Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

2020-2021 Spring District Newsletter

**~Superintendent News~**

As we approach the end of our very different school year, I want to wish a huge congratulations to the Class of 2021! Obviously, the end of their junior year and their senior year (as a whole) has not been normal, but they have been resilient and flexible in facing the challenges brought on by the pandemic. I know that we, as a school district, and you as family and friends of these young adults are proud of how they have handled this unprecedented situation. We wish the class of 2021 the very best as they leave the halls of Bluffton High School for the last time and enter a new stage of their lives. We trust that we have prepared them well to be successful in whatever career path they choose. Graduation will be on Saturday, May 29, at 7 P.M. at Harmon Field. If we have inclement weather, we will move graduation to the High School Gymnasium.

As the school year ends, we also wish the best to Tim Closson, who is retiring after serving as our elementary principal for the last 14 years. Best wishes go to Deb Augsburger, as well, who has worked in the Middle School Cafeteria for the past 34 years! We thank both of these excellent employees for all of their service to our district. They will be missed.

As I reflect over the school year, I want to express gratitude for the patience, understanding, and flexibility of our students, parents, staff, and community. As a school district, our goal was (and always is) to provide your students with a strong learning experience, and this year that goal included learning that occurred in person and online. Despite this challenge, we worked diligently to help all our students, K-12, achieve the learning targets for their grade level. While we cannot know for certain what the next school year will bring, we do expect a more traditional start to the school year when we begin classes again on August 30, 2021. Our plan is for students to attend school in-person 5 days a week, and our teachers will be providing solely in-person instruction. We look forward to welcoming our online students back to in person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

Finally, here is a quick update on voting. If your polling location was previously the Bluffton Elementary School, that polling location has been changed to The Centre in Bluffton. The Allen County Board of Elections made this decision without any input from the school district. I found out that the polling place changed when I received the information in my personal mail.

Please call or stop in if you have any questions regarding the information in this letter. Thank you for the part you play in making Bluffton a great community in which to live and work!

Greg Denecker, Superintendent

***Congratulations to the Class of 2021!***

**The Bluffton High School Commencement**

**will be held on May 29, 2021, at 7:00 P.M.**



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

2021-2022 School Calendar

Bluffton Exempted Village Schools

August 25 & 26 Wed./Thurs. Staff Pre-Service

August 30 Monday School Opens

August 30 & 31 Mon./Tues. Kindergarten Testing

September 1 Wednesday 1st Day of Kindergarten

September 6 Monday No School - Labor Day

October 29 Friday End of 1st Grading Period

November 23 & 24 Tues./Wed. No School - (Elem/MS)

November 24 Wednesday No School - (HS)

November 25 & 26 Thurs./Fri. No-School - Thanksgiving

December 21 Tuesday Last Day of School for 2021

January 3 Monday School Re-opens 2022

January 14 Friday End of 2nd Grading Period

January 17 Monday No School - MLK Day

February 21 Monday No School - Presidents’ Day

March 25 Friday End of 3rd Grading Period

April 15 & 18 Fri./Mon. No School - Spring Break

May 27 Friday End of 4th Grading Period

May 28 Saturday Commencement

May 30 Monday Memorial Day

May 31 Tuesday Staff Post-Service

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**Elementary Update - Tim Closson, Principal**

This has been a challenging but productive school year at Bluffton Elementary School.

Students have experienced a variety of activities this semester. The 5th-grade quiz bowl team was able to participate in our county competition this past winter. They had a successful season and were led by Mrs. Jaime Shaw. In February we had a virtual assembly “Extreme Science.” We had some amazing demonstrations from a 700,000 Volt Van de Graff generator, vortex cannons, and a tesla coil. This was provided by our amazing PTO. In March, the 4th and 5th-grade strings, 4th-grade recorders, and 5th-grade band students were involved with the music booster chicken barbecue dinner to raise money for the music program. The students exhibited their skills through a video-taped concert. In May, students were able to experience many outside experiences such as nature walks and exploration. Our special academic emphasis S.M.A.R.T. Week was during the week of May 6th. The acronym letters stand for S-Social Studies, M-Math, A-Arts & Fitness, R- Reading, and T-Technology & Science. Students participated in special activities each day. Field Day activities were at Harmon Field during that special week.

Kindergarten students have been fascinated with learning. In science, they learned about Earth Day and how to take care of the Earth.  They have been writing “How To” stories with four steps to tell how to do something.  For example, they wrote four steps on how to make a pizza.  For social studies, the students learned different ways to stay safe.  Students are busy learning how to add and subtract using objects and pictures.  They will be researching different animals in May.  They are looking forward to field day.

The first graders have been diligent in their academics.   Currently the students are reading and writing poems during their poetry weeks.  At the end of the week, they will recite a memorized poem during a “poetry café” session. The students also have been working hard to publish their own writing this year.  As the end of the year approaches, the first graders will be exploring different careers along with economics.  An exciting camping week is planned to go along with SMART week!

The second graders are ending the year with an array of activities. They are having Safety Pup with Officer Hannah. Jeremy Scoles from the Ohio EPA gave a presentation on landfills. Students made an edible candy landfill that was super yummy! The children will study arrays and make some with cereal. They also are studying geography and making landform maps using pantry items and salt dough. The last week they hope to visit the Buckeye Park for some fun, games, and a picnic lunch.

Third graders are having fun. Recently, the students met their goals for 6 months of independent reading for the Book It program and celebrated by enjoying pizza from Luke's. The students will be studying Bluffton history and part of this unit will involve walks to note the historical buildings and landmarks in the community.  Classes will attend a Little House on the Prairie program, presented by Judy Green, a Laura Ingalls Wilder expert. Students will also be making models of the cabin from this book during May.  To wrap up the year, third graders will be investigating rocks and soil as part of an earth science unit.

The fourth graders learned about diversity.  Louise Matthews, at the Lion and Lamb Peace Center, provided several cultural opportunities. They enjoyed a series of programs entitled, “What It’s Like to Be Me.” The students listened to the book A Chance to Shine and had a chance to discuss how to show empathy and understanding toward people who seem different. A Bluffton University student zoomed with them and shared his story of what it was like for his family to be homeless. The fourth graders participated in a SESA presentation on electricity. They enjoyed making and learning about circuits and even tested objects to determine if they were conductors or insulators. Students will be participating in a Peace Art Tour scavenger hunt at Bluffton University at the end of the school year.

Bluffton fifth graders have many exciting plans for May.  Students will enjoy a D.A.R.E. graduation party with a magician at the school. They also look forward to participating in Field Day.  On the last day of school, the students will enjoy a picnic at Mrs. Boblitt’s house and a movie at the Shannon Theater.  For their final farewell to elementary school, students will make their own chalk artwork on the playground.   The 5th grade teachers wish the class the best of luck as they move from the elementary building into the middle school this fall.

During the summer months ahead, we encourage all parents and families to involve their children in challenging activities, to take advantage of the wonderful Bluffton Library reading programs, and to incorporate fun learning into family vacations. **Thank you for your generous and continual support!**

**Middle Schools News – Joshua Kauffman, Principal**

As we come to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year at Bluffton Middle School, I want to begin by sincerely thanking the middle school teachers and staff for all the work they have put in to trying to continue the tradition of excellence during what has been a year of unknowns. The work, time, and energy they have put into their craft, not only this year but last as well, are truly inspiring, and I thank them for that work. I also want to thank our students and families for staying the course through everything that has been thrown at us throughout the pandemic. If there has ever been a year where we can all be grateful that we live in Bluffton and truly do come together as a village to ensure our students are taken care of by working together, this one has been it. I know I speak for all of us inside the school in saying we appreciate the support, prayers, communication, and ongoing patience as we took our first steps to educate during the pandemic. As we look ahead, I’m encouraged and hopeful to see what challenges we may face, and I know that, at any cost, the children in our school will be taken care of at the highest level.

Since mid-year, our students have been hard at work despite the restrictions and limitations they have faced. Our winter sports teams had successful seasons; the 8th-grade boys basketball team won the league title and ended their historic season as NWC tournament runners-up, losing only one game in their two years in the MS. The 8th-grade girls were also runner-up in the NWC tournament. The quiz bowl teams were competitive, always placing in the top tier of those schools in attendance.

Despite not being able to perform live for our community as we have in past years, our choir, band, and strings students still put the work in for their virtual concerts and are continuing to work hard in the spring. I know Mrs. Zink, Mrs. Lewis, and Mr. Sycks wish they had been able to showcase the students in live performances for you, but they did a great job of recording, editing, and getting the links out to the community so everyone could watch our students in action. One of the luxuries of those virtual concerts was seeing the joy the students and teachers still had, even though they were coming through the doors in shifts, wearing protective gear, and following safety protocols in order for the event to even take place.

Another big event that we still were able to have was our annual 8th-grade idol competition. Edging out a fantastic group of competitors, 8th-grader Kaleigh Coffman took home the trophy this year. As with all other events this year, this activity had to be modified with extra work invested to zoom the competition so other classes in the school could view it too. Bringing this to life required a great deal of coordination by the staff.

With the arrival of spring and the hopeful farewell to the winter snow, we are well into our spring sports. Many students are participating in track, and it has been wonderful to see them in action, enjoying what they love to do.

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A favorite activity is the Lego League competition, and that will be coming soon.

Another big event on the horizon is our annual Night-at-the-Museum, which, this year, will be held for students only on May 20th. Even though we will not be able to involve the public like in years past, we are still hopeful to be able to put together a virtual recording of the event so families and community members can see the hard work of the students and teachers.

As we conclude the school year, I want to thank all our community members and partners for helping to make the year a success. It is my hope that even though our year has been different, we can look back on it and use it as a point of reference not only to appreciate each day and the years ahead a little more but also to look forward to our upcoming school year with a mentality that motivates us all to make up for the last year and a half and to do awesome things for students. I’m looking forward to it. With Pirate Pride!

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

As we enter the final few weeks of the school year, I would like to thank our students, parents, teachers, aides, cooks, custodians, bus drivers, nurse, and everyone else who played a part in our educational system here at Bluffton this year. This pandemic has put many under stressful and into challenging situations. It has been great to see the extra measures, flexibility, patience, and understanding these people have shown during adverse situations. It is truly appreciated and has made this a successful year.

In this month of May, 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.

Throughout the year, many students participate in community service projects. The National Honor Society held a canned-food drive to help support our local food pantry. The student senate was able to hold their annual Ironman Volleyball tournament where they were able to raise 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.

During this year of adjustment, our students have continued to uphold a high level of academic achievement. This is evident as our Renaissance numbers continue to stay around 180-200 students each quarter. Thirty-six juniors and seniors took 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 37 new members, and 150 students received academic letters for maintaining a 3.5 grade point average.

Our students have performed well in the arts also. The music department has been creative this year with virtual concerts and holding

our own solo and ensemble contest where many of our students received top marks for their performances. The drama club is working hard on the musical *Dr. Doolittle* that is planned to be held outside on June 4-6. Art students also were recognized with pieces being 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 middle of 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 grade point average 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 Althetic Boosters Reverse Raffle which will be held virtually Saturday, May 22. Each year this fundraiser helps to support many of our students and programs.

During the month of May, we will be able to host a few events that our students missed out on last year. Prom and post-prom, hosted by our junior and senior parents, will be held at Bluffton University. The Renaissance Club will be holding its fourth quarter incentive picnic. The senior class will be able to make their marks on College Avenue during our Paint-the-Street event and enjoy their traditional morning parade their last day of school.

As the year draws to a close and graduation approaches, all members of the Class of 2021 should have received a mailing concerning their end-of-the-year schedules and commencement. Any questions pertaining to commencement (May 29 @ 7:00 p.m.) should be directed to the high school office.

The last day of school is scheduled for May 28. 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 of a quarter grade. Report cards for the last grading period will be posted on Progressbook on Wednesday, June 2.

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.

**Music Department**

Over 250 students were part of the vocal music program during 2020-2021. The high school symphonic choir (juniors and seniors), concert choir (freshmen and sophomores), and chamber choir (by audition) participated in virtual recordings of a fall, Christmas, chicken barbeque, and spring concert. Students from both the high school and middle schools also participated in a solo and ensemble contest, and all earned superior or excellent ratings. In June students will perform the musical *Doctor Dolittle*. The choirs from 6th-12th grades were very fortunate to have had many talented members.

Despite the circumstances, the bands have had an amazing year. The 55-member marching band had a very successful season performing at half time of all three home football games as well as a few impromptu “send offs” for the football team for their away games. In March of 2020, the marching band was the last band to travel to Disney World before the pandemic hit. The 45-member concert band recorded concerts for the fall, at Christmas, the annual barbecue, and in the spring. The group continues to grow musically each year. The 25-member pep band did not play for any basketball games, but had rehearsals and get-togethers each week throughout the season – *music for music’s sake*! The 18-member jazz ensemble recorded music for the Christmas concert and the barbecue; they actually will be able to have the end-of-the-year concert in May. The 36-member junior high band, as well as the 21-member 6th-grade band and 24-member 5th-grade band, recorded concerts in the fall, at Christmas, and the barbecue. We had our own solo and ensemble contest in April, and the tory" in the students’ classrooms this year, rather than our actual music room.  This presented some challenges, but has also helped us to be

creative with our lessons.  Learning how to send plans to each classroom

with interactive lessons or appropriate YouTube songs was the #1 hurdle

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(since pushing the piano around the halls was not an option.)  Thank you K-3 parents who sent in socks so students could wear them as gloves and be able to share instruments.  Thank you teachers who had the students ready with chromebooks so they could access their Music Google Classroom when necessary.  Thank you students for your patience as Mrs. Basinger navigated through this new territory of technology!  I hope you enjoyed the journey and learned a few new things along the way.

This year proved to be challenging for the string orchestras; however, we persevered and found new ways to learn and be successful. The 25-member junior high orchestra recorded a recruiting video for the 4th grade classes, which resulted in 42 new fourth string players. WOW! The orchestras continued to learn new notes, bow articulations, and different music genres. Virtual concerts included fall, Christmas, and barbecue concerts. In lieu of field trips, these concerts were shared with residents of area nursing facilities. In May, the 6-12 orchestras will have a guest orchestra conductor adjudicate their songs and work with the orchestras on an additional song. The orchestras look forward to future field trips and adjudicated events.

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

The high school and middle school sponsored seven sports in the fall season. Sports offered for athletes in high school 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.

The winter sports had approximately 80 athletes participating in sports at the high school level and 70 athletes at the middle school. Our sports included basketball, wrestling, cheerleading, and swimming. Middle school athletes participated in basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading. Congratulations to Kadin Basil for advancing to the OHSAA State Wrestling tournament this winter at Marion Harding High School. This was Kadin’s second year advancing to the State Wrestling tournament; however, he was unable to compete in 2020. Thayne Kleman also advanced to the State Wrestling tournament in 2020 but he too was unable to compete due to the pandemic.

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 participated in spring sports (baseball, softball, boys tennis, and track), and 60 middle school students participated in track.

Next year, the Bluffton Athletic Department will continue using and storing online physicals on PRIVIT, <https://blufftonpirates-oh.e-ppe.com/index.jspa>. **Before a student may participate in athletics at Bluffton, he/she must be cleared by a physician, and all appropriate forms must be signed and uploaded on PRIVIT**. If you have concerns, you may call the PRIVIT help desk at 844-234-4357 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm), or contact Alex Hanna [HannaA@blufftonschools.org](mailto:HannaA@blufftonschools.org)  (419) 358-7941.

**Physicals are good for one calendar year;** all forms must be completed and uploaded every year. After you have completed or updated the **Physical History**, uploaded the **Physical Exam Form**, the **Medical**

**Bluffton Exempted Village Schools Non-Profit**

**102 S. Jackson St. U.S. Postage**

**Bluffton, Ohio 45817 PAID**

**Bluffton, OH 45817**

**Permit No 157**

**Postal Patron**

**Eligibility** form, have read and signed the **Acknowledgement of Warning**, (the St. Rita’s Release and the Sudden Cardiac Arrest form), the **OHSAA Eligibility Statement**, **Transportation Agreement**, and have joined a team, your son/daughter will be able to participate in athletics at Bluffton High School/Middle School.

Step-by-step instructions can be found by going to the school’s home page <https://sites.google.com/blufftonschools.org/bevs/home?authuser=0>, scrolling to the bottom, and clicking on the link labeled **SPORTS PHYSICALS**. Parents and athletes will need to complete this information prior to seeing the doctor for a physical. Anyone who does not have a computer, smartphone, or internet access, is more than welcome to stop at the high school and use a computer. This is approximately a 20-minute process the first year. On Tuesday, May 28, Bluffton’s Blanchard Valley Hospital will conduct physicals for all current students in grades 6-11 who wish to play a sport during the 2021-22 school year. If you have any questions, please call the high school (419)358-7941 or email Alex Hanna at [HannaA@blufftonschools.org](mailto:HannaA@blufftonschools.org).

***Technology Dept. Update - Mardy Herr, Technology Coordinator***

Trying to stay ahead of the curve with updated technology hardware while being fiscally responsible is always challenging but extremely important. With the demands of today’s classroom and the added value that working technology bring to the learning process, it is paramount to maintain our school electronics. We are in the process of replacing ten-year-old desktop computers in the elementary K/1st-grade wing and middle school classrooms. These computers connect to a projector/Smartboard or interactive flat panel for teachers and students to use in the classroom.

After about 6 or 7 years, Chromebooks become obsolete because they no longer update the operating system. An updated operating system is important for use with our state testing app. We recently replaced about 150 seven-year-old Chromebooks used for state testing which are no longer useful. Normal Chromebook wear and tear is also an issue to consider for longevity; however, our students continue to learn and practice responsible care for their school-issued Chromebooks as well as keeping them charged and ready for use each day.

**Pirate Pride!**