



Board of Education Updates

The Blair Board of Education met on Monday, April 13, to address several district improvements and financial matters. The session opened with the grateful acceptance of two generous donations: \$5,000 from the Washington County Cattlemen's Association to support the Blair FFA Chapter's state convention trip, and \$2,000 from senior cheerleaders and the DECA program at Millard West High School to purchase new mats for the cheer squad.

In policy and infrastructure news, the board approved the first reading of a new facilities use policy, which will return to committee for further refinement before a final vote in May. The Buildings and Grounds committee also received approval for two key upgrades: a new heated pressure washer system for the bus barn to prevent fleet corrosion and a new intercom system for the South Early Childhood Center to replace a non-functional unit.

Transportation and technology also saw significant investments. The board approved the purchase of a 71-passenger bus featuring an integrated camera system, saving the district the cost of a separate installation. Additionally, the Finance Committee moved forward with a lease for new Apple Neo laptops to replace aging staff computers. The implementation of the state-mandated DIBELS reading screener, which includes funding for teacher training, was also approved.

The board confirmed several personnel changes for the 26-27 school year, officially welcoming ten new staff members across various departments and grade levels.

As the school year enters its final weeks, the board shared their appreciation for the continued hard work and dedication of all district employees during this busy season. The community is encouraged to stay engaged as the district prepares for its next scheduled meeting on May 11.

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



Dear Blair Community,

Spring is an invigorating time in the life of a school district. As the weather warms and the landscape turns green, there is a renewed sense of energy, optimism, and momentum across our community. I continue to be impressed by the pride and commitment that define our district. Our students are performing at a high level, and the positive spirit shared by our Board, staff, and students is both evident and inspiring. Like last month, I have greatly enjoyed attending events and watching our students compete and pursue excellence.

One of the highlights of the past month was the Hall of Fame ceremony. This special event recognized some of our brightest and most accomplished students and celebrated their achievements throughout their high school careers. Honorees represented excellence in academics as well as a wide range of extracurricular activities, including drama, music, athletics, and more. I was deeply impressed by their dedication and hard work, as well as by the thoughtful words shared by coaches, counselors, and sponsors during each introduction. Events like this are a powerful reminder that such success is made possible through the collective efforts of our Board of Education, administration, teachers, and staff. Thank you to everyone who contributes to making these achievements possible.

This past month also marked the launch of my “Salad and Sweets with the Superintendent” initiative. These informal gatherings provide an opportunity for staff to share their perspectives, ideas, and feedback during their lunch break. I value these conversations and the insight they provide as we continue working to strengthen and support Blair Community Schools. In addition, our district has begun the process of conducting a comprehensive Communication Audit. This effort will include surveys of students, staff, parents, and community members, along with focus groups, to help us develop a more effective and transparent communication plan. I look forward to sharing more about this work in the coming months.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board of Education for their thoughtful engagement in community development matters. Their recent involvement in discussions surrounding a proposed TIF-funded apartment project reflects a strong commitment to ensuring that growth aligns with the long-term interests of our school district. While we welcome development, it is essential that it supports both sustainable student growth and the financial health of our schools. I appreciate the Board’s dedication to making informed decisions that benefit Blair Community Schools and the community as a whole.

With appreciation,

Dr. J.



5th Grade Musical - Finding Nemo

The 5th grade musical, Finding Nemo, was a fantastic success this spring, showcasing months of hard work, creativity, and collaboration between Deerfield and Arbor Park students.

Rehearsals began back in October, with students dedicating countless hours to learning their lines, songs, and choreography. Their efforts paid off with wonderful performances this month, including special matinee shows for fellow students from Deerfield and Arbor Park elementary schools.

The cast also took the stage for the community on April 24, delivering outstanding performances that were met with enthusiasm and support. It was clear that students not only worked incredibly hard, but also had a great time bringing the story to life.

This production is a great example of how Deerfield and Arbor Park come together to create meaningful opportunities for students. A special thank you goes out to the staff members who volunteered countless extra hours to make this experience possible. Their dedication helped create lasting memories for our students and a truly special event for our school community.



Artistic Excellence: Students Shine at EMC Competition

On April 23, the local art scene was buzzing as a talented group of students arrived at the EMC art show. The competition was fiercer than ever this year, with over 100 entries crowding the gallery walls, but our students truly rose to the occasion. Madeline Chikos captured the judges' eyes with a stunning charcoal drawing that earned her a well-deserved honorable mention. Though she has since moved away, Dani Garcia's talent was also recognized with an honorable mention, leaving a lasting mark on the show before her departure.

The highlight of the afternoon came when Declan McCabe was announced as the winner of the prestigious Best in Show award. In a field of more than a hundred pieces, taking home the top honor is a massive achievement and a testament to his incredible skill. It was a proud day for everyone involved, seeing such hard work and creativity pay off in a big way.



April Signing Day

Signing day at Blair High School celebrated three remarkable seniors as they officially traded their Bears jerseys for collegiate colors. Victor Hernandez and Aaliya Bilyk both committed to Midland University, with Victor set to take the soccer pitch and Aaliya joining the elite dance team. The duo shared a proud moment of hometown spirit, knowing they'll head to Fremont together this fall.

Meanwhile, Jacob Hanson signed with Nebraska Wesleyan University to continue his swimming career in Lincoln. Surrounded by family and coaches, the three athletes marked the end of their decorated high school chapters and the beginning of their journeys as Prairie Wolves and Warriors.



Otte Honor Roll

Otte Blair Middle School is buzzing with pride as we officially announce the 3rd Quarter Honor Roll. This prestigious distinction celebrates students who have demonstrated exceptional dedication by maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher in their core subject areas.

We are incredibly proud of the hard work and academic discipline these young scholars have shown throughout the term. Congratulations to all of our Honor Roll students for reaching this impressive milestone—their commitment to excellence truly shines!



Multi-Activity Student Award



This month we celebrate a remarkable group of Bears. These students have officially been honored with the Nebraska State Colleges' Multi-Activity Student Award, a distinction reserved for those who tackle three or more NSAA-sanctioned activities in a single year. From the intensity of the Friday night lights and the focus of the wrestling mat to the precision of a choir performance or the quick wit of a speech meet, these students have proven they can do it all without missing a beat.

This award is about much more than just staying busy; it is a testament to the grit and determination it takes to balance a demanding schedule while giving 100% to every team and club. By stepping into so many different roles, these individuals have shown exactly what it means to be a leader

in our community. Their ability to switch gears between sports and fine arts shows a level of versatility and teamwork that makes Blair High School a truly great place to learn and grow.

To our multi-activity award winners: your hard work hasn't gone unnoticed. Earning this certificate from the NSAA and Nebraska State Colleges is a huge milestone that highlights your dedication to your school and your future. We are incredibly proud of your drive to excel in every arena you enter. Congratulations on this well-deserved honor—Go Bears!

Second Annual 3rd - 5th Grade Track Meet



The second annual 3rd-5th Grade Track Meet was a great success on April 29th at the Blair High School track. With beautiful weather and a strong turnout of families and staff, the event created a fun and energetic atmosphere for all involved.

Students from both schools demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship throughout the day, cheering each other on and celebrating one another's efforts. Participants had the opportunity to choose two field events, softball throw or long jump, and two running events, ranging from the 50-yard dash to the 400-meter run. The excitement on the track was matched by the energy in the stands, where a supportive crowd helped make the day even more special.



Blair high school track team members volunteered their time to assist with events and support elementary students, making it a true cross-town experience and a great example of older students giving back.

The PTO hosted the concession stand, helping round out the experience for students and families. Most importantly, the event continues to grow as a meaningful tradition that brings schools together for a day of fun, fitness, and community pride.

BHS Senior Signs with Lozier Scholarship Program

Blair High School senior Bella Borges is taking an exciting step toward her future after signing with Lozier as part of their Scholarship Program. This opportunity will allow Bella to gain valuable hands-on experience while continuing her education and preparing for a career in the skilled trades.

The signing took place at a special event sponsored by Metropolitan Community College (MCC), which recognized students pursuing career pathways in the trades. Bella's accomplishment drew additional attention, as she was interviewed by Channel 7 during the event, highlighting both her hard work and the growing importance of trade careers.

Supporting Bella at the signing were Blair High School Career and Technical Education teachers Mr. Chris Schuler and Mr. Ed Mills, who have played an important role in guiding students toward career-ready opportunities. Bella's achievement reflects the strong partnerships between Blair High School, MCC, and local industry leaders like Lozier—creating meaningful pathways for students to succeed beyond graduation.



A Lasting Impact: Thank You, Officer Bob Leehy

After years of dedicated service as School Resource Officer at Blair High School, Officer Bob Leehy will be transitioning back to patrol duty with the Blair Police Department. A new SRO will be assigned to BHS next year, but Bob's impact on the school and community will not be forgotten.

A lifelong Blair resident, Bob graduated from Blair High School in 1977 and later joined the Blair Police Department after beginning his career with the City of Blair in 1995. Throughout his time in law enforcement, he has served in multiple roles, including firearms instructor, field training officer, and SRO. He has also supported numerous community initiatives, including Shop with a Cop, Post Prom, and National Night Out.

As SRO, Bob has been a trusted presence and mentor to students and staff. BHS Principal Mr. Mark Gutschow shared, "Bob and I have been friends since we were five years old—we even graduated together. He's one of the most effective SROs I've worked with. Our students and staff respect him, and our families know their kids are safer because of him."

Officer Leehy will be greatly missed at BHS, and we thank him for his years of service and dedication to the Blair community.



Happening In Our Schools



Blair High School

April was a banner month at Blair High School, kicking off with a successful production of the spring play, *Geezers*. Student success was on full display through athletic achievements, including the Girls Soccer team's first EMC Championship since 2001 and a Local Signing Day for three standout athletes.

Fine arts also took center stage, with Declan McCabe winning Best in Show at the EMC Art Show, high ratings for band and choir at the District Music Contest, and a heartwarming Unified Play performance of *Finding Nemo*. The month concluded by honoring student excellence at the Hall of Fame ceremony and the Local Community Scholarship Presentation, where donors awarded over \$117,000 to deserving seniors.



Otte Blair Middle School

Otte Blair Middle School has had an exciting and successful stretch as we head into the final month of the school year. Students recently wrapped up state testing, and we are proud of the focus, effort, and positive attitude they showed throughout the process. Our track season is off to a great start, with strong participation and early success that reflects the hard work of our student-athletes and coaches. We also enjoyed some memorable spring events, including the 6th and 7th grade dance and the 8th grade formal, which were great opportunities for students to celebrate and connect outside of the classroom.

Learning has extended beyond our walls as well, with our Teammates and mentors as well as ACP class taking part in engaging field trips to the zoo. These experiences provided meaningful opportunities for connection and real-world learning. As we move into May, we are looking forward to final concerts, performances, and end-of-year celebrations that will showcase our students' talents and accomplishments. It's a busy and exciting time at Otte Blair Middle School, and we are proud of all our students and staff have achieved this year.

Happening In Our Schools



Arbor Park Elementary School

It's been a really fun and busy month at Arbor Park, with lots of great moments for our students. The 3rd–5th Grade Track Meet was definitely a highlight—what a great day! The weather couldn't have been better, and it was awesome to see so many families there cheering kids on. Thank you for coming out and supporting our students—it made the day even more special. We were also blown away by the generosity during our Milk Drive for the Washington County Food Pantry. Because of your support, we raised enough money to provide milk for an entire year, which is just incredible.

Our 5th graders have been busy showing off their talents, too. The band concert was a great chance to see how much our young musicians have grown this year, and they sounded fantastic. They also put on a wonderful performance of *Finding Nemo* for the whole school. It was so fun to watch, and the kids did an amazing job bringing it all together. It's been one of those months that really reminds you how much there is to celebrate in our schools.



Deerfield Elementary School

April was a busy and exciting month at Deerfield Elementary, filled with learning, celebration, and community. Students showed great sportsmanship at the 3rd–5th Grade Track Meet at the Blair High School track, with support from families and even high school track athletes who volunteered to help run events. It was a true cross-town experience.

Our students also gave back through the annual food pantry drive, collecting 312 boxes of cereal. We celebrated with a fun domino drop in the hallways. In addition, our 5th graders impressed audiences with their musical, *Finding Nemo*, after months of hard work and preparation.\

We also completed state testing this month, and we are proud of our students' effort and focus. Several classes celebrated, including the always-popular 4th grade Glow Day. April was a great reflection of our Deerfield community—hardworking, supportive, and full of school pride.

Happening In Our Schools



South Early Childhood Center

April was full of excitement at South Preschool as students celebrated the Week of the Young Child. The fun began with a visit from Dr. Oxygen, where students explored science through hands-on activities with air, water, and bubbles.

Throughout the week, students enjoyed themed dress-up days and special activities, including creating a Kindness Rock Garden to spread positivity in the community. The celebration wrapped up with a Spring Family Engagement Night featuring a musical instrument "petting zoo" with the high school marching band, a snack station, the ribbon-cutting for the Little Lending Library, and family games.

In the classroom, full-day students explored a Tree Study, while half-day students learned about insects through hands-on discovery. Families are invited to join South Preschool on May 14th for Family Fun Day to celebrate a great year.

A Standing Ovation for "Geezers" at Blair High School

On April 10th and 11th, the Blair High School stage came alive with a moving production of *Geezers* by Tommy Lee Johnston. The story followed Jack, a young man searching for his place in the world after a life-altering event. His journey led him to a job at the Maple Leaf Retirement Community, where the wisdom, humor, and hidden stories of the residents helped him navigate his own grief and eventually find his purpose.

The students poured incredible heart and hard work into the performance, masterfully balancing the show's emotional depth with its witty, human moments. From the lead actors capturing Jack's vulnerability to the dedicated crew working behind the scenes, every detail reflected months of preparation. The result was an amazing experience that resonated deeply with everyone in attendance.



A huge thank you goes out to the community for supporting the arts and to the entire cast and crew for their stellar performances. Your dedication made this production of *Geezers* a truly unforgettable success. Congratulations to everyone involved on a job well done!

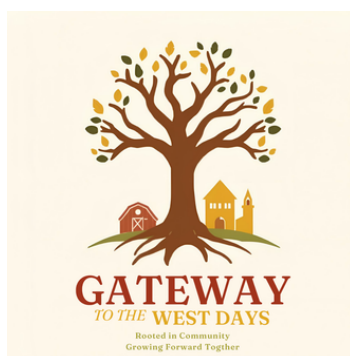
Blair FBLA Shines

FBLA is celebrating much success after the State Leadership Conference April 16-18 in Kearney. Seventeen members attended the conference and 11 of those members qualified for Nationals this summer in San Antonio. We have three state champions in the following areas: Customer Service: Madeline Chikos, Personal Finance: Jacob Hanson and Website Design: Jonathan Foged and Mia Kern. We received several honors as a chapter as well including the Gold Seal of Merit Award which is awarded to a chapter with a strong and rigorous program of work. Jonathan Foged was also named State Parliamentarian and will represent FBLA on the state level. This is the first time BHS has had a state officer since the 1997-98 school year. These students exemplify hard work and determination.



Gateway to the West Logo Winner

Blair High School is beaming with pride as one of our own, Lily Warren, has left a permanent mark on the local community. Lily's original artwork was recently selected by the Chamber of Commerce as the official logo for this June's "Gateway to West Days" festival. Amidst several competitive submissions, Lily's design stood out for its creativity and ability to capture the spirit of our town, earning her the top honor and the chance to see her vision displayed throughout Blair during the celebration.



This impressive achievement began in Mrs. Thomas's art class, where Lily poured her hard work and innovative ideas into the project. Her success is a wonderful reflection of the talent fostered within our halls and the dedication our students have for their craft. We are incredibly proud of Lily's creative mind and her commitment to excellence; please join us in congratulating her on this fantastic accomplishment and look for her winning design this summer!

Unified Music Performance Showcases Talent and Inclusion



The Unified Fine Arts Music Performance on April 17th was a joyful celebration of talent, inclusion, and collaboration at Blair High School. Held in the high school band room, the event brought together students, staff, and families to highlight the success of the Unified Music program.

Under the direction of Mr. Hays, Mr. Fonda, and Mrs. Maly, the performance showcased the hard work and growth of students in the Unified Music class. Attendees enjoyed a variety of musical performances that highlighted both students' talents, and the strong sense of community and belonging fostered within the program.



One of the highlights of the event was the involvement of families, as parents joined in alongside students, creating a memorable and engaging experience for everyone in attendance. The room was filled with energy, pride, and support as students took the stage.

The Unified Fine Arts Music Performance was a powerful reminder of the impact of inclusive opportunities in our schools—bringing people together, celebrating strengths, and creating meaningful experiences for all.

Deerfield and Arbor Park Students Support Local Food Pantry in Big Way

Students at Deerfield and Arbor Park Elementary once again demonstrated the power of community service through their annual food pantry drive. Each year, the two schools rotate donations, with one collecting cereal and the other collecting coins to support the local food pantry.

This year, Deerfield students collected an incredible 312 boxes of cereal. To celebrate their efforts, students enjoyed a fun domino drop event in the hallways, turning their donation drive into a school-wide celebration.

Arbor Park students raised an outstanding \$2,058.46 in coins. This amount provides what staff affectionately call “milk money” for the pantry for an entire year. The local pantry is one of the few in the state that is able to offer milk to families in need, made possible entirely through the generosity of the community.

Together, Deerfield and Arbor Park continue to show what is possible when schools come together in service to others. Their efforts make a meaningful impact on local families and reflect the strong spirit of giving across our district.





Activities & Athletics

April has been a very exciting month for the athletes and performers of Blair Community Schools. The atmosphere at Blair High School is electric as spring sports charge ahead. The girls soccer team is the talk of the town with a flawless, undefeated record, and they won their first EMC Championship since 2001. The boys soccer team is showing incredible grit and skill in their own fantastic season.

On the diamond, the baseball team is swinging hot bats and maintaining a winning record. Meanwhile, track and field athletes are hitting their stride, and both girls tennis and boys golf are finding great success and having a blast on the courts and greens.

The intensity rises as May approaches, bringing the high-stakes thrills of Districts and State. This is the time when months of hard work culminate in championship moments. The community is encouraged to pack the stands and support your Blair Bears on the big stage.

Beyond the fields, FBLA students excelled at State, and students also completed in DMC with Concert Choir, A Cappella Choir, Bass Choir, and Treble Choir all receiving 1s. There were also 5 soloists with a 1, and 7 with a 2! Seventeen students competed at the Nebraska State FFA Convention, led by the Food Science team's fourth-place finish, Bria Lantry's second Veterinary Science win, and two State FFA Degree recipients. Lastly Blair had 9 students make it to State Journalism, and they did great! These students are proving that Blair's talent extends far beyond the scoreboard.

Inclusion remains a cornerstone through our Unified programs. Unified track is in full swing, and the Finding Nemo Unified play was an excellent celebration of talent. These students are doing amazing work and representing the heart of our school.

Finally, Blair Middle School track is off to a great start with high energy. It is truly a phenomenal season to be a Bear!





Registration is open for various Blair Bears youth summer athletic camps on the Bound platform, offering specialized training in various sports. These programs allow local youth to train with high school coaches and athletes to develop skills.

[Click here to register for summer camps](#)

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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