

A photograph of a student applying face paint to another student's face. The student applying the paint is wearing a white tank top and has her hair tied back. The student being painted is wearing a grey t-shirt and has her hair down. The background is a blurred green field.

AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER

BLAIR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

WHERE ALL STUDENTS LEARN

Board of Education News

The Blair Board of Education kicked off the 2026–2027 school year on August 8 by accepting two generous athletic donations. The Blair Gridiron Club donated \$7,000 for new play clocks at Krantz Field, which will become operational early this season. Additionally, the Blair Bear Backers funded a \$41,640 stadium speaker system. This upgrade expands sound coverage to the south field events for track meets and adds a new subwoofer to support cheer and dance team performances.

In business actions, the board approved final readings for new KSB Law policies, officially replacing all legacy district policies. Members also approved the annual August transfer of \$60,000 from the General Fund to the Activities Fund to offset structural deficits. Looking ahead, the board formalized its three primary goals for the upcoming year: re-establishing a district-wide curriculum review cycle, implementing a comprehensive community communication plan, and reconvening the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee for long-term capital improvement planning. Student travel was also greenlit for the FBLA Fall Leadership Conference this November.

Board members thoroughly enjoyed connecting with everyone during the all-staff meeting and the welcome cook-out, extending a special thank you to Washington County Bank for donating the food and time. It has been a pleasure greeting families with cookies at recent open houses, and the board looks forward to seeing more friendly faces as these events conclude next week.

Finally, the board expresses its deepest condolences to Mr. Gutschow on the passing of his wife, Bonnie. As a long-time fixture in our district, her presence will be deeply missed. The board welcomes all students, staff, and families back to campus and wishes everyone an exciting and successful school year ahead.

Message from Blair Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. Don Johnson



Off to a Great Start!

The start of a new school year is always an exciting time—but it can also be a wonderfully busy and sometimes crazy one! It has been a few years since I have experienced a first day of school, and I am truly excited to see what this school year holds for the staff and students of Blair Community Schools.

Our first meeting with staff was incredibly energizing. We have an outstanding group of people, and the enthusiasm and commitment were evident from the very beginning. I encourage our entire community to get involved and support our schools. Come see our students shine as they participate in the many activities, events, performances, and competitions throughout the year. There is so much to be proud of in Blair Community Schools!

Family Fun Night

Family Fun Night was such a wonderful event! A big thank-you to the Blair Community School Foundation for hosting the evening and to all of the local businesses who sponsored and supported the event.

I loved seeing families come together to enjoy the activities, connect with one another, and celebrate our students. It was especially exciting to watch our student-athletes, choir, and band perform. I was incredibly proud of our students and enjoyed being part of the evening and taking in all the fun.

And, I have to admit—the funnel cake was pretty darn good, too!

Looking Ahead: Our Board Goals

I am also excited about the goals our Board of Education has selected for the upcoming school year. These goals provide an important roadmap for our district, and I welcome the opportunity and challenge of working with our staff, students, families, and community to make meaningful progress in each of these areas.

1. Strengthen Curriculum and Instruction

Re-establish and sustain a district-wide curriculum review cycle by adopting a multi-year review plan and increasing annual funding to support curriculum development, instructional materials, and professional learning.

2. Strengthen District Communication

Develop, adopt, and fully implement a comprehensive district-wide communication plan that strengthens transparency, promotes consistent messaging, and enhances engagement with students, families, staff, and the community by the end of the fiscal year.

3. Plan for Our Facilities and Future Growth

Reconvene the Board Ad Hoc Facilities Committee to evaluate current and future district facility needs and develop a comprehensive, long-term building and capital improvement plan that supports student growth, educational priorities, and fiscal responsibility.

These are ambitious goals, but I believe they are achievable when we work together. I look forward to listening, learning, and collaborating with our staff, Board, families, and community as we move Blair Community Schools forward.

Looking Forward

In closing, I am so grateful and excited to be a part of Blair Community Schools. The energy I have seen already has me very optimistic about the possibilities that lie ahead. We have talented staff, amazing students, supportive families, and a community that cares deeply about our schools.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve Blair Community Schools. I am honored to be here and look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the years ahead.

Good luck, and God bless!

Dr. J.

Blair Softball Takes First in the 2026 Bellevue East Invitational (Chieftain Invite)

The Blair Bears high school softball team dominated the diamonds at the Bellevue East Invitational, charging through a gauntlet of tough competition to capture the championship title. Under the guidance of head coach Jennifer Fangmeier, the Class B No. 6-ranked Bears displayed an unstoppable mix of grit and skill all weekend. They battled past powerhouse programs like Millard West, Kearney, and Papillion-LaVista, proving with every pitch and swing that they were a force to be reckoned with.



The tournament culminated in a spectacular offensive explosion during the final round, where Blair dominated Hastings in a resounding 17-3 victory. The Bears' bats were on fire, anchored by standout performances that will be talked about for the rest of the season. Laynie Brown put on a masterclass at the plate by going a perfect 5-for-5, while Jennessy Knapp powered the offense with two spectacular home runs and four RBIs to secure the gold bracket trophy.

This undefeated weekend serves as a major milestone for the team as they look ahead to the rest of the season. The dominant tournament run showcases their depth and readiness to compete at the highest level in Class B. With their bats clicking and defense holding strong, the Bears have set a high bar for the matchups waiting for them down the road.

Friday Morning Football High Fives



Every Friday morning during the fall season, Head Coach Will Lansman and his varsity football players bring high-energy excitement to Deerfield and Arbor Park elementary schools. Dressed in their Friday game jerseys, the players line the school walkways to greet arriving children with music, chants, and enthusiastic high fives. This energetic morning tunnel pumps up the high schoolers for their big game under the lights that night while instantly erasing any early-morning grogginess for the young students.



For the elementary kids, walking past their hometown sports heroes feels like stepping onto a professional playing field. Eyes widen and bright smiles flash as tiny hands reach up to connect with the towering athletes, creating an inspiring bond across the district.

This cherished weekly tradition builds a vibrant school community, leaving the children inspired for class and reminding the varsity players of the loyal fans standing firmly behind them. The football team has their first home game on Friday, September 04, 2026!

Blair Schools Foundation's Annual Family Fun Night

The Blair Community Schools Foundation hosted its annual Family Fun Night last Friday, August 21, 2026, bringing a near-capacity crowd of students, families, and neighbors to the Blair High School parking lot and Krantz Field. The community gathered in high spirits to celebrate local students and kick off the fall season. From free hot dog meals provided by WCB to local food trucks serving treats, there was plenty to keep everyone energized during the warm evening. Children swarmed the bounce houses, face painting stations, and explored the emergency vehicles, setting a vibrant, festive tone for the night.

The athletic and musical showcases kicked off in the main gym, where the Blair High School Choir set a powerful tone with an amazing performance of the national anthem. Directly following the anthem, the volleyball team took the court for an outstanding scrimmage. The highly competitive match kept fans on the edge of their seats, ultimately concluding with a close, hard-fought victory for the white jerseys.

The excitement then transitioned outdoors to Krantz Field as twilight approached. The Blair Marching Band's performance filled the stadium, playing a beautiful national anthem to usher in the football scrimmage. As the football team traded plays on the football field, the energy stayed electric into halftime, when the Blair Sparx dance team took center stage. Their sharp choreography and high-energy routine drew massive applause from the stands, highlighting the incredible variety of student talent in Blair.

As night fell, the cross country team took to the track to wrap up the evening's athletic events with their "Under the Lights" all-out mile. Pushing through the humid night air, the runners showed off immense grit and determination as the crowd cheered them on down the final stretch. It was an unforgettable night that perfectly showcased the dedication of Blair's students and left the entire community with a deep sense of pride.



Happening In Our Schools



Blair High School

August has brought incredible energy to Blair High School, with athletics and organizations off to a fast start. Over 200 student-athletes prepared this summer through the conditioning program sponsored by the Blair Bear Backers and Larsen Athletic Academy. That dedication paid off immediately as the softball team won the Chieftain Invitational, while a successful Family Fun Night showcased our volleyball, football, cross country, cheer, dance, choir, and band programs.

The excitement continues with show choir completing three intensive summer camps and expanding to include a new JV show this year. Auditions are also officially underway for the fall musical, *Something Rotten*. Rounding out a busy month, the FFA and FBLA hosted their annual kickoff barbecue and picnic last night, August 25, setting a fantastic tone for the school year ahead.



Otte Blair Middle School

Otte Blair Middle School is off to a fantastic start as we welcomed 478 students back into the building for the new school year! Before the doors officially opened, our staff spent valuable preservice days completing Well Managed Schools training to ensure a supportive and structured environment for everyone. Throughout these first few weeks, our focus remains on teaching clear expectations and daily procedures so every student is set up for a successful year ahead.

Extracurricular excitement is already in full swing with our fall activities officially underway! Participation is soaring across the board: football has drawn 23 seventh graders and 28 eighth graders, volleyball hit the court with 41 seventh graders and 21 eighth graders, and cross country is running strong with 5 boys and 19 girls. It's been an incredible August, and we are excited to see our students grow both in the classroom and on the field!

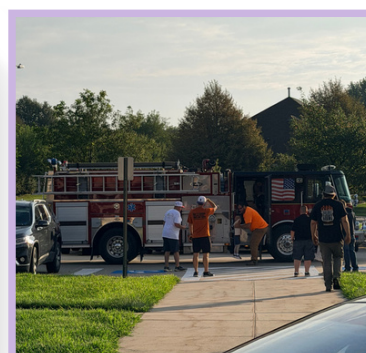
Happening In Our Schools



Arbor Park Elementary School

We've had a great start at Arbor Park, and it has been wonderful to see students settling into routines, reconnecting with friends, and getting comfortable in their classrooms. The beginning of a school year is always a time of learning—not just academics, but also learning how we want to treat one another and what it means to be part of our school community.

This year, we're spending intentional time helping students build the skills that make our school a welcoming and safe place for everyone. We're talking about how we can help others feel welcome, how to greet someone and make them feel noticed, and how to use safe actions and words—even when we're frustrated or having a difficult day. These may seem like simple things, but they are important skills that help create the kind of school community we want for all of our students. We're off to a great start, and we're excited for all that this year will bring!



Deerfield Elementary School

The first weeks at Deerfield Elementary have been nothing short of amazing. Our students have returned with excitement, positive energy, and a readiness to learn that can be felt throughout the building. Classrooms are already filled with meaningful conversations, engaging activities, and opportunities for students to collaborate and grow. Our staff has done an incredible job creating welcoming environments where students feel safe, supported, and eager to be part of our school community.

We even kicked off the year with a memorable moment as one of our students made a special first-day arrival by fire truck, bringing smiles and excitement to everyone who witnessed it. Moments like these, combined with strong daily routines and a focus on positive behavior, have helped us start the year on a high note. We are so grateful for the continued support of our families and community as we work together to make Deerfield a place where every student thrives. We are looking forward to all that this school year has in store.

Happening In Our Schools



South Early Childhood Center

Welcome to a brand-new school year! We have had an incredible first few days together as our students jump right into acclimating to their new classroom, getting to know their teachers, and finding their way around the building. Much of our initial time is dedicated to learning our daily routines and procedures, which helps everyone feel safe, confident, and ready to learn.

Beyond the classroom, our days are filled with great opportunities to practice important independence skills. Students are doing a fantastic job practicing how to manage their snack and lunch routines and we encourage this practice to continue at home! We are also making the most of the sunny weather by enjoying plenty of outside time.

Our rockstar staff are pouring their hearts into keeping the students safe, happy and excited to learn! We are incredibly lucky to have this staff support all learners at the Early Childhood Learning Center! We look forward to a great year ahead!

Officer Leehy Recognized with the Foundation Golden Bear Paw Award



Officer Robert "Bob" Leehy was honored with the Golden Bear Blair Paw Award at Kranz Field during Family Fun Night, celebrating his eight years as a School Resource Officer. The Blair High alumnus earned immense respect from students, families, and staff by serving as a dedicated protector, mentor, and trusted ally. The roaring applause from the stadium bleachers mirrored the deep gratitude of the entire hometown community.

This prestigious award symbolized the enduring, positive impact Officer Bob made by balancing school security with genuine empathy. He looked past basic law enforcement to build deep personal connections, learn students' names, and foster a lasting culture of trust. Holding the trophy high, his legacy was solidified as a leader who brought safety, warmth, and inspiration to Blair's youth.



Activities & Events

Blair High School has kicked off an action-packed August as the fall sports and activities seasons are officially underway. Students, coaches, and fans have brought high energy back to the school, setting an exciting tone for the rest of the school year.

The athletic program is already celebrating early victories, led by a dominant performance from the girls softball team. They opened their fall season with a stellar run, winning the championship title in their very first tournament of the season. Building on that momentum, the girls volleyball team also started strong, securing an exciting opening victory against Bellevue East High School.

The football team started their season by playing Gross Catholic at Bryan High School. Meanwhile, the cross country and girls golf teams have completed their preseason preparations and are locked in and ready to compete in their upcoming matches and meets.

Beyond the sports fields, the Blair theatre department officially launched its year by holding auditions for its upcoming production of *Something Rotten!* The cast and crew are already deep in rehearsals and highly motivated to bring this hilarious musical comedy to the stage this October.

School spirit reached a high point during the annual Family Fun Night, which turned out to be a massive hit for the local community. The successful event featured a wide variety of activities, bringing students, families, and staff together to celebrate the official start of the school year.

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

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