

# Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

## 2022-2023 Spring District Newsletter

### ~Superintendent News~

The school year is quickly coming to a close with the last day on Friday, May 26. We hope all of our students had a positive experience this year. We congratulate the Class of 2023 and wish them the very best as they leave our high school for the last time as students of BHS. Commencement ceremonies will take place on Saturday, May 27, 2023, at the Bluffton High School gymnasium starting at 7 P.M. We believe we have prepared our graduates well to be successful in whatever career path they choose. Congratulations to our graduates!

In addition, we wish the best to several employees who will be retiring from Bluffton Schools at the conclusion of this school year. Karen Falk has taught Family Consumer Science classes, formerly known as Home Economics, for the past 25 years in Bluffton; Jodi Braun has worked as a cook in our cafeteria for 32 years; and Mardy Herr has been in our district as a teacher and then our technology coordinator for the past 23 years. We thank Karen, Jodi, and Mardy for their long-term dedication to our school district and the students they served on a daily basis. We wish them the very best in retirement.

As you may already know, our students perform extremely well on state assessments and consistently score near the top in the state in the performance index. However, beyond test scores it is the experiences and relationships that we build with our students, parents, and community that really make a huge impact on the education of our students. In addition, it is great to see our students excel in so many different extracurricular activities; these include but are not limited to cross-country, golf, football, soccer, cheerleading, volleyball, tennis, wrestling, basketball, swim, track, baseball, softball, quiz bowl, academic team, math team, and E-sports. In addition, our students are involved in musicals, dramas, honor society, student senate, show choir, jazz band, choir, marching band, concert band, strings, orchestra, Renaissance, flags, Art Club, Latin Club, Foreign Language Club, SADD, Buccaneer, and Ocean Focus. It is great to see students find their passion. One example of this is our musical and drama performances. The students who participate demonstrate such happiness and confidence in their performances. The same is true of our athletes and academic teams: it's a joy to see them make a big play or meet a desired goal in something they have worked so hard to achieve. Likewise, those moments of pride when band, choir, or orchestra members receive a high rating in competition are beyond measure. We thank our students for their involvement in so many different activities, and we encourage our students to be involved in as much as possible.

I wanted to share a phone call that we received from a random customer at a Chick-fil-A in Toledo. This spring, our Art and Latin Clubs at the high school, led by Mrs. Garmon and Mrs. Hoff, took a field trip to the Toledo Art Museum, and they stopped for lunch at Chick-fil-A. A customer was in the restaurant at the

same time, and she was so impressed by our students that she took the time to call the office and let us know what a nice bunch of students we have. She stated that we should be so very proud of them. We certainly are. It was great to receive this positive feedback.

Please call or stop in if you have any questions regarding the information in this letter or anything else about our district. As I have stated before, we have fantastic students (like those who were in the Chick-fil-A), staff, and parents, as well as a supportive community. This combination makes for an excellent school system and community. Thank you for your support.

Greg Denecker, Superintendent



### ***Congratulations to the Class of 2023!***

**The Bluffton High School  
Commencement  
will be held on May 27, 2023, at 7:00  
P.M.**

### **2023-2024 School Calendar Bluffton Exempted Village Schools**

<b>August 22,23 &amp; 24</b>	<b>Tues/Wed/Thrus.</b>	<b>Staff Pre-Service</b>
<b>August 28</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>School Opens</b>
<b>August 28 &amp; 29</b>	<b>Mon./Tues.</b>	<b>Kindergarten Testing</b>
<b>August 30</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Day of Kindergarten</b>
<b>September 4</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>No School - Labor Day</b>
<b>November 3</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>End of 1<sup>st</sup> Grading Period</b>
<b>November 21 &amp; 22</b>	<b>Tues./Wed.</b>	<b>No School - (Elem/MS)</b>
<b>November 22</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>No School - (HS)</b>
<b>November 23 &amp; 24</b>	<b>Thurs./Fri.</b>	<b>No-School – Thanksgiving</b>
<b>December 20</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Last Day of School for 2023</b>
<b>January 2</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>School Re-opens 2024</b>
<b>January 15</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>No School - MLK Day</b>
<b>January 19</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grading Period</b>
<b>February 19</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>No School - Presidents' Day</b>
<b>March 22</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grading Period</b>
<b>March 29 &amp; April 1</b>	<b>Fri./Mon.</b>	<b>No School - Spring Break</b>
<b>May 24</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>End of 4<sup>th</sup> Grading Period</b>
<b>May 25</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Commencement</b>

**[www.blufftonschools.org](http://www.blufftonschools.org)**

## Elementary Update – Benjamin Thiel Principal

It is hard to believe another school year is nearly in the books. It's a busy time of year here at the elementary as we work to complete testing, enjoy lots of field trips, and wrap up our learning for each grade level. Our students have done such an amazing job showing growth at all levels. As you are aware, we switched to a new diagnostic platform, i-Ready, for this school year to track student progress and address specific learning needs for each student. Part of that program is a diagnostic tool that tracks student growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. When I met with representatives from i-Ready to review our mid-year data, they were amazed. They commented that they rarely, if ever, see a district with growth across grade levels in both math and reading. This is a testament to the staff, students, and parents at Bluffton and the hard work and effort displayed every day by our community. I am privileged to be a part of this school and cannot wait to see what the future holds for this district.

Our **kindergarten** students have been doing a great job all year in their work to become acclimated to school and to working hard. We are blessed to have a tremendous kindergarten teaching team who work well together to provide each of our students amazing learning opportunities throughout the day. Students have enjoyed getting to meet Bluffton's K-9 dog Kato as well as visiting Safety City. Next, our students are looking forward to visiting the zoo in May to round out the school year.

Our **first graders** have been a hard-working bunch this year. The students excelled in their work with their March Madness challenge and animal reports. Most recently, first grade was able to visit Johnny Appleseed Hermon Woodland to spend some time outdoors and enjoy nature. In May we will have a readers' theatre where special members of the community will come in to listen to students present their writings which they have worked so hard to prepare throughout the year.

The **second-grade** classes are a small but mighty group. This class is gearing up for their Iowa/CogAt testing that will take place this May. Students will be tested in all academic areas as well as some cognitive skills. This is a requirement that takes place in second and sixth grades respectively. Also coming up for the second grade is a trip to the Mazza Museum at the University of Findlay and the Edible Landfill with Mr. Scoles. Most recently, second graders wrote about what they thought Mr. Thiel does all day. It was fun to see how our students thought the principal spends the day . . . great imaginations!

**Third graders** recently enjoyed their annual trip to the Allen County Museum and a Kewpee lunch. Students learned about what life was like "back in the day" when pioneers travelled to Ohio from Pennsylvania and made a life for themselves in the Black Swamp. This was a great introduction to the *Little House on the Prairie* unit they will be enjoying soon, followed by the annual trip to Sauder Village. I'm so proud of our teachers and students in the third grade. I have seen so much growth from this group and look forward to seeing them continue that growth as they finish elementary school.

**Fourth grade** students continue to impress. I always enjoy walking through the fourth-grade hallways to see this group using

their clipboards to answer questions and work through around-the-world activities that extend into the hallways. Fourth graders have done an amazing job of working together to help each other understand new concepts and have always acted as great peer models for our kindergarten students as reading buddies. Our students have been enjoying regular presentations from SESA to learn fun and exciting science concepts from community representatives.

The **fifth-grade** class has done an amazing job this year as the leaders of our elementary school. Fifth grade always presents an exciting challenge for students to step into the role of being the example in the hallways, cafeteria, and classroom. Students have done a great job of focusing on the work at hand and getting the job done. To close out the school year, the fifth graders are anticipating a trip to On Target Outfitters for a day of outdoor activities and fun.

We are entering into a busy season at Bluffton with students wrapping up testing for the year, enjoying field trips, and ending the school year. Our annual S.M.A.R.T. Week activities are scheduled for May 15-19<sup>th</sup>, culminating with our Field Day activities on May 19<sup>th</sup>. We will have bouncy houses and games for grades K-3. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will get to enjoy their own Field Day activities the following Monday. We are excited for what the remainder of the year holds and look forward to another summer to relax and refresh before the next school year

## Middle Schools News – Joshua Kauffman, Principal

In just under a month, the 2022-2023 school year will come to a close at the middle school, and, despite mother nature's best attempt at delaying warmer weather and the always cherished summer break, spring is here, and we are in full bloom here at BMS.

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to thank the amazing 280 students, who are blossoming every day here in the middle school, for all their hard work, relentless effort, and constant dedication to their education. In a world that constantly portrays young people at this age in such a negative light, I can reassure you and can attest first-hand that each of our students is everything but what the world thinks they are, and, as parents, you should be so proud of them not only for what they do every day academically and athletically but also, and more importantly, for who they are and who they are becoming as young members of our society. They truly are amazing people who are full of life and have a bright future ahead of them; I appreciate them for motivating and inspiring me.

I would also like to thank our community at large and all our parents and guardians for the continued support of our school and our students. I've said it before and you've all heard it, but it truly does take a village to raise a child, and this village does it exceptionally well. Simply put, our school would not be what it is without the families in our community who value and emphasize morals and expect a superior quality of education for their children. Thank you for continuing to prioritize students' education and advocating for an exceptional educational experience.

This year marks the second year of venturing through our house system. Our goal this year was to make sure each house established its own identity separate from the others. We welcomed our largest class to the middle this year with our annual "Sorting

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May 2023

Ceremony" that featured fog machines, teacher introductions, and a ton of energy with our returning students welcoming the new arrivals. We hosted several events throughout the year that were customized to each of the four houses that made memories for students and brought them closer together.

Our extra-curricular groups also had an exceptional year. The junior high football team took the league title, and our volleyball girls picked up league and tournament titles at the 7th grade level. This momentum carried over to our winter sports. Athletes took care of business and had successful seasons with the NWC tournament runner-up trophy coming back to BMS with our 7th grade girls basketball team. Achievements didn't stop on the hardwood; our MS 6<sup>th</sup>-grade quiz bowl team captured the championship this year, and that was awesome to see.

The band, strings, choir, and art groups also had an amazing year. From the various competitions and concerts throughout the year to the BBQ event and community outreach opportunities, our students exemplified their talents. The art department took on a Paint-the-Plow project for ODOT that beautifully remembers the fallen students we tragically lost over recent years.

One new wrinkle that we added this year to the middle school experience was the introduction of Career Cluster courses for students in grades 6-8. Sixth-grade students were given a career exploration course which allowed them to see various job opportunities. In 7th and 8th grades, students rotated through 8 different careers, showcased by our awesome teachers, which gave them exposure to careers in wellness/self-care, business branding & marketing, financial literacy, travel, education, construction/industry, and skilled trades.

Other events this year that students experienced included a return to Outdoor School at Camp Berry, the return of the Washington D.C. trip, OMLA Breakfast of Champions, a WWII re-enactment at Lauer Farms, the Night at the Museum, the talent show, 8<sup>th</sup>-grade Idol, 3 middle school dances put on by our CREW council, and various incentive trips to local businesses including the Shannon Theater, Southgate Lanes, Grove Skateland, and the community parks. I'm also proud of the various community service projects our students tackled, like cleaning up around campus, cleaning our school buses for our amazing drivers, and the canned food and toy drives. All our students played an important role in making these efforts a success.

Finally, I want to thank my staff. After proudly serving as the middle school principal alongside these folks for four years, our time together will come to a close at the conclusion of this year. While I will be moving on to Hardin Northern High School, I will always cherish the memories we made in my time here. What started as a vision became a plan and, eventually, turned into something special for us all. I will be forever grateful for the "blackberry moments" that we shared together and for the community's relentless dedication to making the middle school the very best that it can be. Thank you for what you do for the

students each day. Best wishes to all of you in the 2023-2024 school year.

## Pirate Pride!!!

**Bluffton High School - Mike Minnig, Principal**

As we enter the final stretch of the school year, I would like to thank our students, parents, teachers, aides, cooks, custodians, bus drivers, nurse, and everyone else who plays a part in our educational system here at Bluffton. I urge parents to help keep their sons/daughters focused on finishing the year strong. Many of our students are involved in extra-curriculars and, at this time of the year, can see the days of summer ahead testing their time-management skills. Setting aside time to study, do homework, complete final projects, and prepare for final exams helps ensure a successful end to the year.

The summer can provide parents and students a time to reflect on their future planning. Whether it be college, military, or the workforce, students can use a few days of the summer to explore their options. College visitations, job shadowing, and researching opportunities, whether in person or virtually, are ways for students to gain their vision for the future. Incoming sophomores should start to look at preparing for and taking the ACT.

Throughout the year, many students have participated in community service projects. The Students Against Destructive Decisions held a toy drive for Nationwide Children's Hospital. From the Ironman volleyball tournament, the student senate raised funds that were donated to a few local families in need. The student senate will continue with its annual clean-up and mulching of the school grounds in May.

Along with community service projects, our students have continued to uphold a high level of academic achievement. Our Renaissance numbers continue to stay around 225 students each quarter. Seventy-two juniors and seniors have been taking post-secondary classes, mostly at Bluffton University, and dual enrollment classes through the University of Findlay and Rhodes State University. Over the past couple months, various groups and individuals have been honored for their excellence: the National Honor Society inducted thirty-three new members, and 150 students received academic letters for maintaining a 3.5 GPA.

Our students have performed well in the arts also as is evident in the production of *Newsies Jr* and the qualification of numerous band and choir students for the District III Honors Concert. Many students received top marks for their performances at the solo and ensemble contest. The strings orchestra received a superior rating at the state orchestra competition. Twenty-two pieces of student artwork were showcased in the Kewpee Show at Artspace in Lima and in the Governor's Youth Art Exhibition.

Athletically, our students are working hard in the spring sports season. During the winter sport season, the majority of our

student-athlete varsity letter winners were named NWC Scholar Athletes for maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and the same is expected for this spring season.

Thanks to everyone involved with planning, working, and donating to the Athletic Boosters Reverse Raffle, which will be held Saturday, May 20. Each year this fundraiser helps to support many of our students and programs.

As the year draws to a close and graduation approaches, all members of the Class of 2023 should have received a mailing concerning their end-of-the-year schedules and commencement.

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May 2023

Any questions pertaining to commencement (May 27 @ 7:00 p.m.) should be directed to the high school office.

The last day of school is scheduled for May 26. Exams will be given during the last week of school. It is important that students take these exams seriously as each exam is weighted half a quarter grade. Report cards for the last grading period will be posted on Progressbook on Thursday, June 1.

Again, I would like to thank the community and our parents for their amazing support of our students and wish our students the best for a strong finish to the school year.

#### **Athletics Year in Review** **Alex Hanna, Athletic Director**

The high school and middle school sponsored a variety of sports in the fall season. Sports offered for high school athletes included cheerleading, cross country, volleyball, tennis, soccer, golf, and football. Total participants for the fall season in the high school were approximately 200 students. At the middle school, 4 sports were offered (football, volleyball, cheerleading, and cross country) with approximately 70 students participating. This was a very successful fall. The boys cross country team advanced to state meet where Landon Armstrong finished 3<sup>rd</sup> and Erik Nygaard finished 4<sup>th</sup>. Both our boys and girls soccer teams won the NWC and finished the year as district runners-up.

For winter sports, approximately 80 high school athletes participated in basketball, wrestling, cheerleading, and swimming. Seventy middle school athletes participated in basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading. Several athletes, Xavier Diller, Riley Verb, Charles Wright, and Jackson Bowlus, advanced to the state swim meet.

The early spring weather can sometimes cause problems for spring sports, but so far this year we have been very fortunate. The boys tennis season ended at sectionals, which were played at the University of Northwestern Ohio. Both boys and girls track finished second at the NWC meet, and will run the district meet at Ada High School. Softball's season ended in the sectional final at Coldwater after defeating Allen East 14-13 in the sectional semi-finals. Baseball will begin its tournament run at OG in sectional semi-finals.

#### **Music Department**

The elementary music room has been an exciting place this year. Each month, all grades learned about a new composer and talked about how music and mood are connected in a variety of ways. ALL students enjoyed some new instruments that were

added to the classroom: 5th graders played ukuleles in class; 4th graders worked hard on recorders all year (as shown at the BBQ performance); 3rd graders worked on new rhythms and learned about instrument families; 2nd graders worked hard on note names; 1st graders explored dynamics and body percussion; and kindergarten students sang more and more.

Nearly 300 students were part of the vocal music program during 2022-2023. The high school symphonic choir (juniors and seniors), concert choir (freshmen and sophomores), chamber choir (by audition), and show choir participated in the fall, the Blaze of Lights,

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## **Postal Patron**

Christmas, BBQ, and spring concerts. Students from both the high school and middle schools also participated in solo and ensemble contest, and all earned superior or excellent ratings. In April, students successfully performed *Newsies Jr.* to nearly 1,000 audience members. The choirs, from 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, are fortunate to have many talented members.

The bands had a successful year. The 58-member marching band performed for all football games, the Allen County Fair Band Show, the Bath Band Spectacular, the Blaze of Lights parade, and the Memorial Day parade. In March, both the band and choir travelled to Disney World to perform. Marching down Main Street USA was a thrill, for sure! The 55-member concert band performed at Christmas, the BBQ, and a spring concert, all the while playing some collegiate-level music. The group continues to grow

musically each year. The 35-member pep band performed for all the boys and girls league basketball games. They had a great time and sounded good doing it. The 24-member jazz ensemble performed at Christmas and the BBQ; they will perform one last time at an end-of-the-year concert. The 30-member junior high band, as well as the 33-member 6th-grade band and 38-member 5th-grade band, performed in the fall, at Christmas, and the BBQ. Over 20 students represented Bluffton in the high school and junior high district honors ensembles this past year, and a handful of high school students played in the Bluffton University concert band as well. The band department was well represented in the community. Combining it all, we again performed well over 50 times this year.

It has been a wonderful year for string students. Nearly 130 students participated in the string program from grades 4-12. This included a whopping 56 fourth-grade students, the largest class I have had in my 39 years. All music groups participated in 2-3 school concerts this year. Performances for the high school orchestra included field trips to nursing homes, state orchestra contest (superior rating), and 3 community outreach performances. The junior high orchestra performances included field trips to nursing homes, a pre-school, and solo & ensemble contest. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade and junior high orchestras are currently preparing for the large group contest event to be held in May.