



## Board of Education Updates

The Board of Education February meeting was held on Monday, February 09, 2026. A work session led to the approval of architectural plans for new secure entrances at Arbor Park and Otte Middle School. Other building updates included installing classroom security blinds, replacing old pottery wheels in the high school art department, and repairing damaged skylights at Arbor Park.

Mrs. Heather English's first-grade class kicked off the session by leading the pledge and presenting their reading program progress. Mrs. Monica Maly also shared a highlight on Blair Unified Sports, noting the incredible student and community support at the recent basketball game against Elkhorn. The board expressed its gratitude for Mrs. Maly's dedication to making the program such a success.

Local businesses and organizations continue to show amazing support for our schools, and the board officially accepted several generous donations. These included \$1,195 from Cubby's, a golf cart valued at \$5,000 from Balls Out Motors, and \$4,760 for new track uniforms from the Blair Backers. The Blair Community Schools Foundation also awarded an additional \$10,000 grant to the South Early Childhood Center to support STREAM initiatives.

Operational approvals included the 2026-2027 Negotiated Agreement and a new mixed-age classroom model for preschool. The district is excited to welcome Kelli Westphal back as a high school English teacher next year, while also honoring Jennifer Fowler for her 32 years of teaching excellence upon her retirement. Finally, please note the next board meeting has been moved to March 16th to accommodate Spring Break.

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# A Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Don Johnson



## Off and Running!

It's hard to believe I have already been in the district for two months — the time has truly flown by. During this short period, I have greatly enjoyed attending and supporting our students at basketball games, wrestling meets, and show choir performances. I look forward to attending the upcoming band concerts and many other activities as the season continues.

Congratulations to our Boys and Girls Wrestling teams on qualifying multiple athletes for the State Tournament. A special recognition goes to Katie Wheeler (5th place), Forrest Uhing (4th place), and State Champion Blaise Baughman. We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments. Thank you as well to our dedicated coaches for their leadership and commitment to our students' success.

Our Board of Education has also had a productive month. We have begun training with the Nebraska School Boards Association and are currently developing a comprehensive Board of Education Handbook. This will be one of only a few such handbooks in the state and will serve as a valuable resource for both current and future board members for years to come.

In addition, the Board has initiated plans to enhance security at the entrances of Arbor Park Elementary and Otte Middle School. We anticipate construction beginning this summer. Ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for our students remains one of our highest priorities, and we are excited to take this important step forward.

As many of you know, winter weather decisions are never easy. While there was one day when the forecasted snow did not arrive as predicted, please know that student and staff safety will always guide my decisions. If that means occasionally disappointing those hoping for a snow day — or surprising them — I am comfortable erring on the side of caution.

I have also appreciated the opportunity to connect with the Rotary Club and several local business owners and CEOs in our community. I welcome the chance to meet with additional community groups and organizations to listen, learn, and share more about the great work happening in our schools. Please feel free to contact the district office to arrange a time for us to meet or for me to present to your organization. Blair Community Schools grows stronger through the partnership and input of our parents, patrons, and community members.

Finally, thank you for the warm welcome you have extended to me. With engaged stakeholders, a talented and dedicated staff, and a shared commitment to excellence, I am confident we will continue to do great things for the students of Blair Community Schools.

With appreciation,

Dr. Don Johnson  
Superintendent  
Blair Community Schools



# More Than a Game: BHS Unified Basketball Game

Our wonderful community truly showed up for the recent Unified Basketball game at Blair High School! The event was a huge success, packed with a massive, excited student section, festive signs, and an atmosphere buzzing like a real varsity game thanks to the pep band, cheerleaders, announcements, and referees.

The spirit and inclusivity of the Blair Bears' student body was on full display. The cheering was deafening, a roar of genuine support that extended beyond the home team. Blair students cheered loudly not only for the Bears but also for the Elkhorn students, a display of sportsmanship and kindness that truly resonated with everyone in the gym. This kind of support speaks volumes about the character of the students and the positive school culture cultivated at Blair. It was a beautiful example of how sports can bring communities together and foster a sense of belonging for all participants.

The event created memories that will last a lifetime. Elkhorn parents and staff shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, expressing how meaningful it was for their children to be included in such a special event. We are incredibly grateful for the hospitality, the commitment to inclusion, and for creating a day that highlighted the very best of our community spirit.



# Sing Around Nebraska: Otte Blair Students Take the Stage

The halls of Otte Blair Middle School buzzed this month with melodic energy as students from around the state represented their schools at the prestigious Sing Around Nebraska festival. This year was particularly special, as Otte Blair served as a regional host site on February 21, 2026, bringing together young vocalists from across the area to rehearse and perform under the guidance of expert clinicians. Under the direction of Emily Jackson, young singers spent weeks mastering a diverse repertoire, culminating in a celebration of choral excellence at this event.



# New Beginnings: Blair National Signing Day

National Signing Day at Blair High School was a momentous occasion on January 28, as five standout student-athletes officially committed to continuing their journeys at the collegiate level. The room buzzed with pride as Claire Anderson signed with The University of Sioux Falls to continue her soccer career, while Blaise Baughman signs for Hastings College to play football. Hayden Daggett showcased his versatility by signing with Wayne State to compete in both football and track, and the baseball program celebrated two major commitments with Hans Sorensen heading to Mount Marty and Jashua Stephenson joining Nebraska Wesleyan. These five individuals represent the very best of BHS excellence in both athletics and academics, and the entire community wishes them the best of luck as they transition from being Bears to leaders on their new campuses!



## From the Classroom to the Capitol

The students of Blair High School's Business and Law class recently stepped out of the classroom and into the halls of power for an immersive field trip to the Nebraska State Capitol. The highlight of the day was an exclusive meeting with Senator Ben Hansen, a Blair native and District 16 representative, who shared firsthand insights into the legislative process and the responsibilities of representing their home community. Standing in the historic rotunda, the students gained a deeper understanding of Nebraska's unique unicameral legislature and the real-world application of the legal and business principles they study in class.

Beyond the legislative chambers, the tour took a deep dive into the judicial branch with a visit to the Nebraska Supreme Court. The class explored the ornate chamber, featuring its famous acoustically perfect walnut ceiling, and learned how the state's highest court interprets the law. By connecting with local leadership and witnessing the inner workings of both the executive and judicial branches, these Blair High students returned home with a newfound appreciation for civic engagement and the diverse career paths available within the state's legal and political systems.



# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## Blair High School

February has been a month of standout performances across the board. On the wrestling mats, the boys' team fought their way to an impressive 8th-place state finish, highlighted by Blaise Baughman's dominant run to become a State Champion. The momentum continues in the pool, as five of our swimmers prepare to compete at the State Championships today, February 27th. Meanwhile, our Show Choir delivered an electric performance in Wahoo, securing 2nd place overall and sweeping the "captain awards," including the well-deserved title of Most Entertaining Show.

Back on campus, the focus remains sharp on academics as we head into the second half of the semester. Students are currently navigating the registration process for next year's courses, making important decisions about their future paths. We are proud of the way our students continue to balance these high-level extracurricular achievements with a dedicated commitment to their classroom goals.

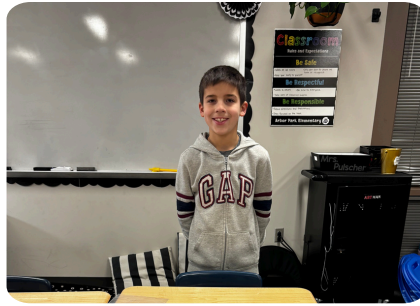


## Otte Blair Middle School

It's been a busy and exciting few weeks for our middle school! On February 3, our 8th graders represented students across the country by participating in NAEP testing. They also took important steps toward the future with a visit to the high school, and we appreciated the high school counselors coming over to support registration and answer questions. Our music programs were on full display as well, with a fantastic 7th and 8th grade band concert on 2/23 followed by the 6th grade band and choir concert on 2/24.

Despite a couple of snow days, students jumped right back into learning and have been working hard in their classes every day. We are also wrapping up winter activities, including girls basketball and boys wrestling, and we're proud of the effort our students continue to show both in and out of the classroom. It's been a full few weeks, and our students are finishing strong!

# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## Arbor Park Elementary

As we wrap up another month at Arbor Park, I'm grateful for the energy and partnership that make our school such a special place. Thank you to our families for showing up in a big way for parent-teacher conferences—we had an incredible 96% attendance rate. That level of engagement reflects our shared commitment to student growth. When school and home stay closely connected, students win.

We also had a lot of fun celebrating the 100th day of school! From creative outfits to classroom projects centered around the number 100, our students marked the milestone with enthusiasm and joy.

One highlight this month was 3rd Grade Market Day, where students put their learning into action by creating products, practicing budgeting, and engaging in real-world buying and selling. The classrooms were buzzing with excitement as students showcased their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Arbor Park—we are proud of our kids and grateful for this community.



## Deerfield Elementary

February was a month full of excitement and achievement at Deerfield Elementary! We reached a massive milestone as a school community, with our students earning 20,000 tickets for consistently demonstrating Respect, Responsibility, and Kindness. To celebrate, Deerfield was transformed into the "Deerfield Cinema" for an afternoon movie day—an incentive specifically chosen by the students to reward their positive behavior. We also marked a major calendar milestone by celebrating the 100th Day of School, reflecting on all the growth and learning our students have accomplished since the fall.

Beyond the big screen, our community spirit and academic competitive edge were on full display. Our recent Book Fair was a resounding success, and it was wonderful to see so many families supporting our young readers. We also have a major victory to celebrate: the Deerfield A Team took home the Quiz Bowl Championship! In the classroom, our 5th-grade students had a truly unforgettable experience when a bald eagle visited the building, allowing them to learn about this majestic animal up close and personal.

# HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS



## South Early Childhood Center

It has been a heartwarming month at South Early Childhood Center as we focused on spreading kindness and care. Students celebrated with classroom Friendship Parties, exchanging valentines and filling our halls with smiles. Teachers also connected with families through home visits, reinforcing our shared commitment to supporting each child both at school and at home. These strong partnerships truly make a difference in helping our students thrive.

Our Full-Day Programs wrapped up an engaging study on buildings, highlighted by students creating models of recognizable Blair landmarks and participating in hands-on activities like school map exploration and marshmallow-and-toothpick engineering challenges. Meanwhile, our Half-Day Programs dove into a fascinating study on lights, exploring shadows, experimenting at the light table, and enjoying cozy flashlight reading time. Up next, we're excited to celebrate Read Across America Week with spirited dress-up days and themed activities inspired by Dr. Seuss—including the much-anticipated green eggs and ham taste test as we continue fostering a love of reading!

## Tattoo a Teacher : Prom Fundraiser

The "Tattoo a Teacher" fundraiser at Blair High School turned out to be a massive success, bringing a burst of laughter and school spirit to the commons. Organized by the junior class officers to support the BHS Prom, the event featured 15 brave volunteer teachers who agreed to be "tatted" for a good cause. For an entire week during lunch, students eagerly purchased temporary tattoos ranging from \$2 to \$6, gaining the hilarious opportunity to choose the design and its placement on their favorite staff members. This creative initiative ultimately raised approximately \$300, providing a significant boost to the prom fund while transforming faculty members into walking art galleries. A huge thank you goes out to the participating teachers for being such good sports and to everyone who donated to make this such a fun and memorable event!





## Activities & Athletics

It has been a historic February for the Blair High School Bears, as the winter season reaches a fever pitch and the halls buzz with the momentum of multiple podium finishes and postseason runs.

The wrestling mats saw some of the most intense action of the year. The Boys Wrestling team powered their way to an 8th-place state finish, headlined by an incredible performance from Blaise Baughman, who stood atop the podium as a State Champion. Forrest Uhing added to the medal count with a gritty 4th-place finish. On the girls' side, the team secured 22nd place in the state, led by Katie Wheeler, who capped off a stellar season by placing 5th.

The energy shifted to the court this week as the basketball postseason ignited. The Boys Basketball team kept their season alive with a victory over Lexington on February 23rd. They then turned their focus to a high-stakes showdown against Scottsbluff on the 26th. Meanwhile, the Girls Basketball team get ready to compete to make it to state. Boasting an impressive 16-6 record, the girls are locked in for the district tournament during this final week of February, looking to punch their ticket to the big dance.





The success isn't limited to the court and mat. The Blair Swim team sent five qualifiers to the State Championships on February 27th, while the spirit squads have reached new heights. The Dance team made history by placing 5th in Class B Hip Hop—the program's best result since 2012. Cheer also made their mark, taking 4th place in Non-Tumbling/Non-Building and 6th in Gameday.

In the performing arts, Show Choir recently took their talents to Wahoo, where they took 2nd place overall. The group swept the "captain awards," including Most Entertaining Show. Individual honors went to Jonathon Foged for Best Male Soloist and Cassandra Mata as Outstanding Performer. The Speech team also showed their depth earlier this month, finishing 7th overall at the Logan View meet with six students placing in their respective categories.

As February closes with championships and trophies, the Bears have little time to rest. With the winter seasons concluding, Spring sports are officially set to begin on March 2nd. It is a Great Day to be a Bear!

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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