



Blackcat News

Mission Statement:
"Educating Today for a Better Tomorrow"

VOLUME 29 ISSUE 92 SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025 March 13, 2025



Senn-Thomas Basketball



Pictured: Coach Taylor Metcalf, Andrea Faulkner, Lyllian Trusty, Katelyn Blair, Catori Wright, Riley Ijames, Karstyn Twiggs, Akila Mehmedovic, and Brooklyn Propst.

The 7th Grade Girls Won Their Conference

All four of our basketball teams at Senn-Thomas Middle School made it to the JCAA conference championship game in their respective brackets. Only the 7th-grade girls won their conference, but being so well-represented speaks to the health and depth of our middle school basketball program. During the season's final games, it felt like the seeds were being planted for legendary battles in the years to come. These athletes will help break in the new gym at Herculaneum High School and set expectations for all the teams that follow.

"I loved coaching them," Taylor Metcalf said about her 7th-grade girls team. She says, "They grew as people, and all their basketball skills improved." Player Riley Ijames says, "It was a fun season, and we all worked together." Teammate Karstyn Twiggs played a physical game under the basket, but it fits her personality. With a smile, she says, "I like being mean." Reflecting on the season, Twiggs says, "I'm glad we won and that we only lost two games the whole season." Those came against nonconference opponents Perryville and Hillsboro. Catori Wright is looking ahead to next year. She says, "I'm kind of worried about the other teams getting better."

The 8th grade boys' and girls' teams were fiercely competitive. The boys went into overtime to decide the victor. Sinking a couple more foul shots would have turned the tide in either game. While the players were disappointed with their second-place plaques, they played with grit and determination and proudly represented all Blackcats.

The 7th-grade boys struggled, giving Jefferson a lopsided victory, but that may be helpful. After the game, Coach Cheney overheard his players talking among themselves. They discussed their need to improve to compete against the Blue Jays and others. The loss may provide just the motivation they need to pick up a basketball during the offseason. Like so many pursuits, improvement is just time on task.



@DrClintFreeman
@JoeFWillis
@HHSBlackcats
@BlackcatUpdates

@SennThomasMS
@STMSActivities
@MissKatieDunlap
@BlackcatMatt

@HerkyXC
@Herkysoftball
@HerkyVolleyball
@HerkyFootball

Message From Board President

Spring is in the air! It is a great time to get out and see the projects going on in the district. We have completed our Technology / Food Service Storage Building, and they have moved in. The new gym project is really starting to take shape as well. Soon, the track teams will be running and using the track and field. It is hard to believe that the school year is in the last quarter. Soon we will have MAP testing, EOCs, and Graduation. There are so many exciting things happening in the district. Come out and see a track meet or take in a spring musical. Our staff and students work very hard, and it is always good to have a supportive community there to cheer them on.

You may have seen some of our board members participating in High 5 Friday at Pevely Elementary. It is always fun to get out and interact with students, parents, and staff.

Our Blackcats Give Back Day is coming up. This is a great event that brings our community together to work on projects around the district and community. If you want to join this event, please email Joycie at jgonzalezmeyer@dunklin.k12.mo.us. We will also celebrate our

teachers and staff during Teacher Appreciation Week in May.

As always, our school board is focused on doing what is best for kids. This goes into every decision we make as a board. All are welcome to come to our monthly meeting, which is held every third Tuesday.

Once a Blackcat, Always a Blackcat.

Tammy Heidland
President,
Board of Education Dunklin R5



Blackcat Community

As we move through the second semester, I want to take a moment to celebrate our students' achievements, highlight the importance of attendance, and recognize the dedication of our student-athletes and activity participants.

Consistent attendance is a key factor in academic success. I want to acknowledge our students and families for their commitment to being present and engaged in their learning. Every day in the classroom contributes to a stronger educational foundation, and I encourage all students to make attendance a priority. Currently, our District-Wide Attendance is your support in reinforcing this



at 93%. Parents, thank you for message at home!

Our high school athletes have been demonstrating incredible dedication and teamwork. From the basketball courts to the wrestling mats and beyond, we are proud of their hard work and sportsmanship. A special congratulations to those who have achieved personal bests. Most notably to Emerson Reeves, she is the first female state wrestling medalist in school history.

Beyond athletics, our students are excelling in a variety of activities. From band performances to academic clubs and student debate competitions, their dedication and enthusiasm are inspiring. These opportunities help our students develop leadership skills, build friendships, and prepare for their futures. We are very proud of the small school feel, with big school opportunities. Thank you to our staff and volunteers who make these programs possible!

Kindergarten screenings have begun, which means the class of 2038 is coming to Pevely Elementary, and we are so excited to have them here next fall. We can not wait to see some of the brightest, energetic students in the county enter our school. Over the next few months, there will be several more opportunities to gain valuable information from Pevely Elementary. Please visit our website at www.dunklin.k12.mo.us to complete your registration.

Stay up-to-date with all the latest news and events by following us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and visiting our website. Your support

and involvement are essential to the success of our schools and students.

Upcoming Events:

Board Appreciation March 18, 2025.

Blackcats Give Back Day May 3, 2025

High School Graduation: May 19, 2025.

Herculaneum High School Gymnasium completion in July of 2025.

Dr. Clint Freeman, Superintendent of Schools
#GoBlackcats

DUNKLIN R-5 SCHOOL DISTRICT

497 Joachim Avenue ▪ Herculaneum, MO 63048 ▪ (636) 479-5200

Dr. Clint Freeman, Superintendent
Dr. Joe Willis, Assistant Superintendent

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tammy Heidland, President Michael Hicks, Vice President
Jason Drinen, Angie Goforth, John Maddox,
Marissa Newman, Cody Petero

HERCULANEUM HIGH SCHOOL ext. 3

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Ryun Kasten, Asst. Principal
Jason Gillman, Activities Director
Laura Asinger, Guidance Counselor,
Grades 11-12
Chelsey Dickerman, Guidance Counselor,
Grades 9-10 and A+
Connie Ward, Nurse

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Kyle Borror, Assistant Principal
Tiffany Bungenstock, Guidance Counselor
Heather Shadowens, Nurse
Joycie Gonzalez-Meyer,
School-Family Liaison

PEVELY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ext. 1

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Adam Dixon, Asst. Principal
Michelle Liles, Asst. Principal
Adalee Chaffee, Guidance Counselor
Cathie Holdenried, Guidance Counselor
Heather Engelbach, Nurse

TAYLOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ext. 5

Charissa Kappler, Director
Haley Webery, Asst. Director
Christina Meyer, Nurse

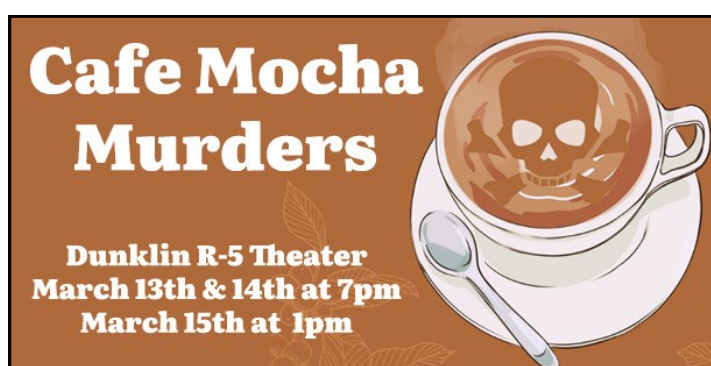
DIRECTORS

Nichole Arnold, Director of Food Service
Graham Schoonover, Director of Maintenance
Ryan Lowe, Director of Technology
Matt Lichtenstein, Communications Director
Tom Moreland, Director of Special Services
Chris Harris, Director of Transportation

Board Meetings are Open to the Public

The Dunklin R-5 Board of Education meets on a regular basis on the third Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held at 7:00 pm. Check the website for the location. The meetings are open to the public. Patrons may view agendas and items from the meetings by going to our website www.dunklin.k12.mo.us, and clicking on the Board of Education tab.

Dunklin R-5 School District is an equal opportunity employer



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE



The new safe and secure entrances to Pevely Elementary and Senn-Thomas Middle Schools are completed. Both have entrance areas or vestibules where visitors can drop off an item, wait for their child, or be buzzed into the building. The changes have enhanced the look of both locations, especially at Senn-Thomas, where they've added administrative offices.

The facilities building next to the bus garage is completed and now houses our technology and food service departments. Inside the garage door is a new walk-in freezer. It will replace the two outdoor freezers at Taylor Early Childhood Center. While most pallets being delivered are frozen food, technology will also receive bulk deliveries, like their annual order of 100-plus Chromebooks.

The theater will get a new lighting and sound system this summer. The current equipment is over 20 years old, much of it is failing, and replacement parts are difficult to find. Installing LED lights will save significantly on power usage and reduce the heat generated by traditional theater lights. The new audio system includes new microphones and speakers that will enhance the clarity of every spoken word or note of a song. Our current wireless mics are susceptible to cell phone interference. After training, the mixing console will allow for professional sound balancing. The light board can be preprogrammed so that the push of a button illuminates the entire concert band or narrowly focuses on an actor in a play. In short, visitors will have a more enjoyable experience inside the Dunklin R-5 Theatre.

The new gym will be completed this summer. The cement block walls and steel roof make a clear outline of the structure. The gym is over two stories tall and built into a hillside, so the impact on the skyline depends on your angle of view. It's huge if you're looking up from the football field, but seems smaller looking down from the theater. The magic will be on the inside, with a walking track surrounding the sunken basketball floor. There won't be a bad seat overlooking the hardwood. Herculeum High School will continue to use Robinson Gym to the delight of our basketball teams. Next year, both the boys and girls can practice right after school.

DUNKLIN R-5 FREE PRESCHOOL

We're offering **FREE** full-day preschool for the 2025-2026 school year at the Taylor Early Childhood Center for children who meet the following qualifications.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Must be a Dunklin R-5 Resident
- Child will be 3 or 4 years old on or before July 31, 2025
- Parent/Guardian provides transportation to and from school
BUS transportation **WILL NOT** be provided.
- Student/Family qualifies for ONE of the following:
 - Free/Reduced Lunches
 - TANF
 - SNAP
 - Food Stamps
 - Foster Care System
 - Homelessness / Doubled up

SPACE IS LIMITED

If you're interested, please contact the Taylor Early Childhood Center's office at 636-479-5200, option 5 by March 20th to add your child to our list. Don't delay, rosters fill up fast!

NOTE

Taylor Early Childhood Center also offers preschool services on a tuition basis for children ages 3 to 5 years old. If you don't meet the qualifications outlined above and you'd like to add your child to our tuition preschool waiting list, please contact our office at 636-479-5200, option 5.

Questions? Call (636) 479-5200 Option 5



Congratulations to sophomore Emerson Reeves for taking second place in the state wrestling championships.

The Spring Play is on March 13th and 14th at 7 p.m., and Saturday, March 15th, at 1 p.m.

The prom is on April 26th, and tickets are on sale now during lunch in the HHS cafeteria.

Congratulations to Pevely's Michelle Liles, who was recognized at press time by the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. Liles was named Jefferson County Region's Outstanding Assistant Principal. "Her passion for building connections fosters a love for learning, while her commitment to finding the best resources and creating a nurturing environment helps Pevely students thrive," says Principal Katie Dunlap.

Herculeum will host a State Large Ensemble (Band) Festival from 4-9 p.m. on April 2nd and 3rd.

Spring is a great time to apply for a job. Go to our website and click on Join Our Team in the upper right corner to see all our openings. www.dunklin.k12.mo.us

The Mineral Area Track Meet at Herculeum High School is on Saturday, April 12th.

Blackcats Give Back is May 3rd.

Band Concerts – STMS May 6th at 6:30 p.m. and HHS May 8th at 6:30 p.m.

The last day of school is Friday, May 23rd, an early release day.

Taylor Early Childhood Center was free for parents this year because of the grant. We won't know if the grant will be renewed until this summer.



Pevely's Buddy Bench



School. She says her daughter was friends with everyone and wanted to make sure all her classmates felt included. The idea behind the recycled plastic bench is to foster friendships. If someone is sitting by themselves on the bench, others are encouraged to join them or invite them to participate in an activity.

Mrs. Marshall's class collected the most lids, so they participated in the unveiling and pizza party. Students were told about Morgan and learned that Pevely Elementary collected 2,363 pounds of lids to make the black and red bench. The Morgan Anderson S3 Foundation, which has a website and Facebook page under the same name, oversaw the project. Morgan was attending Festus Middle School when she passed, and they have a similar bench.

Pictured: Audry Meda holding a picture of Morgan, Mandy Anderson, and Brittney Marshall.

Bucket after bucket were collected in the hallways of Pevely Elementary School. They were filled with plastic lids that would be reshaped into a memorial. On the school's big playground, under a canopy, sits the Buddy Bench inspired by Morgan Anderson. The former student was 11 years old when she died in 2019 from complications of an asthma attack. Her mother, Mandy Anderson, used to be a secretary at Pevely Elementary

"Go Blackcats"

Pevely Pickleball

Pickleball isn't just for retirees; it's being taught at Pevely Elementary School. It's a slow version of tennis played with a paddle. Players hit a perforated, hollow plastic ball over a 34-inch net. Invented in 1965, the backyard family game has been the fastest-growing sport for three years straight. There are leagues and professional players, and there is talk about adding it to the Olympics. To expand interest in the sport locally, the Jefferson County Pickleball League donated nets to Pevely Elementary School.

As a result, Pickleball is being taught to 3rd-5th grade students. Coach Audry Meda says the older students learn the skills faster, but the younger ones have progressed nicely. They'll be a lot better next year. Meda's goal is to keep her students active and have some fun along the way. A casual observer of her gym class will see kids playing a variety of silly games. Upon questioning, the experienced teacher can tell you exactly why she chose that game, the muscle groups being exercised, and why that's important to their overall



Pictured: 3rd grade students Ava Nguyen and Silas Fithian.

development. Now, Pickleball has made the rotation of several sports played in the elementary school. It may take a few years, but some Blackcats will eventually show up at the Festus Pickleball Courts or join the Jefferson County Pickleball League.



Remarkable Reagan Recognized



Pictured Standing: Oliver Keeney, Brayden Strong, Landyn Estes, Ms. Mullins, Zoey Murphy, Paradise House, Isabella Woodfin, Jocelynn Fischer, Dashiell Schepers, Samantha Null, Dr. Boning, and Jaxon Myers.

Front Row: Monica Kyoore, Ariella Tahirovic, Olivia Henning, Maeley Brodin, Liam Harmon, Rurik Leubbert-Ledbetter, and Madilyn Hiat. Very front: David Butler.

Many students go through the Teacher Education Program at Jefferson College, but when Professor Ken Boning was asked to pick a great new teacher, he thought of Reagan Mullins. As a result, the 4th-grade teacher at Pevely Elementary School has been named an Outstanding Beginning Teacher by the Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. He says, "In addition to Ms. Reagan Mullins being an outstanding student while she completed her ATT degree, she served as president of the Student MNEA (Missouri National Education Association) Club, which indicated the kind of teacher and leader I knew she would become." Mullins went on to UMSL for her 4-year degree before attaining her position in the Dunklin R-5 School District.

On a cold winter's day, Assistant Principal Adam Dixon opened Mullins' door and entered her classroom, followed by a line of building and district administrators. Mullins had received an email about the award but didn't know what was happening until she saw Professor Boning. She says, "It was definitely a surprise. I feel honored and humbled that a former college professor would even remember me after almost 4-years, let alone nominate me for the award." Dr. Freeman asked her students if Ms. Mullins was a pretty good teacher, and they all shouted out in the affirmative. They may not have understood the award's meaning, but they were all pleased to see their teacher recognized.

Dr. Boning made the event even sweeter by bringing cupcakes.

Pevely Principal Katie Dunlap says Mullins is hard-working, values feedback, embraces challenges, builds relationships, seeks advice, and is willing to try new things. Dunlap says, "She is always positive and speaks highly of her students. It is evident that Reagan takes great pride in their success." Mullins is one of 63 Missouri teachers chosen for the award among the roughly 20,000 Missouri teachers in their first or second year.

Liles Awarded

Pictured: Michelle Liles and Katie Dunlap



Pevely's Michelle Liles won Outstanding Assistant Principal for the Jefferson County Region. Principal Katie Dunlap says, "She absolutely deserves this honor, and we're so proud of her." The honor was bestowed upon her by the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, and she was recognized during a Leadership Conference earlier this month. Liles and Dunlap were also presenters at the conference, sharing information about Anchor Rooms. They called it Anchoring Your Building for Behavior Success.

Spring Break

April 18th - April 21st

Last Day

May 23rd

It's an early release day.



Class of 2025

Graduation

The Herculaneum High School Class of 2025 will graduate on Monday, May 19th, at 7:30 p.m. on the football field.

In case of rain, it will be moved to the Jefferson College Fieldhouse in Hillsboro. The date and time will remain the same.

Freezing Fundraiser




Pictured: (Front) Grace Tipton, Emma Appelbaum, Will Slinkard, Harrison Clements, Max McClain, and Blake Gorman. (Back) James Zipprich, Meghan McClain, and Caitlin Butcher.



Against every natural instinct, these Blackcats ran into a cold lake on a winter's day. As a result, the Senn-Thomas Student Council raised \$1,775 for Missouri's Special Olympics. Sponsor Caitlin Butcher says it was the largest group they've ever taken to the Polar Plunge at Creve Coeur Lake. "The best part was standing in line watching people jump into it," according to Will Slinkard.

On the shore of the lake, it was 42 degrees with a light rain. Grace Tipton says, "I was already freezing when I went into the lake." When it was their turn, the brave Blackcats ran into the water. James Zipprich says, "I couldn't breathe for a few seconds, and I was stumbling because I really couldn't feel my feet." Once he was soaked to the bone, Harrison Clements' only thought was, "Why am I doing this?" Blake Gorman says, "My whole body was numb, so I turned around and got out as fast as I could." While recalling the experience, Max McClain just remembers, "It was cold." Meghan McClain works at Senn-Thomas and participated in the fundraiser. She says, "I would totally do it again." Her biggest fear was tripping and falling, but the water wasn't as cold as she imagined, and her son raised almost \$300.

While jumping into a lake seems extreme, cold water plunges have grown in popularity due to their reported health benefits. They include decreased inflammation, improved immunity, increased circulation, and mood boosting. Moreover, cold water can activate brown fat to generate heat and regulate the body's temperature. Elite athletes like LeBron James, Naomi Osaka, Klay Thompson, and J.J. Watt have all used cold plunges to enhance performance.



PROM NIGHT

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025
7:00PM - 11:00 PM
Oak Valley Golf Course
1230 Abbey Lane, Pevely
MO 63070

TICKETS

Tickets are \$60 each. They can be purchased from Juniors or Seniors. They will be on sale March 17th-28th during all lunch shifts. Cash, check (payable to Herculaneum High School), or card (via Omella).

Board Meetings are Open to the Public

The Dunklin R-5 Board of Education meets on the third Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held in the Pevely Elementary School beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meetings are open to the public. Patrons may view agenda by visiting our website www.dunklin.k12.mo.us, and clicking on the Board of Education tab. There is a link called **Meeting Agenda**.



Willis Wins Best Assistant Superintendent



Five years ago, Festus Superintendent Link Luttrell told his middle school principal, "You should apply for this job. It'd be good for your career." Taking his advice, Principal Willis applied and was hired by the Dunklin R-5 School District to be second in command to Superintendent Clint Freeman. Both Luttrell's prediction and Freeman's judgment were correct. Dr. Willis was named "Outstanding Assistant Superintendent of Schools" for St. Louis, St. Charles, and Jefferson Counties. The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) is giving this new award to an administrator in each of its eight regions.

Willis would prefer the spotlight to be focused on our staff and students, so he was almost bashful when he learned of the accomplishment. He was asked to enter a conference room under false pretenses, and the mix of people waiting for him didn't match his expectations. There were principals, staff members, and his wife, Jamie. Dr. Freeman made the announcement as Board President Tammy Heidland entered with balloons. Willis took it in stride, smiling for random pictures and thanking everyone.

Dr. Willis has other plaques with his name engraved along the bottom, but this one is special. He says, "I was nominated by the principals I work with, and the people who decided it hold a similar position as me." Willis works with district principals on curriculum, grants, student achievements, counseling, and more. STMS Principal Tracy Lewis says Willis is focused on what's best for kids and strives to put teachers in a position where they can be successful. Dr. Lewis adds, "He's approachable, eager to help, and willing to jump in to support any and all situations."

The award enhances Willis's resume, but he isn't looking to move. "I'm very happy here. As we like to say, 'Every day is a great day at Dunklin R-5.'" The award will be formally presented during the MASA conference on March 26, 2025.



Pevely Dalmatians

Pictured: Kinsley Betzel, Scarlett Dawson, and Nadia Werner dressed as dalmatians on the 101st day of school.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE BLACKCAT NEWS!!!!!!

The Blackcat News is a quarterly communication tool that we use as one way to keep you informed about Dunklin R-5 School District. We want this publication to be useful to you as a patron of our schools- "Must-Read Material!"

Is there...

- Something you've read that you don't understand?
- Information that you would like to see included that is not?
- Something you want to see more often or less frequently?

We value your input! Please email your feedback to our Communications Director, Matt Lichtenstein, at mlichtenstein@dunklin.k12.mo.us Don't use email? Call Mr. Lichtenstein at 636-479-5200 ext. 1010





Blackcats went toe to toe with some of the best high schools in the nation during an international competition called Future City. The middle school program was expanded for the second year to include high school teams. Participants were asked to design a floating city of the future. Over 100 teams signed up for the competition, and the initial judging was based on each team's essay and virtual city built using Revit 3D Design Software. Only the top 20 teams were invited to the finals. Many were private or magnet schools, with names like Fulton Science Academy in Georgia, Deakey High School for Health Professions in Texas, and Ningdu Technician College in China. Among those making the cut was

Herculaneum High School in Missouri.

Herculaneum's project was created by four gifted students: Olivia Blair, Trevor Stevens, Haley Morgan, and Olivia Drinen. They tried to get together once a week, but it was rare that all four students attended. Their days are filled with high school or college classes followed by commitments to clubs, activities, or jobs. Teacher Michelle Stormont says the district purchased a classroom computer to handle the design software. She says, "We came in over Thanksgiving and Christmas break to work on it." Stevens says, "We took our essay and put all the information into the virtual city." He says many teams used the same components, like bio-concrete and synthetic coral. They decided to use reverse osmosis to desalinate the water, and they had a section of the essay focused on cultural preservation. Drinen says, "We all were very proud and happy about the work we did with the resources and time we had."

Herculaneum came 16th on their essay and 14th on their model, which is impressive considering their competition. Blair said, "We were going against groups that had class periods to work on this every day for three months. Many were better funded with better equipment and spent more time with their mentors." Stormont says many teams have Future City as part of their curriculum. The winning team was a class of 25 students. However, Herculaneum's virtual model drew attention during the showcase. Blair says, "We were the only team to render our video to make it animated. We had the waves moving, the trees swaying, and things like that, so we explained to five or six different teams how we did it." The Blackcats knew they were at a disadvantage but took it in stride. Morgan says, "I'm very proud of our accomplishment of even making it to the top twenty and making it to D.C."

Stormont says her students created an impressive project, and she is proud of how they conducted themselves in the nation's capital. They had great networking opportunities as the judges were college professors or private-sector engineers. Next year, the gifted program at Dunklin will have a new teacher because Stormont is retiring. However, she may not be done with Future City. The organizers have asked if she is interested in mentoring a different high school team.

Taylor Early Childhood Center



Making Snow



Making Music



Fire Safety Day



Grandparents Day



Making Muffins for the letter M



Learning to Brush



Let's have a Parade.



GO BLACKCATS!