

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

2023-2024 Summer District Newsletter

~ News from the Superintendent~

We are excited to get the 2023-2024 school year started by welcoming over 1215 students, a small increase from last year, into our district on the first day of school. Our enrollment numbers continue to stay very consistent, which is a real tribute to our community and staff, as many schools in our region have declining enrollment.

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. Alisha Liebrecht and Jack Hohenbrink will be new cafeteria workers for the '23-'24 school year. Jake Staley will be teaching 1st grade, Diana Donaldson - 3rd grade, Joanna Gratz - 4th grade, and Meredith Bixel - 5th grade. Leslie Liberato will teach science in the middle school, and Scott Schnipke will teach MS math. Our new MS/HS physical education and health teacher is Christa Burgei. Brad Schomaeker is our new intervention specialist at the high school, and Kristi Shepherd will teach HS English. Doug Westrick is the new MS principal, and Courtnee Morris is the technology coordinator. Please stop in and say hello to these new staff members when in the building or at after-school events; they are excited to meet you and get to know the Bluffton School District's community. We welcome each of these new staff members to the Pirate staff and look forward to working with them for many years to come.

School security is always a point of emphasis with our students, staff, and community. We have taken many different steps to help with the security in our district. We continue to have training with our staff in the event of an emergency. If you see or hear something, please say something to a school administrator or the police. In addition, Bluffton Schools is a part of the Ohio School Safety Center tip line called SAFEROH. The phone number is 844-723-3764; this tip line number is also on our web site.

We are excited to continue our senior citizen breakfast performances this school year, and those dates are listed on page 4. Typically, breakfast starts at 8:30 AM with a performance starting a little after 9AM. Please spread the word and invite friends to this monthly event; it is great to see everyone be able to watch our students on stage. Thank you to our kitchen staff and our sponsors -- Citizens National Bank, First National Bank, Sprunger Insurance, Ellerbrock Spine and Soft Tissue, Lewis Family McDonald's, Blanchard Valley Hospital, Senior Citizen Center, and Mennonite Home Communities -- for donating the free breakfast each month. Our students and staff always look forward to hosting these events for the school year.

The financial report on this page shows our general fund information for the 2023 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. Should there be a cut to our state funding, which is over 50% of our operating funds, our goal is to continue to operate near the same capacity of staff without having to return to our taxpayers for more funding. We will continue to look for ways to be fiscally responsible to you, our community, while still providing our students with an excellent education.

Our district spends \$3860 less than state average per pupil, but achievement levels for the district consistently rank near the top in the state. This could not be achieved without the support of our parents, students, staff, and community; everyone plays an important role in helping each of our students succeed.

On the second page of this newsletter, you will find the permanent improvement projects which were completed over the course of the past year. These funds allow our district to make repairs and

improvements to our facilities for our students and community. While our buildings are not new, we believe the updates and upkeep to each of our facilities make for an excellent learning environment. We thank our community for the support of our school district and the ability to keep our district up-to-date.

As a reminder when we are back in school next week, please be careful around all our school buildings if you are walking or driving. Please watch closely at all intersections around our district and proceed with caution both as a driver and as a pedestrian.

It is great to see the number of different students participating in the fall season athletics, activities, and music programs. The high student interest in these co-curricular and extracurricular activities shows what a vibrant community we have when it comes to all of these different opportunities.

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 for all our students, and we all want what is best for each one of our children.

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 2022-2023 General Fund

Beginning Balance (July 1, 2022)	7,702,113
Outstanding Encumbrances (FY 2022)	95,358
Beginning Cash Balance (July 1, 2022)	7,797,471

Revenue:

Local Sources:

Real Estate	4,199,913
Personal Tangible	2,888
Investment Earnings	215,788
Other Local Sources	251,613

State Sources:

Foundation Program	6,141,115
Rollback & Homestead	448,781
Other State Sources	114,661

Other Receipts:

Total Receipts Above	11,374,759
Plus Cash Balance	7,797,471

TOTAL REVENUES 19,172,230

Expenditures:

Salaries & Wages	6,552,960
Fringe Benefits	2,564,256
Purchased Service	1,220,914
Materials, Supplies, Texts	298,927
Capital Outlay	849
Other Expenditures	141,577
Transfers/Advances	6,100

TOTAL EXPENDITURES: 10,785,583

ENDING CASH BALANCE 8,386,647

Outstanding Encumbrances 138,212

Ending Balance (June 30, 2023) 8,248,435

Bluffton Schools Permanent Improvement Projects

Over the course of the past year, our district has completed many different 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, 2022	\$202,200.60
January, 2023	\$209,594.29
April, 2023	\$283,422.67
July, 2023	\$388,913.17
Projects Sept. 2021-Aug. 2022	Expenditures
Plumbing Repairs and R/R Updates	\$33,778.36
Technology	\$308,174.96
HVAC Repairs and Updates	\$22,837.94
Outside Facilities Maintenance and Updates	\$71,669.20
Flooring	\$35,583.71
Painting	\$8,656.57
Furniture	\$72,381.58
Windows	\$11,346.17
Equipment and Repairs	\$187,071.55
Security/Safety	\$45,145.52
Electric and Lighting Updates	\$9,695.33
Paving/Concrete/Brick Repairs	\$73,048.00
Building/Classroom Repairs and Updates	\$107,881.28
Classroom Equipment	\$83,436.83
Textbooks/books	\$64,954.27
Roof/Roof Repairs	\$23,927.16
Total Expenses	\$1,159,588.43

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

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.

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...

Christa Burgei – MS/HS Health and Physical Education Teacher

Christa comes to Bluffton schools after teaching health/physical education and special education in Lima City Schools for 22 years. Christa will teach 9th-grade health and 7th, 8th, and 9th-grade physical education. She, her husband Eric, and their 3 children live in the Allen East school district. Her youngest son Grayson will be attending kindergarten at Bluffton schools this year; her eldest son Zachary will be a sophomore at the University of Findlay; and, daughter Ella will be a junior at Allen East High School. Christa enjoys spending time with family and friends and camping. She is looking forward to joining the Bluffton staff.

Diana Donaldson – Elementary Teacher

Diana Donaldson, who will be teaching 3rd grade, has spent the last 11 years teaching kindergarten at St. Anthony's Catholic School in Columbus Grove. Diana is a graduate of Kalida High School and attended The Ohio State University where she graduated with her master's degree in elementary education. Her two sons, Wyatt and Mason, are students at Bluffton elementary, and her husband works at Honda Research and Development in Raymond, OH. While teaching is her passion, Diana also enjoys hiking, going to the Bluffton pool, baking with her son Wyatt, and spending time with family and friends. She is excited to be a Bluffton Pirate and to be a part of the excellent teaching community at Bluffton elementary.

Meredith Bixel – Elementary Teacher

Meredith Bixel will be joining the elementary fifth-grade team. She graduated from BHS in 2011, graduated from BGSU with a bachelor's degree in music education, and recently completed a master's degree in early childhood education from the University of Findlay. In her spare time, Meredith enjoys reading, baking, gardening, and spending time with friends and family. After fulfilling multiple teaching and subbing opportunities in the Northwest Ohio area, she is delighted to be a part of Bluffton schools and is eagerly looking forward to the upcoming school year.

Joanna Gratz – Elementary Teacher

Joanna Gratz is looking forward to joining the 4th-grade team this fall. After graduating from The Ohio State University with her master's in education, she taught junior high in Findlay before staying home to raise her children. Last year, she worked as a substitute teacher at Bluffton, including two long-term positions in the 3rd grade, so she is very excited to welcome many of those same students back to her class as 4th-graders. Joanna and her husband Dan reside just outside Bluffton and are the proud parents of Katherine, a freshman, and Lydia, a 5th grader. In her spare time, she enjoys being creative, reading, and making memories with her family.

Jack Hohenbrink – Cafeteria Worker

Jack Hohenbrink graduated from BHS in 2023. He worked in the cafeteria the last 4 years as a high school helper and is excited to continue this year. While working in the cafeteria, he also will be taking classes at Columbia Southern University and majoring in Occupational Safety and Health. In his free time, Jack enjoys helping on the family farm, being outdoors, riding his ATV, and hanging out with his dog Bo.

Pirate Pride!

Leslie Liberato – Middle School Science Teacher

After a wonderful experience as a long-term substitute at BMS, Leslie Liberato is enthusiastic about teaching 6th-grade science at the middle school. Her roots are in Bluffton, and she is a BHS graduate. In 2005, she graduated from Huntington University with a degree in elementary and middle school education. Since then, she has taught 5th grade in Four Oaks, North Carolina, and spent 6½ years in Brazil teaching EFL at New Wave Schools. During that time, she also taught high school subjects to Brazilians seeking to receive their American high school diplomas. In addition, she enjoyed working with the local church as a missionary there. Leslie and her husband Gesse moved back to Bluffton in 2017 and are thankful to be raising their children Liliana (a sophomore), Juliana (a 2nd grader), and Elijah (a kindergartener) in the Bluffton schools.

Alisha Liebrecht – Middle School Cafeteria Worker

Alisha Liebrecht is a former Pirate and BHS graduate; now her two children, Hayden (10) and Landen (8), are also Pirates. In her green time, Alisha enjoys watching Notre Dame football, attending her children's sporting events, and spending time at a lake house in Michigan. She is excited to be part of the Bluffton school district.

Courtnee R. Morris – Technology Coordinator

Courtnee R. Morris is a dedicated and innovative educator with a strong passion for technology and instructional design. Courtnee has been an active member of the Bluffton community for nearly two decades. Holding a bachelor's degree in child development from Bluffton University, a master's degree in career and technical education from the University of Toledo, and a professional principal's license from the University of Dayton, Courtnee is currently a Ph.D. candidate in instructional design and technology at Liberty University where he continuously learns how to advance education through creative teaching approaches. As a technology coordinator, Courtnee is excited to combine his expertise and love for technology to enhance instructional strategies, professional development, and overall learning experiences.

Beyond his professional achievements, Courtnee is a talented musician in a Christian hip/hop rap group called "The B List Boys," an author and illustrator of children's books, a preacher/motivational speaker, and a keen entrepreneur. Outside these pursuits, he enjoys playing volleyball and video games and watching anime. Above all, however, he cherishes spending time with his family, his wife of over 15 years, and their 12-year-old daughter. He hopes his unwavering commitment to education and technology makes him an invaluable asset to the Bluffton school district, where he will be dedicated to making a positive impact and fostering a culture of growth and success for students and educators alike.

Scott Schnipke – Middle School Math Teacher

Scott Schnipke comes to Bluffton with 10 years of teaching experience, most recently spending the last six years at Pandora-Gilboa. Scott is a 2013 graduate of Bluffton University. He currently resides in Pandora with his wife Courtney, son Leo, and daughter Alba. Scott enjoys sports and spending time with friends and family. He and his family are excited to become a part of the Bluffton community.

Brad Schomaeker – High School Intervention Specialist

Brad Schomaeker graduated from Ottawa-Glandorf, tutored there for a year, and taught at Ottoville for 28 years as an intervention specialist. He and his wife Krista live in Ottawa and are parents to

three sons: Parker - 21, Alex - 18, and Sam - 16. Brad is excited to be a Bluffton Pirate.

Kristi Shepherd – High School English Teacher

Kristi Shepherd, who taught sophomores for the past 22 years at Ottawa-Glandorf High School, is excited to be teaching 9th and 10th-grade English. After growing up in Warsaw, Indiana, and graduating from Grace College, she and her husband Craig moved to Ohio in 2001. In 2015, they moved to Bluffton so her children, Luke and Madison (now teenagers), could attend Bluffton schools. She is thrilled to be able to join the district and teach in the community. In her free time, Kristi loves to travel, read, attend her children's events, and spend time with family, friends, and her two pups Snickers and Twix.

Jake Staley – Elementary Teacher

Jake Staley, a 2017 BHS graduate, will be teaching 1st grade. For the past two years, he has taught 1st grade at the Ottawa elementary school. Jake met his wife Laurin while he was attending BGSU. He enjoys watching sports, coaching basketball, and spending time with his friends and family. He is very excited to be a Pirate once again.

Doug Westrick - Middle School Principal

Doug Westrick will be filling the role of middle school principal for the coming school year. Doug has spent the past ten years at Delphos City Schools in administrative positions including middle school principal. During that time, Doug cultivated a deep understanding of the value of building strong relationships with students, staff, parents, and community members and gained experience in providing a safe and nurturing learning environment for students. Doug and his wife Melanie live in Glandorf and have two sons, Alex and Jaren. In his spare time, Doug enjoys spending time with family and being outdoors. Doug is excited to be part of the Bluffton school district.

Meet-the-Teacher

Meet-the-Teacher will be August 23. The elementary will be open from 5:00-6:00 P.M. and the middle school and the high school from 5:30-6:30 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 22, 2023

**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 25. The elementary will be open from 5:00-6:00 P.M., the middle school from 5:30-6:30 P.M., and the high school from 5:30-6:30 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.

2023-2024 School Calendar

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

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

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 20	5:00 – 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday, November 21	9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. 5:00 – 8:00 P.M.

Bluffton High School

Monday, November 20	5:00- 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday, November 21	5:00- 8:00 P.M.

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.

Visit Bluffton Schools Website:

www.blufftonschools.org

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools
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Senior Citizen Breakfast 2023-2024

September 13	Marching Band
October 18	Show Choir (3 rd Wed of Month)
November 15	Drama Club (3 rd Wed of Month)
December 13	Concert Choir
January 10	Strings
February 14	Solo and Ensemble Students
March 13	Band
April 10	Musical Cast
May 8	Jazz Band

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

Bluffton Exempted Village School District Board of Education

Brad Dailey, President
Wes Klinger, Vice President
Larry Hoffman
Roni Kaufman
Jeremy Scoles

The Board of Education typically meets the third Monday of each month at 7:30 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.