

# The Roar Report



Your Quarterly Guide for Bearcat News and Updates

Winter 2026



## NEWS: Introducing the UAC!

In December 2025, Bedford City School District announced its membership in the newly formed **United Athletic Conference**—aligning six school districts that share a deep commitment to athletic excellence, student development, and community pride. BCSD, Warrensville Heights, Garfield Heights, Maple Heights, Brush (South Euclid–Lyndhurst), and Youngstown City School unite for enhanced competition, collaboration, and a renewal of great regional rivalries. League play officially begins with the 2026-2027 winter sports teams.

## MUST WATCH: SEL Focus “Together We Can”

BCSD recently launched the first message in a new SEL awareness campaign focused on healthy screen habits and family connection. Led by **SEL Coordinator Faith Gordon**, the video invites families to reflect, reset, and reconnect. Watch and join us as this important conversation continues.

Scan To Watch (BCSD TV):



PAGE 2

Superintendent's Office



PAGE 3

Treasurer's Office



PAGE 4

Office of Academic Achievement



PAGE 5

Office of Human Resources



PAGE 6

Office of Operations



PAGE 7

Office of Facility Improvements



PAGE 8

Office of Athletics



PAGE 8

Marketing & Communications



Board Members & Employment Opportunities

PAGE 9





## From the Desk of **Dr. Cassandra J. Johnson** Superintendent



Dear Bedford City School District Families  
Scholars, Staff, and Community Partners,

**Welcome back and Happy New Year!** I hope that our scholars, families, and staff enjoyed a restful and joyful Winter Break filled with time to recharge, reflect, and reconnect. As we return to our schools, we do so with renewed energy, focus, and excitement for all that lies ahead. I am truly looking forward to 2026 and the continued growth, progress, and accomplishments of the Bedford City School District.

As we reflect on how far we have come, it is important to celebrate the dedication and resilience of our scholars, staff, and families. Together, we have overcome challenges, achieved milestones, and continued to move our district forward. I am confident that while the work ahead will require focus and determination, our district is up for the challenge. We have proven time and time again that when we work together with purpose, we succeed.

This semester brings with it important academic opportunities and responsibilities, including state testing, Career Readiness assessments, and continued preparation for life beyond the classroom. These measures are not just assessments, but opportunities for our scholars to demonstrate their growth, critical thinking, and readiness for future success. While these moments are significant, we know that success does not happen overnight.

Most importantly, we must remember a simple but powerful truth: "You play how you practice!" Daily habits matter. Consistent attendance, punctuality, preparation, and engagement all contribute to strong outcomes. With this in mind, I ask for the continued support of all parents and guardians to ensure that our scholars are present and on time every day—because that is the BCSD way.

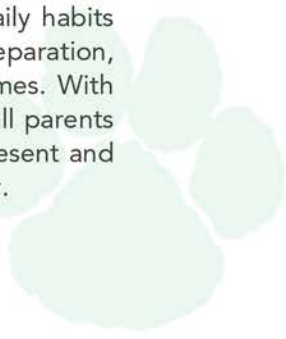
Every instructional minute counts, and showing up ready to learn sets the foundation for success both in school and beyond.

In addition, please be on the lookout for upcoming communications regarding ways parents and guardians can become more engaged and involved in our schools. Parent and community collaboration has proven time and time again to be highly effective—not only in improving the climate and culture of our district, but also in driving academic and organizational improvement across the entire system.

I strongly encourage you to consider joining your scholar's PTA, PTO, or PTSA; supporting music booster groups; participating in Superintendent Chat and Chews; or volunteering in other meaningful ways. Your presence, voice, and partnership matter. When families and schools work together, our scholars thrive.

Together, we can achieve so much more by supporting every member of our learning community to aspire for more, accept change, pursue passions, and never give up. I am excited about what the remainder of this school year holds and proud to continue to walk this journey with you.

With gratitude and optimism,  
**Dr. Cassandra J. Johnson**





## Treasurer's Office

Taylor Friedrich  
Treasurer/CFO



### Community Financial Update: Interest Earnings

#### Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025)

The School District remains committed to strong financial stewardship and maximizing taxpayer resources. As part of that commitment, the District actively manages its cash balances through prudent, low-risk investment strategies that comply with Ohio law and Board policy.

#### Interest Earnings Overview

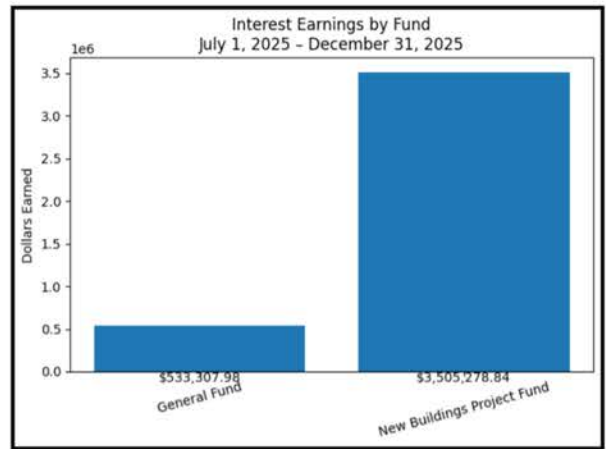
For the first half of Fiscal Year 2026, the District earned significant interest revenue as a result of higher interest rates and careful investment management:

#### General Fund:

The District earned \$533,307.98 in interest revenue. These earnings help support daily operations, instructional programs, and essential services without additional burden on taxpayers.

#### New Buildings Project Fund:

The District earned \$3,505,278.84 in interest revenue (before investment fees) on funds set aside for the new buildings project. These earnings directly benefit the project by helping offset construction and financing costs.



#### Why This Matters

Interest earnings are an important source of supplemental revenue.

By earning interest on existing funds, the District is able to:

- Stretch taxpayer dollars further
- Reduce pressure on operating and capital budgets
- Support long-term financial stability
- Lower overall project costs for major capital improvements

#### Commitment to Fiscal Responsibility

All investments are made in accordance with Ohio Revised Code and Board-approved investment policies, prioritizing safety, liquidity, and return. District administrators continue to monitor market conditions and investment performance to ensure funds are managed responsibly and transparently.

The District will continue to provide regular updates on its financial position and remains committed to maintaining public trust through sound financial practices.





## Office of Academic Achievement

Dr. Kenya Harrington  
Executive Director of Academic Achievement



The Office of Academic Achievement will continue supporting our schools and district regarding our goals. Additionally, we will continue exploring curriculum needs for the 2025-2026 school year.

- **GOAL 1:** By 2028, BCSD will increase our report card component ratings for Achievement, Early Literacy, Gap Closing, & Graduation by improving student achievement for ELA (elementary) and Math, as evidenced by student performance on the OST and district I-Ready reading and mathematics assessments.
- **GOAL 2:** By June 2028, BCSD will increase our report card component ratings for Attendance and College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness. These areas of growth will be evidenced by increased student enrollment in CTE pathways, attendance by 6% (88.94% as of 3/25) at all grade levels and improving student-to-teacher relationships and student-to-student relationships. This will be measured through enrollment/attendance data, student CTE performance (assessments, projects, internships/externships) and through SEL curriculum and surveys.
- BCSD is exploring the updating and identification of new curriculum for Social Studies. The areas of focus will be Government & Politics, AP United States History, AP Psychology, Sociology and specific grade bands.
- BCSD will continue planning meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities for our PK-12 teachers and staff. The rationale for the professional development is to improve student outcomes while assisting teachers to remain current with new strategies and techniques. Additionally, our goals are in addressing achievement and opportunity gaps for students and motivating our teachers.
- The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) released the ability cut scores for gifted identification.
- Preschool Applications for Bedford City Schools will be available in mid February.





## Office of Human Resources

Dr. JaTina Threat  
Executive Director of Human Resources



The Department of Human Resources is officially gearing up for hiring season. One of the first steps in this process is meeting with building principals to review projected staffing needs and ensure we have the appropriate number of staff members in place to support our students. Those conversations are already underway. A key goal of Human Resources is to remain fiscally responsible by hiring strategically and ensuring positions are filled based on student needs, programming requirements, and budget considerations.

In addition to overseeing Human Resources, the Director of Human Resources also provides leadership for Career Technical Education (CTE), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and Special Education. CTE continues to gain momentum as we enter year two of engaging Bedford students in career pathways aligned with their interests and future goals. **Bedford City Schools currently offers fourteen CTE pathways**, providing students with meaningful choices and exposure to real-world skills.

As the program continues to evolve, our focus remains on expanding age-appropriate CTE opportunities across grade levels to better prepare students for industry expectations, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

**Special Education programming** has also continued to grow. In November, the district implemented the **PAW (Pathway to Academic Wellness)** program, designed to support students who require additional therapeutic services to be successful in a traditional school setting.

On December 8, the Special Education Department hosted a **Family Engagement Night** that included dinner and a presentation by Milestone Autism Resources titled "Empowering Families: Practical Ways to Support Your Child's Success." The event provided families with valuable tools, resources, and connections.

Social-Emotional Learning remains a critical component of student success. SEL programming helps students manage emotions, build healthy relationships, make responsible decisions, and develop resilience.

This year, the SEL team hosted its annual Welcome Back Family Engagement Event and continues to meet the requirements of HB 123 and SB 288. Additionally, the district partnered with **the Bedford Heights Recreation Center to establish a Community Resource Room**. This partnership expands access to space and resources across all four municipalities, strengthening support for students, families, and the broader community.

Together, these efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to thoughtful planning, student-centered programming, and building systems that support the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally.



## Office of Operations

Dr. Karl Schneider  
Executive Director of Operations



The first half of this school year resulted in the transition of several departments and programs to new spaces. We completed North House tours and phased the move of staff and students into South House so abatement and demolition can proceed on schedule and with minimal disruption.

EXCEL Academy moved to Mt. Zion and the Technology and Registration Departments are now operating from our new Board Offices at 3 Hemisphere Way. The Resource Room, an important community resource, was relocated to the Bedford Heights Recreation Center over Winter Break. Also, with the closure of the old Administration Building, we have relocated Board Meetings to Heskett Auditorium. We are grateful for our classified staff for maintaining a focus on staff and student needs and for their efforts to ensure the moves were successful. We are also grateful for the flexibility and positivity of staff and students impacted by the transitions.

(Excerpt From Our Official Statement Released on Jan 28, 2026):

*Since returning from winter break, our learning community has experienced multiple disruptions due to a combination of factors, including electrical issues related to the age of the high school building, closures caused by extremely low temperatures, and hazardous winter weather conditions. While these interruptions have been frustrating for all, please know that district decisions are always guided by Board policy, negotiated agreements, and guidance from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce—while prioritizing the safety and well-being of students and staff. (END OF STATEMENT EXCERPT).*

As we move into the second half of the year, Operations will focus on continuing to review and refine processes and implementing practical systems that help building teams succeed. We have a clear focus on supporting our Maintenance and Custodial teams with their work. Additionally, updates are underway to facilitate the repurposing of the Maintenance Garage as a shared Maintenance and Auto Tech space.

Ohio's new attendance law, H.B. 96, took effect September 30, 2025, and changes how we track and support attendance. Under H.B. 96, a student is chronically absent at 10% or more missed days, regardless of excused status. Further, habitually truant is triggered at these unexcused-absence thresholds: 30 consecutive hours, 42 hours in one month, or 72 hours in one school year.

Schools are required to notify families once absences reach 25 hours per quarter so we can partner early to address barriers. Every hour of each day counts and therefore the law emphasizes proactive support - connecting families with resources and developing improvement plans - so students stay engaged and learning.



# Facility Improvements

Tad Ellsworth  
Executive Director of Facility Improvements



The construction of both the new Middle School and new K-2 Elementary School continues, both on-schedule and on-budget. Most of the exterior masonry walls at both buildings are nearly complete and structural steel is being erected on both sites. While brick facades will not be installed until warmer weather arrives, you can start to see the shape both buildings will take.

Recent weather has slowed work somewhat in recent weeks, but both buildings are still scheduled to open on time in Fall 2027. The architectural designs for the new High School are quickly coming together, and an update (including renderings) will be shared publicly in the very near future.

We just finished the second phase of design, and we expect the final phase of design to be complete in late April. The new high school is expected to be approximately 175,000 square feet, housing 900 ninth through twelfth grade students.

It will feature state of the art career tech classrooms, including a public-facing cosmetology lab, culinary kitchen and restaurant. Partial asbestos abatement and demolition work is beginning at the existing high school and former BOE building in the next few weeks.

The new high school is scheduled to open in Fall 2028.

## 6-8 Grade School Progress



Structural Steel and Joists Progress



Underground Electrical



Load bearing masonry near completion



Masonry Bearing Wall And Structural Steel Install

## K-2 Grade School Progress



Office of Athletics

### J.C. Commander Athletics Director



Marketing & Communications

### Jumar Newell Marketing & Communications

Bedford High School Athletics has followed up a tremendous fall season with what has so far been an outstanding winter season as well.

The wrestling program led by head coach Wallace Sonnie has competed in multiple tournaments and had some strong finishes from members of the team. Stephon Phillips '26 has been the consummate leader both vocally and by example this season registering a record of 15 wins and 9 losses.

The girls basketball program with second-year head coach, Courtney Scott, has continued to build on last year's success with some great play from Lexi Ford '27. Ford recently took home the MVP Award in the MLK Invitational at Richmond Hts. High School as she poured in 23 pts. in a Lady Bearcat win over Toledo Waite.

The B.H.S. Bowling teams led by head coaches Steve Schuster (boys team) and Krista Thomas (girls team) are also making their mark this season. Both teams are currently on two-match win streaks, and in the recent Brush Invitational, Marvin Thomas '26 took 4th place overall! The B.H.S. boys basketball team led by another second-year head coach, Jermaine Gay, is making their presence known across the city this season. After dropping their opener to St. Ignatius, the boys went on a nine-game winning streak which included wins over Lutheran West, Barberton, and cross-town rival, Warrensville Hts. Kevin Woodgett III '26 has proven to be one of the top shooters in the state as he ranks in 3pt. field goals made.

As always, please continue to follow our athletic department and programs via social media on Instagram: @bhsbearcats\_athletics, X: @bhsbearcatsport, and our athletic website: <https://bhsathletics.org/>. #riseofthebearcats

As we enter 2026, Bedford City School District does so with momentum, pride, and a shared focus on Achieve Excellence in 2026. This winter season marks both reflection and forward movement—honoring where we've been while continuing to elevate how we connect, inform, and engage our Bearcat community.

As 2025 came to a close, one of the most meaningful moments of the season was the opportunity to welcome alumni back into the North House at Bedford High School ahead of its closure and future redevelopment. The walkthroughs sparked nostalgia, reflection, and powerful storytelling as generations of Bearcats revisited a space that shaped their journeys. Several of these moments were captured on video, and we look forward to sharing them soon on BCSDTV on YouTube, preserving this chapter of Bedford history while we look ahead to new construction and new possibilities.

February brings a district-wide celebration of Black History Month, with activities, programs, and learning experiences taking place across BCSD. We invite the community to explore and follow these moments using the unifying hashtag #BHMAtBCSD.

Looking ahead, we are excited for Bedford High School's upcoming musical production, In the Heights, debuting in March—another example of the creativity and talent that defines our students.

As winter continues, district communications will remain focused on transparency, storytelling, and celebrating the people and progress that strengthens the Bedford City School District.

#### Upcoming Dates To Remember:

- February 7 – BHS Athletic Hall of Fame Ceremony
- February 11 – Parent/Teacher Conferences (BHS, Glendale)
- February 12 – Glendale Career Fair
- February 12 – Students of Excellence Recognition @ Carylwood
- **February 16 – President's Day (No School for Students)**
- February 19 – Parent/Teacher Conferences (BHS, Excel, Glendale)
- February 20 – District Black History Day Programs
- February 26 – Columbus Black History Month Program
- March 2 – Central Read-A-Thon Begins/ UNITY WEEK

We Hope You Enjoyed This Edition!



# The RoarReport

Winter 2026

## Board of Education

Anthony A. Akins, President  
Chris Callender, Vice President  
Angelic M. Carter  
Montez Morton Sr.  
Eva Boyington



If you are looking for employment, visit these websites:



Bedford City School District



City of Bedford



City of Bedford Heights



Oakwood Village



Walton Hills

**Bedford City School District**  
3 Hemisphere Way  
Bedford, Ohio 44146  
440-439-1500



BEDFORD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



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