

FEBRUARY 2025



Board of Education Updates

The Board of Education (BOE) met on Monday, February 10, to discuss and approve several initiatives aimed at strengthening curriculum, enhancing technology infrastructure, and preparing for the upcoming school year.

The BOE approved the purchase of new reading materials and professional development for the district's K-5 Reading Curriculum from 95 Percent Group. This investment ensures that teachers have access to high-quality, research-based resources to support foundational reading skills for all students. Additionally, professional development opportunities will provide educators with the tools and strategies needed to implement the curriculum effectively, ultimately fostering stronger literacy growth across our elementary grades.

The BOE also addressed improvements to the district's technology infrastructure, approving new cabling for access points and the organization of technology closets in school buildings. These upgrades will enhance network reliability, improve internet connectivity, and ensure that all classrooms and learning spaces have seamless access to digital resources. As technology plays an increasingly vital role in education, these improvements will support both students and staff in their daily learning and instructional needs.

Another exciting highlight from the meeting was the approval of three new teachers who will be joining the district for the 2025-26 school year. We are thrilled to welcome Emily Cady, Jordyn Smith, and Shelby Kaup to our team! Their passion for education and dedication to student success will be a great addition to our schools. We look forward to introducing them to students, families, and staff as we prepare for the next academic year.

We appreciate the Board of Education's continued commitment to providing the best possible learning environment for our students. Their support in curriculum development, infrastructure enhancements, and staffing decisions plays a crucial role in ensuring that our schools remain places of growth, innovation, and excellence.

As always, we encourage families and community members to stay informed and engaged with BOE meetings, as these discussions help shape the future of our district. Thank you to everyone who contributes to making our schools a great place to learn and grow!

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson



Dear Blair Community,

February is a month filled with learning, growth, and exciting opportunities for our students. As we move into the second half of the school year, I want to take a moment to celebrate the many positive things happening across our district.

At this month's Board of Education meeting, we took an important step in strengthening literacy instruction by approving new K-5 reading materials and professional development for our educators. The adoption of the 95 Percent Group curriculum will provide teachers with high-quality resources to support reading success for all students. Strong literacy skills are foundational to academic achievement, and we are excited about the impact this curriculum will have in our classrooms.

Our elementary schools have been busy spreading kindness through PTO-sponsored initiatives that encourage students to uplift and support one another. These acts of kindness—big and small—are helping to foster positive school communities where students feel valued and connected. Thank you to our PTO members for their leadership in promoting kindness throughout our schools!

February also brings exciting musical performances! Our show choir has been touring elementary schools, sharing their talents and inspiring our younger students with the joy of music. It's always wonderful to see students encouraging one another and building a love for the arts.

For our 8th graders, high school registration is now underway. This is an exciting time as students begin planning for the next step in their educational journey. We encourage families to have conversations with their students about course selections, extracurricular opportunities, and how to make the most of their high school experience.

We also want to acknowledge the weather-related challenges this month. Unfortunately, parent-teacher conferences were impacted by snow, but we hope that families have found an opportunity to follow up and connect with teachers. Strong communication between home and school is essential for student success, and we appreciate everyone's efforts in rescheduling and staying engaged.

Lastly, we are thrilled to announce that Dania Freudenburg has been named the permanent principal at Deerfield Elementary. We are confident in Dr. Freudenburg's leadership and look forward to the continued success and growth of Deerfield Elementary under her guidance. Interviews are currently underway to find a principal for Otte Blair Middle School for the 2025-2026 school year.

As we look ahead, there is much to be excited about in the coming months. From academic milestones to extracurricular achievements, we are proud of all that our students and staff continue to accomplish. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to our schools—we look forward to a fantastic rest of the school year!

Warm Regards,



Randy Gilson
Superintendent, Blair Community Schools



Blair Community Schools

P.O. Box 288 | Blair, NE 68008 | Phone: 402-426-2610 | Fax: 402-426-3110 | www.blairschools.org

Blair Show Choir - Ovation



Photos courtesy Joe Burns

The Blair High School Show Choir, Ovation, has been captivating audiences with their 2025 show, *Fortune Teller*, featuring Brayden Nolan as the Businessman and Bailey Domann as the Fortune Teller. Their high-energy performances, dynamic choreography, and impressive vocals have already made an impact this season.

In January, Ovation hosted a show choir workshop, welcoming students from ten area schools for a day of learning and collaboration. This event provided young performers with the opportunity to refine their skills, gain confidence, and experience the excitement of show choir. The workshop was a tremendous success, and the enthusiasm from participants was evident throughout the day.

Most recently, Ovation toured local elementary schools, bringing their show directly to young students. Their performances not only entertained but also inspired future generations of performers. Seeing the energy and talent of high school students up close was an exciting experience for the younger audiences, sparking interest in music and performance.

Looking ahead, Ovation is gearing up for several upcoming competitions, where they will showcase their hard work and dedication. With a compelling theme, talented featured performers, and a committed ensemble, they are ready to impress judges and audiences alike.

We wish Ovation the best of luck in their competitions and congratulate them on an already incredible season! Keep shining on stage, Blair High School Show Choir!

Sprinkling Kindness

During February, students at Deerfield and Arbor Park Elementary Schools took part in a heartwarming Kindness Campaign sponsored by the Blair K-5 PTO. This special initiative encouraged students to embrace kindness in their daily lives and discover the many ways they can make a positive impact on those around them.

Throughout the week, students participated in engaging lessons about kindness, with a new theme each day focused on different ways to “sprinkle kindness” throughout their school, home, and community. These lessons sparked meaningful discussions and helped students recognize that even small acts of kindness—like a smile, a helping hand, or a kind word—can make a big difference.

The campaign culminated in exciting assemblies at both school buildings, celebrating the students' commitment to spreading kindness. To wrap up the week, families were invited to a special Family Night at Deerfield Elementary, where they enjoyed a sweet treat—ice cream served by our wonderful PTO volunteers. The event also coincided with Deerfield's Book Fair Week, making it a perfect opportunity for families to enjoy a night of reading, fun, and community togetherness.

A huge thank you to the Blair K-5 PTO for sponsoring this meaningful campaign, and to all the students, teachers, and families who participated. Your kindness and positivity help make our schools an even better place to learn and grow!



Speech Team Brings Home Awards from Logan View!



This past Saturday, our Speech Team traveled to Logan View for a competition, and they certainly made their mark! Competing with only seven members, the team still managed to place an impressive 6th overall—a testament to the incredible talent and determination of our students. Despite the limited number of competitors, the team showed that quality and passion can go further than quantity, earning recognition in a variety of events.

We are proud to highlight the following individual achievements:

- Katelyn Mitchell – 5th place in Varsity Extemporaneous and 6th place in Varsity Informative. Katelyn demonstrated impressive poise and depth in both categories, showcasing her skills as a well-rounded competitor.
- Avalon Morgan – 1st place in Varsity Program Oral Interpretation. Avalon's performance wowed the judges, earning her the top spot in this highly competitive category.
- Kayleia Chesson – 3rd place in Varsity Poetry. Kayleia's expressive and heartfelt delivery earned her a spot on the podium in this tough competition.
- Avalon Morgan & Kayleia Chesson – 3rd place in Varsity Duet. Working together as a duo, Avalon and Kayleia delivered a performance that captured the judges' attention and earned them a well-deserved spot in the top three.
- Mackenzie Wilkinson – 3rd place in Varsity Humorous. Mackenzie's comedic timing and engaging delivery earned her a place in the top three, further solidifying her strong presence in the competition.
- Jael Clinbell – 5th place in Novice Informative. Jael's clear and confident presentation in the Novice Informative category earned her a solid finish and showed great promise for future competitions.

In addition to these fantastic individual results, Diane Mitchell and EJ Finken also competed admirably. Diane was just one rank shy of advancing to the Varsity Informative finals, showing how close she was to earning a spot on the podium. EJ placed 10th overall in Varsity Persuasive, making a strong statement with his persuasive skills and thoughtful delivery.

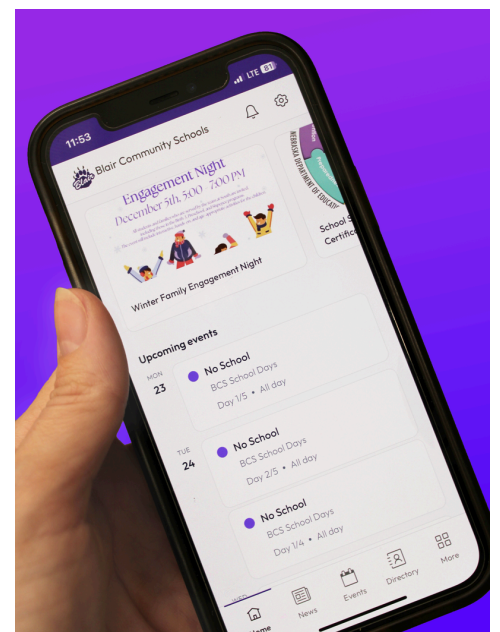
We couldn't be more proud of our Speech Team's achievements and the effort that each competitor put into this event. Their commitment to excellence and the hard work they invest in perfecting their speeches continue to pay off. Their success at Logan View is just the beginning, and we're excited to see what the rest of the season holds for these talented students.

BCS Mobile App

Stay informed and up to date by downloading our district's mobile app, designed to keep families connected with everything happening in our schools. The app sends instant notifications to your phone for school cancellations, delays, and important announcements, ensuring you never miss a critical update. It also provides quick access to daily lunch menus, making it easy to check what's being served in the cafeteria each day.

In addition to keeping you informed, the app helps you stay engaged with school events by providing a full calendar of upcoming activities, meetings, and special programs. Whether it's a school performance, parent-teacher conferences, or an important deadline, you'll have all the details at your fingertips. One of the most convenient features is the ability to customize your notifications, allowing you to select which school buildings you'd like to receive updates from.

With everything you need in one place, our mobile app is the best way to stay connected to our schools and ensure you never miss a beat. Download the app today and make staying informed easier than ever!



HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Blair High School

February has been an eventful month at Blair High School, and as we move into March, we are excited about the upcoming events and opportunities for our students. One of the highlights will be the Unified One Act Play, which will be held on March 20th at 6:00 PM in the BHS Auditorium. This performance will feature our talented students coming together to create an inclusive and inspiring show, celebrating the spirit of teamwork and creativity.

We encourage all families and community members to join us for this special event and support our students as they showcase their hard work and dedication. Thank you for your continued support of Blair High School!



Otte Blair Middle School

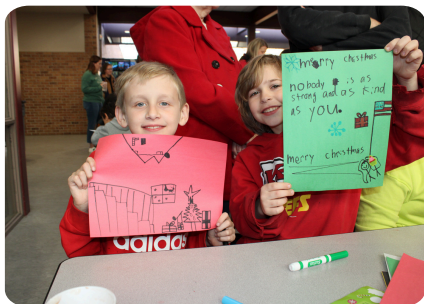
The HAL program held a Project-Based Learning Showcase on February 6th, where students presented new skills they had learned. Teachers, students, and community members gathered to support the students in this unique endeavor.

Throughout March, the Blair Public Library will host the annual K-12 Art Show, featuring student artwork from all grade levels. The opening reception is on March 3rd at 4:30 PM, and the community is invited to celebrate the students' creativity.

Congratulations to 6th graders Gherig Anderson and Thayer Johnson, selected for the Omaha Performing Arts Jazz Academy on tenor saxophone! Their hard work in preparing and submitting auditions paid off, and we are proud of their achievement.

Lastly, Rare Bear recipients for January were celebrated on January 31st. In total, 386 Rare Bears were awarded, with 6th graders earning 169, 7th graders 128, and 8th graders 89. One lucky winner received a Scooters gift card in a raffle.

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



Arbor Park Elementary

We're thrilled to announce that Arbor Park 5th grader Isabella Foged won the Washington County Spelling Bee! Bella competed against the best spellers from grades 3-8 across the county, and we're so proud of her accomplishment. She'll now move on to the regional spelling bee later this month—good luck, Bella!

It is shaping up to be an exciting month here at Arbor Park! Our kindergarteners and 2nd graders will have a special visit from Dr. Boyd, who will teach them all about the importance of dental health and how to keep their teeth strong. Meanwhile, our 4th graders get to work with talented microbiologists from Evonik for a hands-on experiment that will spark their curiosity about the world of science. And for our 5th graders, they've had the amazing opportunity to get up close and personal with a live bald eagle, learning fascinating facts about these incredible birds.



Deerfield Elementary

February has been a busy and exciting month at Deerfield Elementary! We'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone who attended our Book Fair—your support helped make it a great success, and we loved seeing so many families come together to celebrate reading.

We're also excited about the upcoming K-12 Art Show at the Blair Public Library this March. The show will highlight the incredible creativity of our students, and we invite everyone to join us at the opening reception on March 3rd at 4:30 PM to celebrate their artistic achievements.

This month, we've focused on kindness, with students learning how small acts can make a big difference in our school community. It's been wonderful to see our students embrace this theme and work together to create a positive and supportive environment.

Thank you for your continued support of Deerfield Elementary. We look forward to a great rest of the school year!

HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



South Early Learning Center

February has been a fun and engaging month at the South Early Learning Center! Our preschoolers have been busy exploring new concepts through hands-on activities, creative play, and interactive lessons that support their early development. This month, we've focused on building social skills, fostering creativity, and encouraging a love for learning in all of our young students.

As we head into March, we look forward to more exciting opportunities for our students, including continued exploration through play-based learning and early literacy activities. Thank you to all our families for their continued support in making the South Early Learning Center a special place for our youngest learners.

Celebrating the 100th Day of School



On February 5th, our elementary schools celebrated the 100th day of school, marking a special milestone in the school year. To make it even more fun, we imagined what it would be like if we were 100 years old. After 100 days of learning, friendships, and growth, our students had the chance to reflect on all they've accomplished so far.

Students participated in a variety of engaging activities, such as dressing up as if they were 100 years old, showcasing their creativity with costumes, and imagining what life would be like in a century. They also created "100th Day Projects," counting 100 items or using 100 materials to create unique art. In addition, students practiced counting in different ways, including jumping 100 times or counting by 1s and 10s, which made the day even more exciting.

The 100th day of school was a wonderful reminder of all the hard work, progress, and excitement of the first 100 days. We're excited for the next 100 days of learning and growth ahead!



Activities & Athletics

February has been filled with remarkable achievements and exciting news for our students! Congratulations to our state wrestling medalists and qualifiers, who represented Blair with dedication and determination at the State Wrestling Tournament. Ali Wheeler placed 4th, while Reatta Malmberg and Emma Belnog also qualified for State. On the boys' side, Blaise Baughman placed 3rd, Cornez Tucker Jr. finished 6th, and Hudson Loges won his second state championship—an incredible accomplishment! In addition, Griffin Rosterman, Carson Faue, Tannon Bellamy, Jaxson Logan, and Wyatt Loftis all qualified for State, demonstrating the strength and depth of our wrestling program. We are so proud of these athletes for their hard work and dedication throughout the season!

Our Unified Basketball Teams brought home gold medals, showcasing teamwork, sportsmanship, and the power of inclusion. This achievement highlights the positive impact of Unified Sports in our school community.





The Robotics Teams wrapped up their competition season with their final two tournaments in February at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Omaha Bryan High School. They had a strong showing, with several teams making the finals in multiple tournaments throughout the season. Their dedication, problem-solving skills, and teamwork have been impressive all year!

As winter activities wrap up, we're gearing up for the start of Spring Sports at the high school, which will officially begin on Monday. We're excited to see our student-athletes back in action as they take to the fields, tracks, and courts.

We are also thrilled to announce exciting updates to the Hall of Fame at Blair High School! These improvements will honor and celebrate the history of Blair's outstanding students in athletics, fine arts, and academics. The updates will bring a fresh, modern look to this special space, ensuring that the achievements of those who have made an impact on Blair are remembered for years to come. Whether you're a former or current student, or a proud member of the Blair community, you won't want to miss these exciting updates! More details are coming soon, and we can't wait to share them with you!

Thank you for your continued support of Blair activities—our students' achievements are a testament to the hard work, dedication, and community spirit that define our schools! We encourage you to join us to watch our students shine. **[Please click here for a full list of current activities and events.](#)**

Follow us on social media!

 FACEBOOK	 INSTAGRAM
 YOU TUBE	 X (FORMERLY TWITTER)