and Consistency:** All actions to address and eliminate bullying or harassment will be applied fairly and consistently across the district.
- **Transparent Communication:** Throughout the investigation process, the Central Office will support each school in maintaining clear,

transparent communication with students, parents, teachers, and staff, ensuring that all parties are informed and supported.

For those who prefer a completely anonymous option, we are offering a new 24/7 reporting system, Safe2HelpNE, in collaboration with Boys Town. Reports can be made at any time via phone or online. This system provides:

- **Around-the-Clock Reporting:** Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Direct Support from Crisis Counselors:** Trained Boys Town counselors receive and address calls, and each report is immediately routed to the Central Office for follow-up.
- **Immediate Investigation:** Our Central Office initiates an investigation promptly upon receiving any reports from Safe2HelpNE.

Here is how students, parents, teachers, and staff can make a report.

- Visit the website at Safe2HelpNE.org.
- Download the app on either an Android or Apple phone
- Call 833-980-SAFE (7233)

This additional option allows families and students to discreetly report any safety concerns while ensuring immediate action and support.

To raise awareness and reinforce respectful behavior, we will be holding student assemblies at both the middle and high schools:

- Blair High School 11th and 12th Grade Assembly: Auditorium, 10:15 - 11:15 a.m., November 12
- Blair High School 9th and 10th Grade Assembly: Auditorium, 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., November 12
- Middle School Grade-Level Bullying Prevention Meetings: 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., November 13

(Note: Deerfield has already held its Bullying Prevention Assembly, and Arbor Park's will be scheduled soon.)

These assemblies aim to educate students about kindness, empathy, and the importance of a safe, inclusive environment. During these sessions, students will also be informed about how to report bullying or harassment, including using the new electronic incident form or speaking directly with a teacher, parent, counselor, or principal.

On Tuesday, November 12, from 3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., all certified, administrative, and classified staff will participate in a required Bullying Prevention Training in the high school auditorium. Our legal counsel and I will lead this session, which will cover:

- Identifying bullying and harassment and recognizing early warning signs.

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson

- Implementing effective prevention and intervention strategies.
- Reviewing updated reporting procedures to ensure transparency and consistent action.

This training reflects our dedication to equipping staff with the tools needed to address bullying proactively and sensitively.

Our administrators will undergo specialized training to further enhance their skills in:

- Strengthening bullying prevention strategies.
- Improving investigative techniques.
- Enhancing communication practices with students, families, and the school community.

These trainings are designed to provide our administrators with the knowledge and tools to manage bullying incidents effectively and to engage the community in these efforts.

Blair Community Schools is committed to supporting a safe, respectful environment for all students, and we offer multiple resources to address bullying:

- Open Communication: Parents and students are encouraged to speak with teachers, counselors, or administrators if they experience or witness bullying. School staff are trained to handle these concerns with care and confidentiality.
- Anonymous Reporting System: Safe2HelpNE allows discreet reporting 24/7, with each report investigated by our Central Office.
- Education and Awareness Programs: We regularly incorporate lessons that promote empathy, respect, and inclusivity within our curriculum.
- Counseling Services: Our counselors are available to support students affected by bullying, helping them navigate challenges and build resilience.
- Continuous Improvement: We review our policies, data, and student feedback regularly to ensure that we are taking all necessary steps to prevent and address bullying.

Join us as we strengthen Blair Community Schools' safe and inclusive environment. Your partnership helps every child thrive, feel valued, and reach their full potential. Mark your calendar for the Parent Meeting on Tuesday, November 12. Share your ideas and learn about our next steps to enhance student safety. Blair Community Schools is united against bullying. Your voice matters as we continue to build our community of respect.

Sincerely,

Randy Gilson, Ed. D.



Student Senate Fall Fundraisers Make an Impact

This fall, the Otte Middle School Student Senate has been busy with community-building projects and fundraising efforts.

Supporting Breast Cancer Awareness: On October 18, students held their "Pink Out" for Breast Cancer Awareness, sharing facts throughout the week and selling bracelets. With strong support, they raised \$581, which will be donated to the Washington County Relay for Life at the school assembly on November 26.

"Black Out" to Fight Hunger: The annual "Black Out" event on October 31 marked a decade of raising funds for the Washington County Food Pantry. This year, students raised \$1,450.50. To add excitement, WIN classes competed to collect the most donations, with four classes raising over \$100 and one contributing an impressive \$514! These winning classes will receive Eileen's Cookies, courtesy of the Student Senate fund.

We're proud of our school community's spirit and commitment to making a difference!



FBLA Students Empower 4th Graders with Financial Skills

Our high school Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) students are partnering with Junior Achievement (JA) to bring financial literacy lessons to our elementary classrooms. As part of the More Than Money program, FBLA members are delivering five interactive lessons to 4th-grade students, covering essential skills like earning, spending, saving, and an introduction to entrepreneurship.

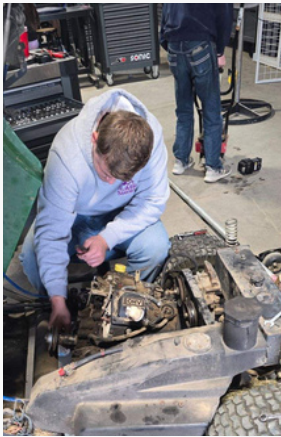
This initiative also supports the American Enterprise Chapter Project, which our FBLA students will present at the state level in April. We're proud to see our high school leaders inspire younger students with valuable financial skills and entrepreneurial thinking!

"Cinderella" Shines on Stage

Our fall musical, Cinderella, was a magical success! Held on November 7th, 8th, and 9th, this timeless tale of dreams and transformation captivated audiences over three fantastic performances. The students' hard work and dedication were evident in every scene, as they brought the enchanting story of Cinderella, her Fairy Godmother, the dashing Prince, and her wicked stepsisters to life.

From the beautiful costumes to the intricate set design, the show was a true community effort, with students, teachers, and volunteers all contributing their time and talents. The students impressed the crowd with their acting, singing, and dancing, making each character memorable and endearing.

Congratulations to the cast and crew for delivering such an outstanding performance! A special thank you to everyone who supported the musical, from families and friends who attended to the teachers and staff who helped along the way. Your enthusiasm and encouragement helped make Cinderella an unforgettable experience for all.



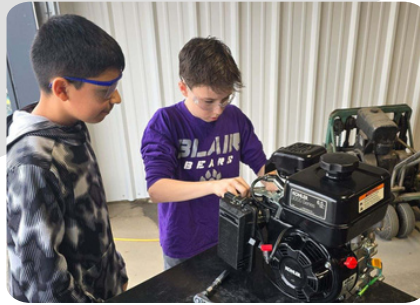
BCAT - Now Open!

Blair Community Schools is excited to announce the opening of the new Blair Career and Technical (BCAT) building, a dedicated space for small engine repair and engine mechanics classes. This new facility provides students with hands-on learning opportunities in a state-of-the-art workshop, in partnership with Metro Community College, giving them essential skills for careers in mechanical trades and technical fields.

The BCAT building is equipped with industry-standard tools and equipment, allowing students to learn and practice real-world techniques in engine repair, diagnostics, and maintenance. This hands-on training is invaluable for students interested in pursuing careers in mechanics, engineering, or technical service fields after graduation.

The addition of the BCAT building reflects our district commitment to expanding career and technical education options, supporting students' individual career goals, and addressing the growing demand for skilled labor in mechanical and engineering industries.

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Blair High School

November is a busy month at Blair High School with a range of exciting activities on the calendar. On November 13, students will have the opportunity to explore future career and education options at the annual Future Options Day. This event brings together colleges, trade schools, and employers to help students plan for life after high school. It's a great opportunity for them to gain insight into various pathways and make informed decisions about their futures.

As the fall season comes to a close, our student-athletes are wrapping up their sports seasons with pride. The football, volleyball, and cross-country teams have all shown tremendous dedication and sportsmanship. The high school musical also wrapped up last week, with amazing performances by cast and crew. Additionally, our robotics teams began their season with their first competition last weekend. It's been a fantastic fall, with many accomplishments to celebrate!



Otte Blair Middle School

At the end of October, we proudly celebrated our Rare Bear recipients, recognizing students who not only meet but exceed our expectations. This tradition highlights the hard work and dedication of our students, and we encourage families to join in the celebration. Ask your students if they received a Rare Bear this month and take a moment to acknowledge their achievements at home! For October, we saw impressive participation: 160 recipients from 6th grade, 129 from 7th grade, and an outstanding 179 from 8th grade. Congratulations to our 8th graders for leading the way!

On Halloween, Otte students participated in the Blackout for Hunger initiative, where they wore black clothing and donated money to support the Washington County Food Pantry. Our initial goal was to raise \$500, but thanks to the generosity of our community, we raised an incredible \$1,450.30—our highest total ever! This surpasses our previous record of \$1,340.40 set in 2018. We are excited to present a check to the food bank during our Teachers vs. Students Volleyball game on November 26th. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this fantastic cause!

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Arbor Park Elementary School

One of the wonderful things about being a K-5 school is watching our older students step into the role of mentors and role models for our younger students. At Arbor Park, we've seen some amazing partnerships develop between different grade levels, and the learning and community-building that have come out of these collaborations have been truly remarkable. So far, these "cross-over" activities have included a nature scavenger hunt, where students worked together to explore the outdoors, as well as fun reading and Halloween craft projects that brought everyone together in creative ways. It's been a joy to see our students connecting, learning from each other, and building lasting friendships across grade levels!



Deerfield Elementary School

We hope you're enjoying a wonderful fall! Here at Deerfield Elementary, we've had an exciting season. So far we've celebrated reaching 8,000 tickets with a school-wide "Chalk the Walk" event. We also held our first awareness day for the school year where all of Deerfield wore purple to raise awareness for Rett Syndrome.

Additionally, our local fire department visited to teach us about fire prevention and safety, which was both informative and engaging. Most recently, we hosted our first annual Veterans Day Assembly, where we honored our local heroes and reflected on their sacrifices for our country. It was truly a privilege to celebrate their contributions.

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



South Early Learning Center

South Early Childhood staff successfully conducted fire and tornado drills. The students and staff did a great job of practicing and following protocols. They will continue to address safety drills during this month. The theme for November is Kindness and for December it is Gratitude. Sixpence will host a "Thanksgiving Dinner" catered by Taher Food Services on Friday, November 15 at 6:00 p.m. at South for those families who participate in this program.

Early Childhood (Birth to 5) staff is planning a Family Night, focusing on Parent and child developmental learning activities, on December 5th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at South. This event is for all families of early childhood students. Our goal is to display activities that celebrate student learning and provide parents with resources that promote engagement. The staff continues to see remarkable interactions amongst kids and families.

Focus on Safety and Anti-Bullying Initiatives

We want parents to know that Blair Community Schools is dedicated to supporting a safe and respectful environment for all students. We offer several resources to address bullying effectively:

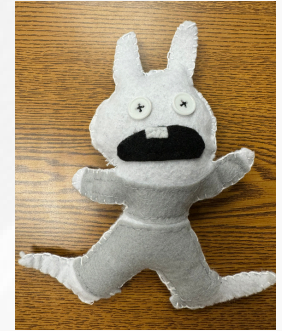
- **Open Lines of Communication:** We encourage parents and students to speak with teachers, counselors, or administrators if they experience or witness bullying. School staff are trained to handle these concerns with care and confidentiality.
- **Anonymous Reporting System:** For those who prefer privacy, our anonymous reporting system allows students, parents, and community members to report bullying concerns discreetly. Every report is taken seriously and investigated thoroughly by our administrators.
- **Proactive Education and Awareness:** We regularly incorporate lessons and activities that promote empathy, respect, and inclusion as part of our curriculum. Our anti-bullying presentations and initiatives aim to educate students on the importance of kindness and understanding, as well as on recognizing and addressing bullying.
- **Counseling and Support Services:** Our counselors are available to provide support to students who may be affected by bullying. They offer guidance and resources to help students manage their feelings and build resilience.
- **Continued Monitoring and Improvement:** We consistently review our policies, data, and student feedback to improve our efforts and ensure that we're doing everything we can to prevent and address bullying in all forms.

Our goal is to work together with parents and the community to create a safe, supportive environment where every student feels valued and protected.

FCS Students Share Creations with Deerfield Library

Blair High School students in the Intro to Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) class recently made a special visit to Deerfield Elementary to deliver their hand-sewn creations to the school library. The students worked diligently to craft characters from well-loved children's books *The Creepy Carrot*, *The Creepy Crayon*, and *The Creepy Pair of Underwear*. These fun creations will serve as engaging tools during reading time, helping to bring the stories to life and deepen young students' connection to the books.

This collaboration exemplifies the positive impact of partnerships between high school and elementary students, showing how teamwork can enhance both the learning process and the sense of connection within the school district. The project also reinforces the importance of creative expression and hands-on learning in building both practical skills and a spirit of giving.



Halloween Fun for Students

The Alternative Curriculum Program (ACP) students had a spooktacular time at their Halloween party, filled with fun activities, delicious treats, and plenty of costume creativity! The event, organized by the ACP staff and volunteer students, provided a festive atmosphere for students to celebrate the season together. From spooky decorations to costume contests, everyone got into the Halloween spirit.

Students enjoyed playing games, a pizza party, cookie decorating, and showing off their costumes. The energy was high, and the students embraced the Halloween spirit, making the party a memorable occasion for all involved.

The Halloween celebration was not only about fun and games, but also about bringing the ACP community closer together. It was a wonderful opportunity for students to bond with their peers and create lasting memories. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a success!



Activities & Events

High School Activities had a great fall season, and are getting ready for winter athletics to begin. Mark your calendars for the EMC Vocal Music Clinic, happening on November 11 at Gretna East! Additionally, our talented All-State music students are preparing to showcase their skills in Lincoln from November 20-23. This is an incredible opportunity for our musicians, and we wish them the best! We're excited to support our Unified Bowling team as they compete in their first-ever NSAA competition! They'll be heading to the EMC Championship on November 14, representing OMS with pride. Go team!

Congratulations to both our 7th and 8th-grade football teams, who wrapped up the season undefeated! OMS Cross Country (XC) had around 12 runners participating in the state meet in mid-October, a fantastic achievement! Both the 7th and 8th-grade marching band earned a superior rating at their recent performance in the Waverly parade. This winter, OMS is proud to kick off boys' basketball and girls' wrestling. On November 5, we hosted a successful girls' wrestling event that drew great participation and school spirit. There are several events coming up soon:

- 6th Grade and Choir Concert: November 19 at OMS, starting at 7 pm.
- Honor Choir: November 20, featuring selected choir students.
- 7th and 8th Grade Band Concert: December 12 at OMS, at 6 pm.

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



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