

# NOVEMBER 2025



## Board of Education Updates

The Blair School District Board of Education held its November meeting on November 10. Several community members attended and shared their thoughts during public comment. While the Board is not able to respond to public comments during meetings, we value the feedback and appreciate the community's engagement. Committee reports were presented, highlighting ongoing work in various areas of the district.

The Board gratefully accepted several generous community donations, including \$3,720 from the Blair Gridiron Club, \$6,125.76 from Blair Walmart, and \$1,000 from Novonesis. These contributions provide meaningful support for our students, staff, and programs, and we are deeply thankful for the ongoing partnership of our community. Your generosity helps enhance learning experiences, provide additional resources, and strengthen our school district as a whole. We are proud to work alongside families, local organizations, and businesses who share our commitment to making Blair Schools a place where every student can thrive.

Following the recent resignation of Dr. Gilson, which the Board accepted on November 24, the Board has partnered with the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) to begin the search for an interim superintendent. District leadership has been meeting with staff to discuss both short-term and long-term plans. The Board remains focused on providing a stable and supportive learning environment for all students, and families can expect updates as the process moves forward, with the next progress report to be shared at the Board's regular meeting on December 8.

We thank our families, staff, and community for their continued support and partnership during this time of transition.

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# A Message from the Blair Community Schools Board of Education

During the past few months, our district has experienced significant change. We know this has brought a mix of emotions and a great deal of conversation within the community. As your Board of Education, we want to acknowledge that openly and share our sincere appreciation for the patience, support, and care you continue to show for our students, staff, and schools. Our goal in this message is simply to offer clarity, share updates, and reinforce our commitment to working together in a positive and transparent way.

## **Our Work as a Board**

Many people have reached out with thoughtful questions about the Board's responsibilities, especially during times of transition. The Board's work centers on setting district policy, supporting the long-term direction of the district, approving budgets, and hiring and evaluating the superintendent. We also deeply value listening to our community and making decisions with students' best interests at the heart of our conversations.

At the same time, there are parts of the school system that the Board does not oversee directly. Day-to-day operations, personnel matters, and building-level decisions are managed through the district's established leadership structure. This chain of communication helps ensure consistency and stability in our schools, and we appreciate the partnership of staff and families in honoring that structure.

## **About Closed Sessions**

We also want to offer clarity about closed sessions, as they will appear on upcoming agendas. Closed sessions are allowed only for specific purposes under Nebraska law, such as personnel matters, contract negotiations, or topics that require confidentiality. These sessions are not used to limit transparency but to follow legal requirements and protect the integrity of sensitive processes.

In the coming weeks, you may notice the Board entering closed session more frequently as we begin negotiations for teacher contracts and move forward with leadership transitions. We share this information simply so the community knows the purpose behind these sessions.

## **Interim Superintendent Search**

At our most recent meeting, the Board voted to enter into an agreement with the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) to begin the search for an interim superintendent. NASB will also assist us in conducting the search for our next permanent superintendent. Their experience and support will help ensure a thoughtful, thorough, and timely process.

On Monday, Shari Becker, Director of Educational Leadership Search Services, will join a Board work session to share information and outline an expected timeline. We look forward to beginning this process with guidance from NASB and with input from our community as appropriate along the way.

We understand that transitions can be challenging, but they can also be moments of possibility. We are grateful for the dedication of our staff, the involvement of our families, and the strength of our community. We appreciate the opportunity to serve our community and are committed to earning your confidence every day. We remain committed to transparency, collaboration, and steady leadership as we move forward together.

Sincerely,  
Blair Community Schools  
Board of Education

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# BHS - Macho Man 2025



This year's Macho Man 2025 volleyball tournament was an unforgettable event filled with excitement, surprises, and plenty of school spirit. All money that was donated the night of Macho Man will go to the Washington County Food Pantry in Blair. We ended up making \$1,868.75 The tournament brought together four high school boys' teams competing fiercely for the coveted title—and the chance to face off against the secret teacher team in an epic showdown. The Men in Black team, who had been favorites early on, faced a tough challenge and ultimately lost to the Frat team, shaking up the expected outcome. Meanwhile, the Smurfs were edged out by the Criminals in a close match, setting the stage for an intense semifinal showdown. The Criminals then took on the Frat team and narrowly missed their chance to face the teachers, as the Frats proved too strong and advanced to the final round.



The much-anticipated teacher team match didn't disappoint, despite the teachers facing a formidable opponent in the Frat team. The teachers' lineup this year included Jeffrey Hacker, David Christensen, Jairin Potter, Chelsea Potter, Chris Whitwer, Heather Hayduk, John Roan, Will Lansman, and Trey Lansman, with Jess Lansman serving as the dedicated coach. Although the teachers faced an uphill battle, they played with heart and determination. The highlight of the night was definitely Mr. Hacker's unforgettable fall after an incredible effort for the ball—showing true sportsmanship and school spirit. It was a blast for players and spectators alike, making this year's Macho Man tournament a memorable highlight of the school year.

## Deerfield Elementary Students Show Heart and Hard Work

Students at Deerfield Elementary School demonstrated incredible kindness and community spirit this month in their school wide food drive. In a wonderful display of teamwork, student senate members counted, transported, and loaded food boxes for the Blair Food Pantry, making a real difference in their community.

The students worked tirelessly, eager to lift heavy boxes and solve the puzzle of fitting everything into the vehicle. Their selflessness and dedication were evident as they worked together with enthusiasm and determination.

Their effort not only helped those in need but also showed what it means to be caring and responsible members of the community. Deerfield's young helpers truly exemplify kindness and teamwork, and their hard work is an inspiration to us all.



# Mike Jenny Retires After 46 Years

After an incredible 46 years of dedicated service, Blair Community Schools is proud to honor one of its most cherished members—Mike Jenny. As he steps into retirement, we reflect on a lifelong journey rooted in community, commitment, and care.

Mike first walked the halls of Blair High School as a student, graduating in 1975. Little did he know that his connection to Blair was just beginning. Soon after, he joined the district's custodial staff, bringing with him a work ethic, warmth, and a genuine desire to make Blair a better place for students and staff alike.

Over the decades, Mike has been more than just a custodian; he's been a fixture in the Blair community. His friendly smile, unwavering reliability, and willingness to go above and beyond have touched countless lives. Whether it was preparing classrooms for a new school year, ensuring the hallways were spotless, or simply offering words of encouragement, Mike's presence has been a steadying and positive influence.

As he retires today, we thank Mike for his extraordinary service and dedication. His journey is a testament to the power of community and the importance of every role within our schools. Blair Community Schools is grateful for the years he has given and proud to have had him as part of our family.

Mike, enjoy this new chapter—you've certainly earned it!



## Career Expo

The Blair High School Career Expo was a fantastic success, providing students with an exciting opportunity to explore a variety of career options. During a special 30-minute lunch session, students had the chance to walk around and engage with representatives from 21 different local businesses and organizations. This event was made possible through the collaboration of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Gateway Development Corporation, who helped bring together a diverse range of career fields for students to discover.

Many of the participating organizations offered more than just information—they provided students with the chance to gain hands-on experience through job shadowing and internship opportunities. This exposure allowed students to get a real feel for the day-to-day responsibilities of different careers and helped them envision their future paths. Overall, the Career Expo was a valuable event that empowered students to make more informed decisions about their futures, whether they're just beginning to explore or ready to take the next step toward their career goals.



# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## Blair High School

November at Blair High School was a month filled with meaningful events and exciting achievements. One of the highlights was the Veterans Day assembly held in the main gym, where we honored the brave veterans who have fought to protect our freedom. The assembly included heartfelt speeches and moments of gratitude, and Jaron Zuerek's powerful performance of the song "Taps" brought a somber and respectful tone to the occasion, reminding everyone of the sacrifices made by our veterans.

This month was also a celebration of our talented student-athletes. Emma Ammon signed to play volleyball in college, Jacy Schueth committed to softball, and Cassandra Mata will be continuing her passion for dance at the collegiate level. Additionally, we had an exciting career expo and the annual Macho Man volleyball tournament, both of which brought lots of fun and inspiration to the school community. Overall, November was a memorable month filled with pride, achievement, and gratitude at Blair High School.



## Otte Blair Middle School

As we move through November, academics continue to be our primary focus across the Otte Blair Middle School. Teachers and students are working hard every day to build strong learning habits, deepen understanding, and maintain steady progress as we head toward the end of the second quarter. Classrooms are busy, engaged, and full of meaningful learning experiences that reflect the commitment of our staff and students.

Winter sports are also underway, bringing great energy to our building. Girls wrestling and boys basketball are off to a strong start, and our athletes are showing dedication and teamwork as they grow in their skills. Our music programs are equally active—band and choir students have been putting in tremendous effort. Our 6th grade students had a successful concert in mid-November, and we look forward to our 7th and 8th grade concerts coming up in December.

As we enter the final stretch of the quarter, we'll continue to focus on gratitude, hard work, and staying grounded in the routines that help students thrive. This time of year can move quickly, but it also offers many opportunities to celebrate growth, support one another, and finish the semester strong.

# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## Arbor Park Elementary

Over the past month, Arbor Park has been buzzing with community pride and student achievement. One of the biggest highlights was our Veterans Day celebration, where nearly 80 veterans—each connected to an Arbor Park student—joined us for a meaningful, student-centered ceremony. Staff and students worked together to create decorations, music, and an atmosphere of gratitude, making it one of our most memorable assemblies of the year. Our 5th graders also shined outside the classroom, bringing home a regional championship in Omaha after defeating a team of 6th graders in the final match.

We've continued building school spirit and connection through a variety of events and opportunities. Students have been preparing for the upcoming 5th grade musical with joint practices at Deerfield, and our One School, One Book work has helped keep families engaged in reading together. Altogether, it's been a month filled with celebration, community partnerships, and students showing what makes Arbor Park such a special place to learn.



## Deerfield Elementary

We hope everyone enjoyed a restful and happy Thanksgiving break! It has been wonderful having students back at Deerfield, bringing energy, curiosity, and enthusiasm to our classrooms each day. We are especially grateful to our PTO and the Blair Schools Foundation for their generous support of our school, teachers, and students. Their contributions help create meaningful opportunities and experiences that enhance learning and make Deerfield a special place for all.

As we head into December, families can look forward to our annual Cookies, Cards, and Cocoa event—always a joyful way to celebrate the season. With colder weather approaching, please remember to send students with coats, hats, gloves, and other snow gear so they can enjoy outdoor recess safely. Thank you for your continued support in making Deerfield a place where every student feels cared for, challenged, and connected.

# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## South Early Childhood Center

Students at South Early Childhood Center began new studies this month! Our half day classes are studying trees, specifically focusing on the different parts of trees and how they grow and change throughout the seasons. Full day classes have begun their study on lights, specifically identifying objects that make light, how to turn lights on and off, lights in the sky/space, and how we use light in our daily lives. Students in our full day program are also practicing lots of phonemic awareness skills through our Kickstart to Literacy program.

So far, students have learned to recognize their own names and the letters that spell them, created and recognized rhyming words, recognized alliterative words, and learned the names and sounds of the following letters: Aa, Mm, Tt, Ss, and Pp. Preschool students have also enjoyed learning what it means to be thankful and are looking forward to all the yummy food that this season of thanksgiving brings!

## FFA Ribbon Recipients: 2025-2026

On November 19, 16 of our FFA members competed in a variety of Leadership Development Events in West Point at our District FFA LDE Competition. We had a great day with members competing and many receiving ribbons at the end of the day, and even one qualifying for State FFA LDE. We are so proud of all their hard work.

### • Red Ribbon

- Bella Borges - Sr. Public Speaking Parliamentary Team

### • Purple Ribbon

- Casey Mertz- Creed
- Eloise Russell- Extemporaneous Speaking
- Ava Andrews - Natural Resources Speaking

### • Blue Ribbon:

- Savannah Andrews - Jr. Public Speaking
- AJ Gustafson - Extemporaneous Speaking
- Hailey Jackson - Extemporaneous Speaking
- Wyatt Flemming - Employment Skills
- Levi Beyer - Employment Skills

### • Purple Winner State Qualifier:

- Melanie Korth - Jr. Public Speaking



# Blair Community Schools

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## Activities & Athletics

Lots of students participated in activities this November. This month has been a success!

Otte Blair Middle School has had an exciting and active fall season! Girls wrestling is off to an outstanding start, with individual match wins totaling 146 and 80 losses. The team also achieved great success at Winnebago, with 9 champions and 11 runners-up.

Our 7th-grade basketball team has a solid record of 4-2, with notable road victories at Giles Creek and Norris. The 8th-grade team has shown tremendous improvement from last season, earning wins over South Sioux City and Bennington.

The Fall Choir Concert was a huge success, with 7th and 8th graders entertaining the audience with lively performances and lots of crowd participation. On November 18th, the 6th-grade band and choir performed some familiar tunes everyone enjoyed.

While high school activities are a bit quieter, students participated in Unified Bowling against EMC on November 13th and will compete in Districts on December 1st. FFA district competitions took place on November 19th, and winter sports—including boys and girls basketball, wrestling, and swimming—are underway this month.

Additionally, FBLA students enjoyed a trip to Woodhouse, and many students received ribbons at the District FFA Leadership Development Events in West Point. It's a busy and exciting time at Otte Blair Middle School!

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

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