

# JUNE 2025



## Board of Education Updates - Cell Phone Policy Discussion

At the June 9 Board of Education meeting, the High Ability Learners (HAL) Program gave an engaging presentation, highlighting the enrichment opportunities and academic support provided to students across the district. It was a great opportunity to showcase the impact of the HAL Program on student growth and achievement.

The Board also discussed a proposed update to the district's cell phone policy. Currently, students in grades K-8 are required to keep their phones in lockers during the school day, though they are allowed to wear smartwatches. High school students may carry their phones but are not allowed to use them during instructional time. Limited use during passing periods and lunch is currently permitted.

The proposed policy would be stricter, prohibiting student use of all communication devices—including smartwatches—at all times during the school day. High school students would no longer be allowed to use their phones during passing periods or lunch. This proposal is in response to a newly passed Nebraska law, LB140, which mandates that school districts adopt a formal cell phone policy. The law states that communication devices should not be used on school property during school hours but does allow local boards and school officials to define appropriate use times.

While Blair already has one of the strictest cell phone policies in the area—with first violations resulting in a 10-day phone restriction—the proposed changes have sparked important discussion. Supporters believe the policy could improve student mental health and reduce cyberbullying. Others have voiced concerns about student safety, the ability for families to contact students during the day, and the importance of teaching responsible use and digital citizenship. They argue that the current policy already provides a balanced approach that promotes structure, accountability, and real-world readiness.

A parent meeting has already been held to gather input, and a second meeting is being planned prior to the Board's vote on the policy in July. We encourage families to stay informed and engaged in this important conversation.

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# Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson

Dear Blair Community,



As we officially enter the summer season, I want to extend my gratitude to our families, staff, and community for a successful and meaningful school year. The end of the academic year is always a time of reflection, celebration, and transition—and this year was no exception.

One of the highlights was celebrating the incredible Class of 2025. Graduation is more than a ceremony; it's a milestone that represents years of hard work, growth, and perseverance. We are proud of each of our graduates and the diverse paths they are pursuing. Whether they are continuing their education, beginning careers, entering skilled trades, or serving in the military, we know they are well-prepared to meet the challenges ahead and contribute meaningfully to the world.

While students may be out of the classroom, our schools remain bustling hubs of activity. Summer school is currently in session, offering continued learning and support for students. In addition, our campuses are hosting a variety of camps and programs—from athletics and fine arts to STEM and enrichment experiences. These activities not only support student engagement over the summer but also help strengthen our connection to the community. We're proud that our school buildings continue to serve as welcoming spaces for families and students throughout the summer months.

Behind the scenes, we are making critical repairs and facility updates to ensure our learning environments are safe, modern, and ready for the return of students in August. From HVAC improvements to classroom renovations and general maintenance, our operations and facilities teams are working hard to care for our buildings—an effort that reflects our ongoing commitment to providing the best possible spaces for teaching and learning.

This month also brought a warm welcome to 20 new teachers who joined us during our New Teacher Orientation. It was inspiring to see their enthusiasm and passion for education. They represent a range of experience and backgrounds, and we're excited to have them become part of our school community. Investing in strong, dedicated educators is one of the most important things we can do for our students' success, and we're confident these new team members will make a lasting impact.

Another key area of focus right now is the proposed update to our district's cell phone policy. Following the passage of Nebraska Legislative Bill 140, which requires school districts to adopt a formal policy limiting the use of communication devices during the school day, we've begun engaging in conversations about how to best meet this requirement. Blair already has one of the strictest cell phone policies in our region, but the proposed update would be more restrictive, prohibiting all communication devices—including smartwatches—during school hours. This issue has prompted important feedback from students, families, and staff. A parent meeting was held in May, and a second one is being planned before the Board of Education considers the policy for a vote in July. The date, time, and location of this meeting will be shared as soon as it is finalized. We appreciate the thoughtful dialogue around this topic and remain committed to making decisions that reflect the best interests of our students and learning environments.

Thank you for your continued partnership, trust, and support of our schools. I hope each of you finds time this summer to relax, recharge, and enjoy moments with loved ones. We look forward to welcoming our students back in August, ready for another great year of learning and growth.

Warm Regards,

*Randy Gilson, Ed. D.*

Randy Gilson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Blair Community Schools

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## Welcome New Teachers

On Wednesday, June 18, we were excited to host our New Teacher Orientation as we welcomed 20 new teaching staff members to the Blair Community Schools team. This annual event is a special opportunity for us to introduce new educators to our district's mission, culture, and expectations, while also helping them build connections and feel supported as they begin their journey with us.

Throughout the day, new staff members engaged in sessions that covered everything from curriculum and instructional practices to technology tools and student support services.

They also had time to tour buildings, meet key staff and administrators, and learn more about what makes Blair such a special place to live and work. The energy, passion, and professionalism of this group were truly inspiring, and we are confident they will make a positive impact in classrooms across the district.

As we look ahead to the 2025–26 school year, we are thrilled to see the fresh perspectives and talents these educators will bring to our schools. Please join us in giving a warm welcome to our newest teachers—we are proud to have them join our team and excited for the contributions they will make to our students, families, and community.



## Class of 2025

As we step into summer and reflect on a fantastic school year, we're especially proud to celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2025. These students have shown resilience, determination, and growth throughout their time in Blair Community Schools, and now they are heading into a wide variety of meaningful post-graduation paths.

Half of our graduates are continuing their education at four-year colleges and universities, while 21% are pursuing two-year programs such as community colleges, trade schools, apprenticeships, and union training. Another 27% are entering the workforce or exploring other opportunities, and 2% have made the honorable decision to serve in the military.

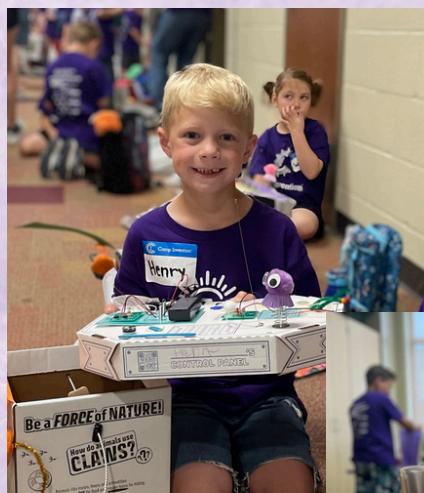
Each of these choices reflects the unique strengths and goals of our students. We are incredibly proud of their hard work and look forward to seeing all they will accomplish. Congratulations, Class of 2025!





# Camp Invention Brings STEAM Fun to Blair

The first week of June was filled with creativity, curiosity, and hands-on learning at Deerfield Elementary as BCS hosted Camp Invention, a nationally recognized STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) camp. With over 80 enthusiastic campers in attendance, the building was buzzing with energy as students explored innovation through imaginative projects and team challenges.



Camp Invention is known for sparking curiosity and confidence in young learners by encouraging them to think like inventors. Throughout the week, students worked in small groups to tackle real-world problems, design creative solutions, and build exciting prototypes. From creating their own inventions to exploring how machines work, campers had the chance to stretch their minds while having a blast.

In addition to building critical thinking and collaboration skills, Camp Invention also allowed students to develop confidence as they experimented, failed, redesigned, and succeeded—all in a supportive and fun environment. The laughter, excitement, and “aha!” moments were a true highlight of the week.

We're thankful to the staff and volunteers who made it all possible. Judging by the smiles and creative energy on display, Camp Invention was a huge success—and we can't wait to welcome it back next summer!

## K-5 Summer Happenings

Summer started with a bang! Our dedicated summer school team eagerly welcomed 64 enthusiastic K-5 students to the program. The energy is high as students dive into both reading and math lessons and activities.

Behind the scenes, our reading curriculum teams have been hard at work. They are carefully pacing the new reading supplement alongside our existing core reading program. This thoughtful integration promises an even richer learning experience, and we can't wait to see it all come to life this fall!

Our commitment to excellence continues with a few teams updating mathematics assessments to better align with state standards and current instructional practices. Meanwhile, science content is also being refreshed to match the latest standards, ensuring our students receive the most relevant and engaging education possible.

We're thrilled about the progress being made across all areas and look forward to a fantastic school year ahead!





## Activities & Events

Summer may signal the end of the traditional school year, but our buildings and fields are anything but quiet! Across the district, students are actively engaged in a wide range of enriching summer opportunities designed to keep them learning, growing, and having fun.

Athletic Camps have kicked off in full force, with student-athletes of all ages sharpening their skills in football, volleyball, basketball, track, wrestling, and more. These camps not only build strength and athletic ability but also foster teamwork, leadership, and school spirit. Our coaching staff has done a fantastic job creating high-energy, positive environments that keep kids motivated and moving.





Camp Invention returned to Deerfield Elementary during the first week of June, drawing over 80 enthusiastic campers for a week of hands-on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) fun. Students immersed themselves in creative problem-solving, designed their own inventions, and tackled exciting challenges—all while building critical thinking skills and having a blast.

In partnership with Metropolitan Community College, students also had the opportunity to participate in College for Kids, a program that offers a variety of courses focused on technology, career exploration, the arts, and more. These classes provide a great bridge between school years, giving students a chance to explore new interests and build new skills in a college-style setting.

From learning labs to athletic drills, invention sessions to professional training, it's clear that summer in Blair Community Schools is anything but a break. We're proud to offer such a rich variety of programs and thankful for the staff, families, and community partners who help make it all possible. Here's to a summer of learning, fun, and preparation for an exciting new school year! [A full list of youth summer activities can be found on our website.](#)



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