

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

2021-2022 Spring District Newsletter

~Superintendent News~

As we approach the end of the school year, we want to congratulate the Class of 2022. While the class has had a different HS experience the last couple years, at least we seem to be back to normal at this point. Graduation will be on Saturday, May 28, at 7 P.M. at Bluffton High School gymnasium. We wish our class of 2022 the very best as they leave the halls of BHS for the last time and enter a new stage of their lives. We hope we have prepared the students well to be successful in whatever career path they choose.

In addition, we wish the best to the following teachers who will be retiring at the end of this year. Dina Tadema has worked in the middle school as a math teacher for the past 22 years; Pam Riffle has taught math at the high school for the past 28 years; and Alice Basinger has been a music teacher in our district for the last 30 years. We thank all these excellent teachers for their service to our district and wish them the best in retirement.

When we look back over the past couple years, we are very thankful for the patience, understanding, and flexibility from our students, parents, staff, and community. We hope you believe we have given your students a good experience, and we are always looking for ways to improve our service to our students. We wish our students a strong finish for the end of this school year. We are planning and looking forward to welcoming our students back for the 2022-2023 school year.

If your polling location was the Bluffton Elementary School, the Allen County Board of Elections has changed the location of the polling place to The Centre in Bluffton. Our facilities are available to use as a polling place should the Allen County Board of Elections choose to do so.

Please call or stop in if you have any questions regarding the information in this letter. As I have stated before, we have fantastic students, staff, and parents, as well as a supportive community, which makes for an excellent school system and a great community to live and work.

Greg Denecker, Superintendent



Congratulations to the Class of 2022!

The Bluffton High School Commencement will be held on May 28, 2022, at 7:00 P.M.

On May 3, 2022, The Bluffton Exempted Village School District will have an issue on the ballot for the renewal of a ½ % income tax for permanent improvements.

This is not a new tax; it is a renewal of an existing tax for three years.

- The tax was originally passed in May 2007 for 1/2% income tax.
- The tax generates around \$900,000 per year.
- This tax will be on the ballot on May 3, 2022, as a renewal at the same amount: 1/2% income tax for three years.
- If passed, first collection will begin in calendar year 2023.

What is a permanent improvement tax?

A permanent improvement tax can be used for anything that will last 5 years or more. For example, the District has used this money to replace roofs, buy new busses, and remodel classrooms. We publish the revenue and expenditures of our permanent improvement projects each summer in the District Newsletter sent out to our community.

What can the money *not* be used for?

The money generated by a permanent improvement tax cannot be used for salaries or fringe benefits; these expenses must be paid out of general operating dollars.

2022-2023 School Calendar Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

August 24 & 25	Wed./Thurs.	Staff Pre-Service
August 29	Monday	School Opens
August 29 & 30	Mon./Tues.	Kindergarten Testing
August 31	Wednesday	1 st Day of Kindergarten
September 5	Monday	No School - Labor Day
October 28	Friday	End of 1 st Grading Period
November 22 & 23	Tues./Wed.	No School - (Elem/MS)
November 23	Wednesday	No School - (HS)
November 24 & 25	Thurs./Fri.	No-School – Thanksgiving
December 21	Wednesday	Last Day of School for 2022
January 3	Tuesday	School Re-opens 2023
January 13	Friday	End of 2 nd Grading Period
January 16	Monday	No School - MLK Day
February 20	Monday	No School - Presidents' Day
March 24	Friday	End of 3 rd Grading Period
April 7 & 10	Fri./Mon.	No School - Spring Break
May 26	Friday	End of 4 th Grading Period
May 27	Saturday	Commencement
May 29	Monday	Memorial Day
May 30	Tuesday	Staff Post-Service

www.blufftonschools.org

Elementary Update – Benjamin Thiel Principal

I have been blessed with the privilege to succeed Mr. Closson in serving the Bluffton Exempted Village Schools as elementary principal. Every first year is an exciting challenge filled with learning the people, processes, and priorities of the new environment. I knew Bluffton elementary was amazing in the past, and I now know it is due to the great staff and students; this has made the year one of the most enjoyable years of my educational career.

Our **kindergarten** students have been doing a great job all year in their work to become acclimated to school and to working hard. I am always amazed at the creativity of our students and teachers at that end of the hallway. It seems each week, if not each day, new projects are hung in the hallways that display the hard work and effort of our students. 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. I know our kindergartners and teachers were excited to bring back the alphabet march and the fall trip to the pumpkin patch. Now, we are looking forward to visiting the zoo this May for the first time in a few years.

Our **first-graders** recently finished their annual March Madness reading competition where students, competing individually and as a class, read as many books as they could over a three-week period. It is amazing to see the motivation and effort our students show during this fun and competitive time of year. Students also completed their animal reports recently where each student studied the characteristics of a favorite animal. I was able to see a few students present their finished work to their class, and it was great to see them presenting their research to their peers and having such a fun time doing so.

The **second-grade** classes are enjoying their first year ever of being able to go to school five days a week for the entire year. Think about that! This group has shown so much growth. Second grade is always a year when students start to thrive and show progress and growth in their learning. This group has been no different, and they have been able to learn and grow even more than a typical group of students. It's exciting to see what a class can do when the children are able to get a regular year of instruction. Knowing what this group has gone through starting in kindergarten, our second-grade staff deserves a great deal of credit for the patience and persistence they have shown. The projects and ideas the students enjoy, such as Thanksgiving Day parade floats, Santa's workshop, winter olympics, and March Madness, seem to be endless. Our teachers and students are working hard in the second-grade, and I'm so proud of what they are doing.

Third graders have been working hard to prepare for their first-ever state test. I'm amazed at the dedication and focus our students display in their classrooms each day. This is a direct reflection of their teachers who work as a team to deliver consistent, high-quality instruction. Students are gearing up for their next round of state testing by completing written reports on various animals and presenting their research to their classmates. I observed a classroom where the teacher used the facts researched by her students in the lesson. It's an empowering moment for the students when they see their research being used to help teach the next skill. Our students and teachers should be extremely proud of themselves. As for the remainder of the year, the students will visit the Allen County Museum and Sauder Village to wrap up their *Little House on the Prairie* unit.

Although the **fourth-grade** class is small in numbers, the students are mighty in effort and potential. Students and teachers in the fourth-grade hallway are always hard at work. It's quite normal to see the students in the hallways working on fun activities, like scavenger hunts or around-the-world activities, which the teachers have created for them. This group

uses every inch of their classrooms and hallways to make learning exciting and engaging for all types of learners. Besides that, I have seen our students completing research projects on our nation's Presidents and presenting science experiments for their classmates each week. Just like the third-graders, this group is hard at work prepping for their first round of state testing this spring. I am confident that the work and effort our students and staff have put into their learning this year will be on full display in the next several weeks.

The **fifth-grade** students have shown enormous capacity and potential for leadership. I have been a part of many schools in my career, but I don't know that I have ever walked into classrooms and had conversations with individual students or had students make exceptional effort to greet me each morning with a warm welcome the way our fifth-grade students have. The compassion and empathy this group has shown was especially evident this year when the students learned that one of their teachers was battling cancer for the second time. Students have been working hard in all subject areas: building cars in science class, learning a new process for detailed writing, reading multiple novels, memorizing the states and capitals, and computing fractions, decimals, and percentages. Thanks to the efforts of our fifth-grade teaching team, our students are learning and growing from a wide range of activities. Students have been participating regularly in the D.A.R.E. program as they listen to and interact with local law enforcement; they will enjoy a D.A.R.E. concert and graduation with students from many local schools in the coming months.

Our many musicians were able to perform for the community once again with band and strings concerts in both the winter and spring months.

S.M.A.R.T. week activities will be the focus for May, including the ever-popular field day activities.

Middle Schools News – Joshua Kauffman, Principal

Spring is in the air and like a baserunner rounding 3rd and heading for home, the 2021-2022 school year has had that feeling as we are on the cusp of completing what has been a long two-year journey navigating the pandemic. While this year still certainly has had some challenges along the way, a renewed sense of normalcy has been underway within the middle school.

The middle school staff needs to be recognized for what they do each day to make the experiences for our students exceptional. Our classified and certified staff, also known as THE CREW, come to the Pirate ship and pour their hearts and souls into our young people; I am exceedingly grateful to work with such a driven and purposeful group. When one's life's work requires the village, I would take our kitchen ladies, bus drivers, custodians, office staff, and teachers any day and go to bat with them over and over again. Also, I want to thank all our students and their families for making this year the very best it can possibly be. It is our students and the endless support we get from our community that make BMS the amazing place it is.

From the beginning of the year, our staff made it a goal to get students excited about coming to school in-person again, while also realizing that everyone would be in a unique spot mentally. With all that had been taken from students throughout the pandemic, we wanted to make sure we did all we were able to do to overcompensate for lost time. We wasted no time. During the first week of school, we took what had been over a year's worth of hard work and planning to kick off our new House System, our first annual sorting ceremony at Harmon Field. All staff and students were randomly sorted into one of four pirate-inspired houses and, with an invitation and a ton of positive energy from house leaders, have been welcomed into that house for the duration of their time at BMS. The four houses are Coraggio "The House of Courage," Respe "The House of

Respect," Excelencia "The House of Excellence," and Wajibu "The House of Responsibility." From these houses come the Pirate CREW. Each house has its own identity with its own color, symbol, song, chants, characteristics, and unique meanings. The house system was designed by a creative team of staff members to develop a virtue-centered building culture that, among many things, will build a community within the school where each student has a sense of belonging, a sense of connectedness to peers and staff that allows for mentorship opportunities, all while igniting pirate pride and creating space for middle level learners to grow in confidence, engage socially, and be motivated to come to school to share in memorable experiences. As we have moved through the year, students have competed for collective house points in a multitude of events from the classroom to competitions at the end of each nine-week period. Each week a house winner is declared, enabling students of that house to take a victory lap with their house song around our school. Also, staff members recognize a student as their Pirate-of-the-Week for exemplifying our core values.

Our advisory classes implemented House Family Fridays. Fourteen groups, a blend of 6th – 8th grade students in each family, are led by staff members with the intent to connect every student to an adult in the building who can help them navigate through life in the middle school and who can facilitate the grade-levels to begin forming relationships with all students in the building. Some of the activities that have come out of that family time include community service projects, weekly check-outs, full house team-building, and our annual formal dining experience before the Christmas holiday.

Past activities have been resurrected this year and given students a sense of normalcy. We kicked off the year with a double amputee guest speaker from Defiance, Brad Hurtig, who delivered a message on "Finding a Way." Students also were privileged to hear several community members speaking to the health classes throughout the year about career fields. A special visit and inspiring message came from BHS graduate and Team USA silver medalist in the 400-meter World Indoor Championships, Trevor Bassitt.

Our newly formed CREW Council, led by Mrs. Bourassa, hosted several fundraisers to earn money toward our first semi-formal school dance in two years.

The sports teams, in both the fall and winter seasons, were very competitive. These student-athletes not only get the job done in the classroom, but they also develop and refine their skills on the playing fields.

Our middle school quiz bowl teams were quite competitive in battling area schools this year. Mrs. Flory and her teams deserve recognition for their hard work.

Another big event for our 8th-grade students is our annual 8th-grade Idol Competition. This is, by far, one of the biggest events the whole school gets to experience. This year's field of participants saw five students reaching the finals with trophies being awarded to our top three students: Jenna Downey, Elizabeth Hartzler, and Lily Liberato. Lily, our champion this year, brought down the house by singing in both Portuguese and in English in the finale.

Our choir, band, and strings students and teachers returned to in-person fall, winter, and spring concerts; the revitalized chicken barbeque event capped it all off in March. Based on the attendance at these events, people in our community have anxiously awaited the return of our very talented musicians. Students' time, work, and dedication to not only learning an instrument, but to refining their development from their 6th-grade year to their 8th-grade year is nothing short of remarkable. It's amazing to see students participate in all 3 without missing a beat in the classroom.

As we wrap up the school year, I take comfort in knowing that we are well on our way to continuing to do even more special things for our MS

students. The planning for the 2022-2023 school year is well underway, with many more exciting things on the horizon.

I want to thank the Bluffton community members for all of the support of Bluffton Middle School. Even though this will conclude my 3rd year here, it has been a joy to see and meet so many people throughout the year, and it is humbling to know that I have the opportunity to work in a community that rallies around our schools and our youth. Now, we are pointing our sails forward and aiming to end the year on a positive note, just like we started!

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. This pandemic has put many into stressful and challenging situations. The extra measures, flexibility, patience, and understanding these people have shown are truly appreciated and have made this a successful year.

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, in-person or virtually, are ways for students to gain their vision for the future and 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 National Honor Society held a canned-food drive to help support our local food pantry. From the Ironman volleyball tournament, the student senate raised funds that were donated to a local family 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 210 students each quarter. Forty 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 twenty-four new members; ninety-seven students received academic letters; and 147 students received academic letters for maintaining a 3.5 GPA.

Our students have performed well in the arts also. Through the production of *Virgil's Wedding* and the qualification of numerous band and choir students for the District III Honors Concert, the success in the music department is quite evident. Many students received top marks for their performances at the solo and ensemble contest. The strings orchestra was one of only five groups to receive a superior rating at the state orchestra competition at Perrysburg. Nine 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. Last sport season, the majority of our winter 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. The

boys basketball team captured its first NWC championship in twenty-two years.

Thanks to everyone involved with planning, working, and donating to the Athletic Boosters Reverse Raffle, which will be held Saturday, May 14. 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 2022 should have received a mailing concerning their end-of-the-year schedules and commencement. Any questions pertaining to commencement (May 28 @ 7:00 p.m.) should be directed to the high school office.

The last day of school is scheduled for May 27. 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 2.

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

Music Department

Over 250 students were part of the vocal music program during 2021-2022. The high school symphonic choir (juniors and seniors), concert choir (freshmen and sophomores), and chamber choir (by audition) participated in fall, 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 will perform the musical *Virgil's Wedding*. The choirs from 6th-12th grades are fortunate to have many talented members.

The bands have had a successful year. The 55-member marching band performed for the Memorial Day parade, the Allen County Fair Band Show, the Bath Band Spectacular, all the football games, and the Blaze of Lights parade. In March 2023, the marching band and the choirs will travel to Disney World to perform. The 50-member concert band performed at Christmas, the BBQ concert, and a spring concert. They also earned superiors at large group contests in March. The group continues to grow musically each year. The 30-member pep band performed for all the boys and girls league basketball games this season, and, with the aid of our new electronic drum set, was able to sit behind the student section. Having all the students and band together is thrilling. The 18-member jazz ensemble performed at Christmas and the BBQ concert. The group will travel to the Mennonite Home at the end of April to celebrate jazz history month and then perform at the end-of-year concert. The 33-member junior high band plus the 18-member 6th-grade band and 41-member 5th-grade band performed in the fall, at Christmas, and the BBQ. Over 20 musicians represented Bluffton in our high school and junior high district honors ensembles this year. The band department was well represented in the community. Combining it all, we will have been showcased over 50 times this year.

Elementary music is glad to be back home in the music room where there is a stereo, more room to move, and better access to instruments. Kindergarten and 1st-graders have spent their year learning steady beat and pitch-matching by using body percussion, sticks, bells, and xylophones. The 2nd and 3rd-graders have been introduced to 3-6 new rhythm symbols and are using them as they learn basic skills on the piano. The 4th-graders began playing recorders and will be taking them home soon. Fifth graders studied music of the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern periods in January and February. They are now playing ukuleles and learning advance rhythms to stretch their knowledge while preparing for middle school music. (As many of you have heard, Mrs. Basinger is retiring this year. She treasures her years of work with the high

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school band and choir and the elementary students over the past 29 years. Some of her former students, now leaders of the community, are parents of her current students.)

The string orchestra is so excited to be returning to an in-person concert season. This year saw 103 string orchestra members in grades 4-12. The 22-member junior high orchestra played for the 4th-grade orchestra recruiting event. This resulted in 37 fourth graders signing up for strings. The 4th/ 5th /6th-grade orchestras continue to move right along learning new notes, bow articulations, and rhythms while playing different genres of music. All groups participated in at least 2 concerts this year. The high school orchestra also participated in the state orchestra adjudicated event and earned a superior rating. We look forward to adding performance field trips in the future.

Athletics Year in Review - Alex Hanna, Athletic Director

The high school and middle school sponsored seven sports in the fall season. Sports offered for high school athletes include 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; our football team made the playoffs for the second consecutive year; girls soccer was district runner-up; and boys soccer was NWC and district champions.

The winter sports had approximately 80 high school athletes participating in basketball, wrestling, cheerleading, and swimming. Seventy middle school athletes participated in basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading. This was successful winter. The boys basketball team won the NWC. Kadin Basil advanced to the OHSAA state wrestling tournament and finished fourth. Riley Verb advanced to the OHSAA state swim meet and finished 12th in the 200 IM and 15th in 100 breaststroke.

The early spring weather can sometimes cause problems for baseball, softball, tennis, and track, but so far this year we have been very fortunate. Tournament action for baseball, softball, track, and tennis will begin in May. This spring our baseball and softball teams could have an opportunity to host the first rounds of the sectional tournament, and that will be determined soon. Boys tennis sectionals will take place at the University of Northwestern Ohio, and track will run the district meet at Findlay High School. Nearly 140 high school students are participating in spring sports (baseball, softball, boys tennis, and track), and 60 middle school students are participating in track. In the spring of 2023, jr. high baseball and jr. high softball will become a school sport.