



AUGUST 2025 NEWSLETTER

BLAIR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

WHERE ALL STUDENTS LEARN

Board of Education News

The Blair Community Schools Board of Education met on Monday, August 11th. During the meeting, Dr. Gilson provided an update on storm damage sustained across the district from the severe weather on August 8th. All school buildings experienced some level of damage, with the most significant impact at Blair High School and Otte Middle School. These buildings saw roof damage and displaced HVAC units that required immediate attention.

Thanks to the dedication of our staff and the strong support of our community partners, all buildings were restored to safe, usable condition prior to the first day of school. Repairs are ongoing. A special note of gratitude goes to McKinnis Roofing, whose quick response and expert work played a key role in ensuring our schools were ready to welcome students back on time. McKinnis has long been a trusted partner to Blair Community Schools, and their commitment to our community during this time of need is greatly appreciated.

The Board also discussed district spending authority, a topic of increasing importance due to new state regulations that have placed additional restraints on school district budgets. In light of these challenges, the Blair BOE considered an increase to spending authority. A special meeting was held on August 25th to further address this issue. While the originally requested 6% increase was not approved, the Board did approve a 3% increase in spending authority. This decision will provide the district with some additional flexibility while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

The Board remains committed to maintaining safe facilities, being good stewards of district resources, and ensuring that the needs of students and staff continue to be met.

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson



Dear Blair Community,

As we begin a new school year at Blair Community Schools, I want to take a moment to share my appreciation for the students, staff, families, and community members who make our district such a special place. The start of each year brings new opportunities for learning, growth, and connection, and I am proud of the way our schools are already filled with energy, excitement, and a strong sense of Bear pride.

This summer, our facilities teams and staff worked hard to prepare our buildings for the year ahead. From classrooms to athletic fields, every space was made ready to welcome our students back. Many of our students also stayed busy through camps, practices, and volunteer activities, showing the dedication and commitment that make Blair such a remarkable community. The way our students, families, and staff came together after the recent storms to support cleanup efforts is a perfect example of the resilience and teamwork that define us.

We are also very aware of the challenges some of our families are facing due to flooding and storm damage. Our school counselors and administrative team work closely with local agencies to connect families with resources. For students who have been displaced or left homeless, know that we continue to ensure they have access to free meals, transportation, and other supports so that school remains a safe and stable place. If you know of families who need support and have not yet updated their contact information with us, please encourage them to reach out so we can provide assistance.

I want to thank the many individuals and organizations who helped us recover and prepare our schools for reopening after the storm. Special thanks go to CJ's Tree Service, McKinnis Roofing, Tim Klindt with GAF Materials/Commercial Roofing, Mechanical Services, United Water Restoration Group, Dick's Electric, and OPPD. A heartfelt thank you as well to Jeff Steinbeck and Rick Brandt for their tireless efforts in getting our buildings ready to welcome students back. Your teamwork and commitment are greatly appreciated.

Academically, we are focused on ensuring that every student has access to high-quality instruction, meaningful learning experiences, and the support they need to succeed. Our teachers and staff continue to engage in professional learning, collaborate with one another, and find new ways to inspire and challenge their students. This year, we are placing a strong emphasis on building positive relationships and fostering safe, supportive school environments, because when students feel connected and cared for, they are best positioned to thrive.

Beyond academics, we are proud to offer a wide variety of activities, clubs, and athletics that allow students to explore their interests, develop leadership skills, and strengthen connections with peers. Whether it's through sports, the arts, or service opportunities, we believe that involvement builds confidence, teamwork, and character that will serve our students well far beyond their years in school.

Finally, I want to thank the families and community members for your continued partnership. Your support is essential to the success of our schools, and we are grateful for the many ways you contribute, from volunteering and attending events to simply encouraging our students along the way. I especially want to thank John Reuter and the Blair Foundation for hosting such a fun and successful Back to School Event. From bounce houses and excellent food to watching high school students participate in various fall activities, it was an amazing way to start the year together as a community.

Sincerely,

Randy Gilson, Ed. D.

Randy Gilson
Superintendent
Blair Community Schools

Local Farmers Support Blair Community Schools

We are thrilled to share the generous support of the Washington County Cattlemen, who delivered nearly 600 pounds of ground beef to Blair Community Schools last week. This donation will help provide nutritious meals for students across our district and ensures that our students have access to healthy, protein-rich options in their school lunches.



Partnerships like this are a wonderful example of how our community comes together to support our students. The Washington County Cattlemen have a long tradition of giving back, and we are grateful for their continued commitment to the health and well-being of our students. Their generosity makes a real difference in our schools, and we are proud to have such caring community partners.

Thank you to the Washington County Cattlemen for helping us provide both nourishment and support to our students!

Blair Community Comes Together After Storm



Following the recent storm, our Blair community has once again shown its resilience and generosity. The severe weather caused damage throughout the area, and many local properties and public spaces required cleanup.

We are grateful to the Blair High School football team, who volunteered to help clear debris at the local cemetery, demonstrating teamwork and community spirit. Additionally, BCS staff member Kelly Himes and her family dedicated their time to helping clean up multiple homes around town, lending a hand to neighbors in need.



These efforts highlight the strength of our community and the willingness of individuals and groups to come together in times of need. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, energy, and care to help our town recover. It's inspiring to see our students, staff, and families working side by side to support one another.

Annual Family Fun Night with the Blair Schools Foundation



The Blair Schools Foundation Annual Family Fun Night was held on Friday, August 22, and it turned out to be a night full of laughter, excitement, and community spirit. While the evening began with a brief delay due to weather, the skies cleared and families were treated to a beautiful night of fun and activities for all ages.

Attendees enjoyed a variety of exciting events, including a volleyball scrimmage and a football scrimmage, giving students and community members a chance to showcase their athletic skills. Younger participants bounced around in bounce houses, got creative with face painting, and delighted in balloon animals. Local food trucks provided tasty options for families to enjoy throughout the evening.

One of the highlights of the night was the community run under the stars with the Blair Cross Country team, creating a memorable experience that combined fitness, fun, and community connection. The event was a perfect example of the strong support and spirit that exists within the Blair community.

The Blair Schools Foundation plays an important role in supporting our students and schools. Funds raised through events like Family Fun Night go directly toward enriching programs, student activities, and classroom resources that enhance learning and school experiences for every student. By attending and participating in this event, families and community members directly contribute to the success and growth of our schools.

Thank you to everyone who attended, volunteered, and helped make the evening such a success. Family Fun Night is a wonderful way to bring our community together, celebrate our students, and enjoy the start of the school year in a meaningful and joyful way.



Happening In Our Schools



Blair High School

Blair High School has had a strong start to the 2025–2026 school year! Students are settling into routines, engaging in their classes, and participating in a variety of learning experiences. Fall athletics—including football, volleyball, and cross country—are underway, and our student-athletes are showing great effort both on and off the field. We are proud to celebrate Assistant Principal Mark Gutschow, who received the Golden Bear Paw Award during the Blair Schools Foundation Family Fun Night.

In addition to academics and athletics, students and staff are giving back to the community, with the football team helping clean up the local cemetery after the recent storm and other volunteers supporting neighbors in need. It's shaping up to be an exciting year filled with learning, school spirit, and meaningful community engagement!



Otte Blair Middle School

Blair Middle School has kicked off the 2025–2026 school year with energy and excitement! Students are exploring new subjects, collaborating in classrooms, and developing important skills for learning and personal growth. We are thrilled to welcome new Principal Trina Yale, who brings enthusiasm, experience, and a strong commitment to supporting students and staff.

Teachers are emphasizing positive behavior and community-mindedness through PBIS initiatives, helping students build a strong foundation for success. Beyond academics, students are enjoying clubs, athletics, activities, and opportunities to get involved in the community, including assisting with cleanup projects after the recent storm. It's shaping up to be a year full of curiosity, growth, and meaningful connections at Blair Middle School!

Happening In Our Schools



Arbor Park Elementary School

The 2025–2026 school year is off to an energetic start at Arbor Park Elementary! Our students are exploring new ideas, building friendships, and discovering the joy of learning in classrooms that encourage curiosity and creativity. From hands-on projects to team-based problem-solving, students are jumping into activities that challenge them to think critically and work collaboratively.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiatives are helping students develop positive habits, while fun school-wide activities and classroom celebrations are creating opportunities to recognize achievements big and small. Staff are focused on ensuring every child feels supported, inspired, and ready to tackle the year ahead. With so much energy and excitement in the air, Arbor Park is shaping up to be a year full of learning, laughter, and memorable moments!



Deerfield Elementary School

The halls of Deerfield Elementary are buzzing with excitement as students dive into the 2025–2026 school year! From lively classroom discussions to hands-on activities, our students are embracing learning and exploring new ideas every day. Teachers are fostering collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking while emphasizing positive behavior through PBIS, helping students build confidence and strong relationships with peers.

This year, we are especially grateful for the partnership between families, staff, and the community. Together, we're creating an environment where every student feels supported and inspired. Students are already participating in engaging small-group projects, problem-solving activities, and fun opportunities to celebrate successes. With school-wide events and celebrations on the horizon, Deerfield is off to a fantastic start

Happening In Our Schools



South Early Childhood Center

The 2025–2026 school year is off to an exciting start at South Early Learning Center! Our youngest learners are exploring their classrooms, meeting new friends, and engaging in hands-on activities that spark curiosity and creativity. Teachers are fostering a nurturing environment where students can develop early literacy, math, and social-emotional skills while building confidence and independence.

This year, our focus is on play-based learning and community building, helping children learn through exploration, collaboration, and joyful discovery. Families and staff are working closely together to ensure every child feels supported, safe, and inspired to learn. With bright smiles, big questions, and a love for learning in every classroom, South Early Learning Center is off to a fantastic start and ready for a year full of growth, fun, and memorable moments!

Mr. Gutschow Recognized with the Foundation Golden Bear Paw Award



Blair High School Assistant Principal Mark Gutschow was honored with the Golden Bear Paw Award on August 22 at Krantz Field during the Blair Community Schools Foundation's Family Fun Night.

Mr. Gutschow was recognized for his dedication, leadership, and commitment to students and the Blair community. He was joined by his family for a photo at the event, celebrating this well-deserved recognition.

The Golden Bear Paw Award highlights individuals who make a significant impact on our schools, and Mr. Gutschow's contributions exemplify the spirit and values of Blair Community Schools. Congratulations to Mr. Gutschow on this honor!



Activities & Events

The 2025–2026 fall activities season is off to an exciting start at Blair Community Schools! Football kicks off tonight, August 29, at Standing Bear High School, and our first home game is scheduled for September 5 at 7:00 PM. Our volleyball team will host the Blair Volleyball Tournament on September 6, bringing teams together for a day of competition and school spirit.

In addition to football and volleyball, our softball, cross country, and girls golf teams are actively practicing and competing, giving students many opportunities to grow their skills, challenge themselves, and represent Blair with pride. Whether it's on the field, the course, or the track, our student-athletes are demonstrating hard work, dedication, and teamwork every day.

A reminder to all student-athletes: an updated physical is required before participating. Please check with the Activities Office if you are unsure whether your paperwork is current.



Families and students can stay up to date on all schedules, locations, and results through Bound, our online athletics and activities hub. Bound provides real-time updates and ensures you never miss a game, match, or meet.

We encourage families, friends, and community members to come out, support our student-athletes, and show their Bear pride as we dive into an exciting fall season full of competition, teamwork, and school spirit!

[Please click here for a full list of events.](#)



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