

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

2013-2014 Winter District Newsletter

~ News from the Superintendent ~

I think we are all hoping for some warmer weather and looking forward to spring! Delays and cancellations have wreaked havoc on many families' schedules, so the hope is that better weather is right around the corner. Current weather disruptions aside, the first semester went very well, and it is hard to believe that we are already into the last week of January. Our students and staff continue to work very hard to keep our district's performance index on assessments in the top 6% of all schools in the state.

In order for our district to be prepared for the new assessments being rolled out in the 2014-2015 school year, we were granted a Race to the Top Grant four years ago. The 2013-2014 school year marks the last year for our district's implementation of the new standards and preparation for the new state assessments beginning 2014-2015. Thanks to the Race to the Top Grant, we received \$25,000 annually for four years, which helped with the purchase of student response systems ("clickers") at various grade levels. These monies also helped absorb the cost of staff development for our Race to the Top Transformation Leadership Team. This team, made up of teachers and administrators, has done an outstanding job of creating and offering professional development opportunities for our staff in preparation for the new assessments. In particular, this group has worked to emphasize formative instructional practices (FIP) in order to transition students to the state's new learning standards. Formative assessments allow teachers to more specifically focus on students' learning needs and to be able to implement remediation strategies that will aid students in being as successful as possible. The new state assessments will be more challenging and will demand increased critical thinking skills among students. Our district will be a pilot school this spring for some of these new assessments; fortunately, this will give us some initial insight into these tests.

Also as part of the Race to the Top Grant, the 2013-2014 school year is the first for the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). Our teachers and principals have been working hard at implementing this time-consuming and rigorous evaluation system. OTES is based on a combination of teacher performance standards and student growth measures. The teacher performance standards consist of formal classroom observations and walk-throughs/informal observations, as well as a pre-conference, post-conference, and complete performance rubric. The student growth measures include a variety of elements which seek to quantify student growth from one year to the next. Some of these growth measurements will be derived from the State Ohio

Achievement Assessments that are given in Math and Language Arts in grades 3-8. Obtaining the growth measures for other academic areas is something that our district will be working on in order to obtain the complete student-growth measure per teacher. The system is not perfect, but we are working hard to make the system as effective as possible.

In other news, the district would like to thank Mr. Larry Eikenbary for his 15+ years of dedication to our district and Mr. Ned Niswander for his 35 years of service. Both of these custodians made outstanding contributions to our district. They will be missed, and we wish them each a happy retirement.

In closing, thank you for being supportive of our school district, and as I have said many times, we have such great parents, students, staff, and community members that it is an honor to be a part of this school system.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns about the district. Either stop in or call me at 419-358-5901.

Greg Denecker, Superintendent

Important Dates

February 17	Monday	No School-Presidents' Day
March 21	Thursday	End of 3 rd Grading Period
April 18 & 21	Friday/Monday	No School-Spring Break
May 24	Saturday	Commencement 7:00 P.M.
May 26	Monday	No School-Memorial Day
May 29	Thursday	Last Day of School.

The make-up days, if cancellations exceed the state allotment, will be February 17 and April 21, 2014.

District Website
www.blufftonschools.org

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools District Board of Education

Renee Smith	President
Brad Fruchey	Vice President
Wes Klinger	Board Member
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Jeremy Scoles	Board Member

Bluffton Elementary Review

Tim Closson, Elementary Principal

The first half of the 2013-2014 school year has been filled with numerous fun and educational events. Many enriching activities have taken place inside and outside our classrooms.

In September, students were entertained by Jim "Basketball" Jones. While performing many basketball tricks, he focused the students on making good choices, respecting others, being responsible, and being safe.

October brought several events. Art Beat began its 29th year with students in grades two through five. Featured artists for this year are Rene Magritte, Frederic Remington, John W. Turner, Edgare Degas and Victor Vasarely. We celebrated Red Ribbon Week to promote a drug-free life. Kindergarten through second grade students enjoyed a Safety Pup assembly provided by the Bluffton Police Department.

Other events occurred at all grade levels.

Kindergarten students were excited for the new activities. They enjoyed their annual field trip to Suter's pumpkin patch. They participated in the Apple Program, which introduces students to a variety of materials that children with disabilities use to learn and play. Students learned about the five senses during a SESA program (Science Enhancement for Science Advancement - a partnership between Allen County Schools and their industry partners).

First graders were busy. They attended Operation Band-Aid at the Bluffton Hospital and toured the Swiss Historical Homestead. The Bluffton Fire Department gave presentations to our K-1st graders for Fire Prevention Week. Keeping with tradition, students enjoyed a ride on the old fire truck. They also enjoyed a SESA program about animal habitats and are currently working on their animal reports.

The second grade children experienced a variety of activities. They enjoyed a weather demonstration by SESA. During a visit to the Lion and Lamb Center, they discussed differences in people by doing a drumming session with beats and rhythm. They attended the Young People's Concert at the Lima Civic Center.

Third graders had fun. They visited the Allen County Museum to learn about local history and enjoyed two SESA presentations (States of Matter and Forms of Energy).

The fourth graders were diligent students. They participated in two SESA programs (Exploring Electricity and States of Matter). They visited Maple Crest for their Lion and Lamb presentation, and then, for the holidays, they sang Christmas carols and played their recorders for some of the residents.

Fifth grade students were excited and busy. Recently they began the popular DARE program, which lasts several weeks. They also participated in a hands-on SESA presentation pertaining to Newton's Laws.

November was a busy month. The Moxie Strings entertained all the elementary students with their feel-good melodies and foot-stomping, rock-influenced rhythms that put a fresh, fun spin on Celtic and Americana music. Parent Teacher Conferences were held, and 98% of our students were represented by at least one parent, an outstanding show of parental support. We are grateful for the veterans who gave presentations to our students in honor of Veterans' Day. The elementary library and the P.T.O. sponsored a Book Fair which helped raise funds to purchase additional library and classroom books. COSI-On-Wheels, an annual event funded by Allen

County's SESA program, presented Investigating Energy to students in grades three through five.

A flurry of activity could be found in our building during this past Christmas season. Second graders worked hard in their Santa's workshop to make Christmas gifts. Our students displayed their musical talents with an instrumental concert (grades 4 & 5) and the elementary Christmas program. Both were well-attended and supported by family and friends. We are very proud of our students. For their annual Christmas service project, the elementary staff and students collected over \$1,600 for Philippine relief. This was a great opportunity for our students to help others during the Christmas season. Thank you for your support.

We are grateful for the many volunteers in the elementary school. On any given day we have parents and community members helping our staff by tutoring or assisting in various activities or projects. We appreciate the tutors involved with the Project MORE reading program. Fourteen volunteers serve 23 children for this program. We also receive invaluable support from our P.T.O., which helps to organize volunteers for events such as COSI-On-Wheels, special-event meals for teachers, popcorn for the Christmas movies, and raising funds through various sources such as Bakery Bingo, BoxTops for Education, and Market Day.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all teachers, staff, parents, and students for achieving all positive marks on the District Report Card. It was the eighth consecutive year that all indicators of the elementary report card were achieved. This is the sixth year we achieved the rating of "Excellent with Distinction". We are proud of this achievement. Thank you for your continuous support. For updated information and monthly student newsletters, please visit the school's website, www.blufftonschools.org.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

It's time to think about Kindergarten for the 2014-2015 school year. Kindergarten Screening is scheduled for April 14-16. Any child who will be five years old by August 1, 2014, is eligible to enroll. In order to develop a kindergarten mailing list, please contact the elementary office at [419-358-7951](tel:419-358-7951). We will need the following information: child's name, birth date, parents' names, address, and phone number. You may send the information via email to marquartt@blufftonschools.org. All children are required to have their immunizations before starting school. The Allen County Health Department provides immunizations, but appointments must be made. Their website is allencountyhealthdepartment.org. More information will be mailed home to future kindergarten students on our mailing list and in future student newsletters.

Pirate Pride!!

Middle School Update

Kyle Leatherman, Middle School Principal

I want to congratulate all students, parents, and staff on such a great first half of the school year. The middle school has had many successes in the classroom, on the stage, and in athletic events. The students continue to come to school eager and ready to learn. The parents provide constant support for student growth and achievement in school. The teaching staff continues to prepare our students to meet the goals and challenges that have been set before them.

As we move forward toward the spring and into the second half of the school year, students will receive information about scheduling classes for next year. Parents and students should carefully review the information provided in order to build a solid educational plan to prepare them for the next school year and beyond.

Students will also be taking the Ohio Achievement Assessments in late April and early May, along with some PARCC and Ohio Field Tests to help prepare them for the Next Generation Tests in the future. It is vital for students to know that adequate sleep, proper nutrition, and hard work and dedication to their daily schoolwork will be extremely beneficial to them for the achievement tests.

Each month teachers select two students from each grade for Pirates-of-the-Month. These students put forth extra effort, show respect for their peers, and demonstrate potential. The Pirates-of-the-Month receive a t-shirt and Shannon Theatre movie tickets. At this time recognition goes to the following students: Grace Paquin, Andrew Lovett, Emma Klinger, Luke Young, Georgia Owen, Jared Meyer, Kaitlynn Rieman, Brennan Davies, Morgan Nusbaum, Trey Shisler, Katie Wright, Tristan Smucker, Olivia Burner, Baylor Garmatter, Kennedy Coughlan, Jackson Steinmetz, Kelli Leugers, Noah Fredritz, Ana Neufeld-Weaver, Zachary Taylor, Madeline Burghaze, Derek Swartzlander, Kayla Kindle, and Kaleb Jefferson.

Student senate members have been busy this school year. Along with providing concessions for the home volleyball and basketball games, they organized a food drive during the holiday season to help the local food pantry. The food drive brought in over 1,500 items. They also sponsored a spaghetti dinner and collected Toys for Tots and pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House.

The local Lions Club organization held a Peace Poster contest. They chose three posters for their awards. Congratulations to Madison Bassett who took first place and will have her poster submitted for the state competition. Kaly Jolliff earned second place, and Kailey Mault earned third place.

Congratulations to Laura Strahan who took first place in the school spelling bee. Christopher Harnish was the runner-up. The Allen County Spelling Bee will take place on January 25th at OSU-Lima.

The middle school band, strings, and choir gave excellent performances in October and December. The strings performers also traveled to Allen County Head Start, the Mennonite Memorial Home, and Allen County Museum to play Christmas music. They will perform again at the Music Boosters Chicken BBQ on March 28th.

On the athletic playing fields, the middle school saw many successes during the fall. The girls cross country team was crowned champions of the Northwest Conference as many of the runners placed in the top 20. The jr. high football team finished off a perfect

undefeated season. The 8-0 Pirates dominated the competition and earned a Northwest Conference championship.

The winter sports teams are in full swing and in competitions. Soon the teams will be competing in their respective year-end tournaments. Congratulations to all student-athletes, who competed in the fall and are currently competing this winter, for demonstrating sportsmanship throughout the season.

Again, the middle school wishes to thank the parents and community for the continued support in helping our students exceed educational goals and prepare for the future.

News from Bluffton High School

Mike Minnig, High School Principal

It hardly seems possible that we have reached the halfway mark of the 2013-2014 school year.

I am constantly amazed by the talents and work ethic that our students, teachers, and staff possess. Our teachers have been working hard with the implementation of the many changes in our state's educational system. Our students are continuing to perform at a high level in the classroom as over 200 students have been accepted into the Renaissance Program.

Our student body is very involved in a number of extracurricular and co-curricular activities, with over 70% of our students involved in at least one activity. This fall 95 of our student-athletes were named NWC Scholar-Athletes, an honor awarded to those student-athletes who maintain a 3.0 G.P.A. while earning a varsity letter.

Our students continue to excel in our musical arts programs. The band and choir students did an excellent job with their concerts as did the Drama Club with its production of Parents Just Don't Understand. These students are preparing for future performances, including a musical Extra Extra in the spring and their monthly **Senior Citizen Breakfast Performances**. These performances all start at 8:30 in the middle school cafetorium and on the following dates: Feb 12 – Freshmen Choir, Mar 12 – Concert Band, Apr 9 – Drama Club, and May 14 – Jazz Band.

We will begin our student scheduling process for next year around mid-February. Students will receive scheduling materials and have curriculum changes explained to them. Please review with your child what courses she/he plans to take and how these courses relate to the student's future.

OGT Week will start on March 10 with many different activities taking place. The sophomores will be taking the Ohio Graduation Test while the freshmen will be taking a practice OGT test. The juniors will be working on ACT prep, and the seniors will be preparing and presenting their cross-curricular research project.

Use our website, www.bluffton.noacsc.org, to look up all the upcoming events and activities at our school or to log on to Progressbook to monitor your son/daughter's grades. The support our students receive from their parents, peers, and our community plays an important role in their upbringing and is why our students have been so successful over the years

The following are some highlights of the first part of the school year:

- The economics class attended a Financial Day seminar, sponsored by Superior Federal Credit Union, at UNOH in September.

- Congratulations to Andrew Hoff, Josh Garmatter, Olivia Sneary, and Emma Woodruff for each being named student-of-the-month. Each of these students received a savings bond from either Citizen's National Bank, Chase Bank, or First National Bank of Pandora.
- The PSAT, Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, was given to many of our sophomores and juniors in October.
- The high school sponsored two successful Red Cross Blood Drives in September and November. Our next drive is scheduled for March 20. If we are able to obtain 50 successful units, one of our students will be selected for a \$500 scholarship. The community is welcome to participate.
- During one of our fall assemblies, Rus Funk spoke to our students about making positive choices. He addressed a variety of topics with a major focus on teen dating violence and healthy relationships.
- Twelve of our students from grades 10 to 12 attended the first NWC Sportsmanship Conference this fall. Approximately 100 students from the 10-member schools collaborated on the ideals of sportsmanship and the expectations of student players and fans. Trent Phillips, Noah Stratton, Ashley Baker, and Cobie Mikesell were selected by their peers to appear in a NWC sportsmanship commercial for TV 44.
- Stephen Tatarkov was named the Honda-OSU Partnership Math Medal Award winner. Stephen was honored at Honda of America Manufacturing in Marysville in November.
- Lauren Parkins was named to the Allen County Youth Leadership Program, which brings students from around the county together to build on their leadership qualities.
- Many of our high school students are involved in the after-school tutoring program called SOS (Students for Other Students). These students work with 4th and 5th graders to enhance their academic progress.
- The anatomy & physiology classes experienced a live knee replacement through COSI via distance learning. Students were able to interact with the surgeon by asking questions throughout the surgery.
- A Financial Aid Night was offered to parents in December. Lawrence Matthews, Director of Financial Aid at Bluffton University, was on hand to talk about the financial aid process and the FAFSA form.
- The junior class attended a College Career Day at Rhodes State College in December. Students picked three careers of interest. Type of work, job setting, education needed, and benefits earned were discussed regarding their choices.
- All 16 student senate members donated their time and effort for a community service day in December.
- Students and staff did a great job with the Toys for Tots campaign in the high school office.
- Our SADD club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, passed out red Bluffton Pirate wristbands to students who signed a pledge to stay drug and alcohol free during Red Ribbon Week. The SADD club has also held a few after- game parties for students during the basketball season.

Thanks again for the continued support our parents and community give to our high school students.

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools
102 S. Jackson St.
Bluffton, Ohio 45817

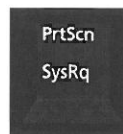
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Technology Update **Mardy Herr, Technology Coordinator**

Aging technology at the high school was updated for this school year and now provides tools to keep pace with 21st century learning.

We also have added several carts of Chromebooks in the middle school and elementary to facilitate our online math curriculum, which was initiated this school year. New technology coupled with Google Apps for Education enables our staff and students to engage in an active learning environment with the ability to share and collaborate in the learning process.



Tech Tip: Print Screen!?!

Ever wonder what happens when you press the PrtScn (Print Screen) key on the keyboard? The short answer is it copies and pastes whatever is on your monitor to the clipboard (memory). The best way to find out is to try it. Press the key, and it appears nothing happens. Now, open a blank document in your favorite word processing tool; then click edit and paste. You should now have a picture of your computer's desktop in your document. Crop and size the image as necessary. As an additional test, try holding the "alt" key down before pressing the print screen key to capture the active window on your computer instead of the whole desktop. This is a great tool to quickly collect info to save and/or send to a friend or colleague. It is especially helpful to tech guys trying to figure out what a "pop-up" message on your computer means.