

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

2025-2026 Summer District Newsletter

~ News from the Superintendent~

The first part of this summer newsletter provides context for the Bluffton Exempted Village School purchase of property across from the elementary school on Vine Street. As you know, Bluffton Exempted Village Schools is a landlocked district in the middle of town. This presents both benefits and challenges. A benefit is that our school helps to promote a vibrant community within downtown Bluffton. Before and after school, students can be seen walking uptown or being picked up by their parents in the downtown area, which contributes to a sense of oneness between the school and downtown.

On the other hand, a challenge of being located in town is that space for student outdoor activities and sports practices is limited. To that point, the Bluffton School Athletic Council has frequently voiced concerns about having enough practice areas, and this is where the purchase of property on Vine Street becomes relevant. The property will provide adequate space to create an artificial turf field extending from the current grass playground across Vine Street onto the purchased property. A turf field of this size will enable our elementary students to have a place to run and play almost year-round, rain or shine. After the school hours, a schedule will be maintained for outdoor sports teams, grades 7-12, and the marching band for utilizing the area. As available, the space will then be open for use by youth football, soccer, baseball, softball, and others. The goal is to utilize the area to its fullest potential.

In addition to providing needed recreational and athletic use, the property would expand the district's physical footprint in Bluffton and allow for building opportunities in the future if the student population increases. Our enrollment of around 1200 students has stayed very steady over the past 30 years. However, heightened interest in the Bluffton community and its housing market plus new construction of properties in the area signal the potential for increased enrollment.

We are excited to get the 2025-2026 school year started by welcoming almost 1200 students into our district for the first day of school.

We are pleased to announce some great new staff members for this school year, and they are excited to become part of the Pirate family. Eric Garmatter will be a new bus driver and Audrey Childs will be joining our MS cafeteria staff. In the elementary school, we welcome first-grade teacher Jessica Parke and third-grade teacher Katie Slaughterbeck. Three new teachers at the middle school are Kristen White (Intervention Specialist), Krista Schomaeker (6th grade Language Arts), and Amy Gratz (Art). At the high school, Will Nichols will be the new intervention specialist; Mallory Hefner will teach anatomy and biology and lead a group to the Bahamas next summer for Ocean Focus. We welcome each new staff member to the Pirate staff and look forward to working with them for many years to come.

The financial report on this page shows our general fund information for the 2025 fiscal year. We have been able to

achieve financial stability due to the cost-saving measures that have been put in place over many years. Our district spends \$4,000 less than the state average per pupil, but achievement levels for the district consistently rank in the top 10% of all districts in the state. This could not be achieved without the support from our parents, students, staff, and community; everyone plays an important role in helping each student succeed. We will continue to look for ways to be fiscally responsible to you, our community, while still providing our students with an excellent education.

We want all our students to have a positive experience in our district. Please reach out to your teacher, principal, or me if you ever have a concern about your child. We believe our staff is very caring and nurturing to all our students, and all of us want what is best for each child.

We look forward to educating the students in our district this year. This is a wonderful privilege and opportunity. Thank you for your continued support of Bluffton Exempted Village Schools and the students we serve. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to stop in or call me at 419-358-5901.

Greg Denecker – Superintendent

Financial Information for 2024-2025 General Fund

Beginning Balance (July 1, 2024)	9,352,636
Outstanding Encumbrances (FY 2024)	140,045
Beginning Cash Balance (July 1, 2024)	9,492,681

Revenue:

Local Sources:

Real Estate	5,187,979
Personal Tangible	4,839
Investment Earnings	338,033
Other Local Sources	307,813

State Sources:

Foundation Program	7,050,778
Rollback & Homestead	507,425
Other State Sources	108,800

Other Receipts:

Total Receipts Above	13,505,667
Plus Cash Balance	9,492,681
TOTAL REVENUES	22,998,348

Expenditures:

Salaries & Wages	7,730,206
Fringe Benefits	2,715,799
Purchased Service	1,779,614
Materials, Supplies, Texts	481,070
Capital Outlay	624,486
Other Expenditures	167,694
Transfers/Advances	6,100

TOTAL EXPENDITURES: 13,504,969

ENDING CASH BALANCE (June 30, 2025) 9,493,379

Bluffton Schools Permanent Improvement Projects

Over the course of the past year, our district has completed many permanent improvement projects. In each summer's district newsletter, we outline the revenue that was brought in from this 1/2% permanent improvement income tax and the projects completed with these tax dollars. Below is the revenue chart of the combined monies brought in by the tax and the list of expenditures for the projects completed thanks to this fund.

Date	Revenue
October, 2024	\$210,130.59
January, 2025	\$211,022.11
April, 2025	\$293,208.46
July, 2025	\$492,906.33

Projects 2024-2025 School Year	Expenditures
Plumbing Repairs and R/R Updates	\$ 11,599.28
Technology	\$330,288.07
HVAC Repairs and Updates	\$ 34,735.60
Outside Facilities Maintenance and Updates	\$ 6,147.99
Flooring	\$ 30,000.00
Painting	\$ 3,752.44
Furniture	\$ 35,215.44
Windows	\$ 26,760.00
Equipment, Repairs, and Updates	\$ 84,163.99
Security/Safety	\$ 47,745.12
Electric and Lighting Updates	\$ 79,415.15
Paving/Concrete/Brick Repairs	\$ 68,957.00
New Bus	\$135,415.00
Classroom Equipment	\$ 41,874.12
Textbooks/books	\$ 49,524.03
Roof/Roof Repairs	\$ 9,763.06
Total Expenses	\$995,356.29

Bluffton Schools will continue to use these funds to update our facilities as promised to the taxpayers of this community. As always, we at Bluffton Schools appreciate the community's support of our district's efforts to maintain and improve facilities. If you would like to see these improvements in person, please call me to set up a convenient time to view these updates firsthand.

Greg Denecker – Superintendent

Please watch closely at all intersections around our district and proceed with caution both as a driver and as a pedestrian.

New Additions to the Staff....

Audrey Childs – Middle School Cafeteria Worker

Audrey Childs will be joining the middle school as a part-time cafeteria assistant. Audrey graduated from Pandora-Gilboa High School in 2014. Now she, her husband Alan, and daughter Joanna reside in Bluffton. Audrey enjoys riding her horses, caring for her other farm animals, gardening, and attending Lima First Church. She is very excited for the new school year and is eager to meet all the students during lunch.

Mallory Hefner – High School Teacher

Mallory Hefner joins the high school science department where she will be teaching biology, anatomy & physiology, and the Ocean Focus course. She started her teaching career in Southern Ohio at Paint Valley Local Schools as a middle school science teacher before moving to Findlay, Ohio, where she accepted a job at Fostoria Junior/Senior High School. After teaching four years at FJSHS, she spent the next six years at Shawnee High School teaching biology and environmental science. Mallory, her husband Cory, and two daughters Elyze (8) and Celeste (4) still reside in Findlay where they love spending time in their pool and getting ice cream at Dietsch Brothers. Football is life in the Hefner household, and when they aren't cheering on the Philadelphia Eagles, they are cheering for Cory who is a high school football coach and math teacher at Hardin Northern Local Schools. Mallory is excited to start her career at BHS where she gets to share her love of all things science with her students.

Eric Garmatter - Bus Driver

Eric comes back to the schools as a bus driver. He retired as a high school basketball coach 2 years ago, after having spent 28 years in the boys and girls programs with the last 14 as the varsity girls head coach. He also retired from Coca-Cola a year ago after 40 years in the beverage business. He and his wife Julie, an intervention specialist in the Bluffton schools, along with their 3 children -- Brinkley (24), Baylor (24), and Laykin (21) -- enjoy spending time together as a family. Eric is looking forward to meeting his riders and having a great school year.

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools - Mission Statement

The mission of the Bluffton Exempted Village School District is to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which flexibility is encouraged in meeting the needs of every student, and to value all persons and learning in order to develop individuals who demonstrate problem-solving skills, personal responsibility, and a desire for lifelong learning.

Pirate Pride!

Amy Gratz – Middle School Teacher

Amy Gratz joins the middle school staff to teach art this year. She brings 14 years of teaching experience from Spencerville High School, where she taught art, yearbook, and photography. A longtime Bluffton resident, Amy is excited to now be part of the district where her family lives and learns. She and her husband Kyle have three children --Tyler (12), Aiden (10), and Hailey (7) -- who keep them busy. Outside the classroom, Amy enjoys painting, crafting, and exploring museums and nature with her family. She is looking forward to sharing her creativity and passion for the arts with her students and making it a great year at Bluffton middle school.

William Nichols – High School Teacher

A graduate of Bowling Green State University, Will Nichols joins the high school staff as an intervention specialist. He currently resides in Glandorf, Ohio. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with family and friends, watching sports, and playing golf. Will is excited to be joining BHS this year.

Jessica Parke – Elementary Teacher

Jessica Parke joins the elementary school as a first-grade teacher. She has been teaching first grade at Arcadia the past 3 years. Jessica's degrees are in both general and special education, and she has a passion for teaching children how to read. She and her husband Bailey live on a farm outside Bluffton where they raise cattle. The Parkes enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling, and having bonfires. Jessica is looking forward to meeting her students, working with the first-grade team, and having a great school year.

Krista Schomaeker – Middle School Teacher

Krista Schomaeker, who will be joining our middle school staff as the sixth-grade ELA teacher, brings 30 years of teaching experience. At Ottoville Schools, she taught 17 years in the junior high and 10 years in the fifth grade. Krista is married to Brad, and they have three children: Parker (23), Alex (20), and Sam (18). As a family, they enjoy spending time together at Cincinnati Reds games and doing most anything related to sports. Krista is excited to begin a new chapter as a Bluffton Pirate and looks forward to connecting with students, families, and the Bluffton community.

Kathryn Slaughterbeck- Elementary Teacher

Kathryn joins Bluffton with 7 years of experience in elementary education. She and her husband Andy live in Bluffton with their two daughters Nora (6) and June (1) and enjoy playing games and taking walks together. Kathryn is passionate about building strong connections and creating hands-on learning experiences that empower students to lead. She's excited to become a Pirate.

Kristen White – Middle School Teacher

Kristen White is excited to join the middle school team as an intervention specialist, bringing with her 16 years of teaching experience and a passion for helping every student succeed. Kristen is the proud mother of three beautiful daughters: Addy (14), Adrienne (11), and Caydence (11). Outside school, she enjoys cheering on the Buckeyes and the Guardians with her boyfriend Nick and camping and watching her girls compete in their various sports. Kristen looks forward to making a positive impact and building strong connections with students, families, and colleagues this year

Meet-the-Teacher

Meet-the-Teacher will be August 20. The elementary, middle school, and high school will be open from 5:00-6:00 P.M. This is an opportunity for parents and children to meet the teachers.

If you do not want your child's name or picture released to any media outlet or on our website, please tell your child's building office in writing by September 20, 2025

**School Cancellations
or Delays/Parent Alert System**

During the school year there may be times, especially during inclement weather, that we may have to delay school or cancel classes for the day. Please go to www.blufftonschools.org and click under parent alert system on the right-hand column. Follow the simple steps to receive text messages and emails for delays, cancellations, announcements, or for cases of an emergency at school. In addition, you may listen to your local radio or television stations for announcements of delays or cancellations.

Bluffton School Open House

The Bluffton Schools will hold a district-wide open house on Monday evening, September 22nd, from 5:00-6:00 P.M. Several community organizations will have booths set up in the elementary gymnasium, and information will be available on ways to provide support to the school and community.

All parents and community members are invited to this open house to meet staff members, observe facilities, and learn more about the educational opportunities available to Bluffton students.

Athletic Alerts - Go to blufftonschools.org under parent alert system to sign up for athletic event reminders that will be sent to you for upcoming athletic events.

**2025-2026 School Calendar
Bluffton Exempted Village Schools**

August 25	Monday	School Opens
September 1	Monday	No School - Labor Day
October 24	Friday	End of 1st Grading Period
October 27	Monday	No School – Staff Day Only
November 25/26	Tues./Wed.	No School-(Elem/MS)
November 26	Wednesday	No School – (HS)
November 27/28	Thurs./Fri.	No-School– Thanksgiving
December 19	Friday	Last Day of School for 2025
January 5	Monday	School Re-Opens 2026
January 16	Friday	End of 2nd Grading Period
January 19	Monday	No School-King Day
February 16	Monday	No School-Presidents’ Day
March 20	Friday	End of 3rd Grading Period
March 23	Monday	No School – Staff Day Only
April 3 & 6	Fri/Mon.	No School-Spring Break
May 23	Saturday	Commencement
May 25	Monday	Memorial Day
May 27	Wednesday	End of 4 th Grading Period

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Listed are the dates and times for parent-teacher conferences in the Bluffton Schools. This is an excellent time to meet with our teachers and discuss the educational progress of your child(ren). We hope you plan to attend.

Bluffton Elementary and Middle Schools

Monday, November 24	5:00 – 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday, November 25	9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. 5:00 – 8:00 P.M.

Bluffton High School

Monday, November 24	5:00- 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday, November 25	5:00- 8:00 P.M.

Senior Citizen Breakfast 2025-2026

	Performance	Sponsor
September 10	Marching Band	Citizens National Bank
October 8	Show Choir	Senior Citizen Center
November 12	Drama Club	Chiles-Laman
December 10	Concert Choir	Sprunger Insurance
January 14	Orchestra	Ellerbrock Spine/Soft Tissue
February 11	Solo/Ensemble	Blanchard Valley Hospital
March 11	Band	Mennonite Home Communities
April 8	Musical Cast	First National Bank
May 13	Jazz Band	Lewis Family McDonald’

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Listed below are the phone numbers for each building in the Bluffton School District. Please call our offices with any questions and concerns you might have about the schools. We appreciate any input in helping maintain a quality education for our students.

Central Office	419-358-5901
High School	419-358-7941
Middle School	419-358-7961
Elementary School	419-358-7951

Visit Bluffton Schools Website:
www.blufftonschools.org

**Bluffton Exempted Village School
District Board of Education**

Roni Kaufman, President
Alice Basinger, Vice President
Brad Dailey
Wesley Klingler
Jeremy Scales

The Board of Education typically meets the third Monday of each month at 5:00 P.M. in the Elementary Media Center. If there is a change in the date, time, or meeting place, it is announced in the newspaper.

Annual Notification of Federal Funds

The Bluffton Exempted Village School receives federal funds in the areas of reading, math, library, and education of handicapped children. If you have any suggestions on how these funds should be used, please contact the district superintendent at 419-358-5901.