



# THE BRIDGE

**Spring 2020**

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Serving the students of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek communities since 1976

*Class of 2020 graduate Autumn Taylor and her family celebrate the special occasion together.*



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Our Mission...Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools empowers our learning community to: Be responsible decision-makers and effective problem-solvers; Persevere in the achievement of life goals; Contribute to communities locally and beyond; and Embrace learning as a lifelong process.

# SUPERINTENDENT



Dear District Residents,

These past months have certainly been extremely unique and challenging as we have battled through the COVID-19 pandemic. There was an overnight change in how we live every facet of our lives, impacting everything as small as a handshake or a hug as well as going to a store, visiting our friends and family and, of course, how we go to school. It has certainly been a test in patience, flexibility and collaboration.

I believe that our district was as well-prepared as any for this situation. On the afternoon of Thursday, March 12, the state announced that all PK-12 school buildings would be closed and that we would be moving to remote learning until at least April 6 (later it was extended to the rest of the school year). By Tuesday, March 17, we were up and running with remote learning using Google Classroom - an extremely quick turn-around!

Because we had experience using Classroom and other digital tools for the past few years, we were as digitally prepared for this transition as we could be. Google Classroom allows teachers a medium in which to post assignments, assessments and other pertinent information. We are also using the video conferencing tool Google Meet and a screen recording software called Screencastify to provide our students with lessons, social and connection time, meetings with counselors and teachers, and collaborative sessions between not only students but with staff.

Of course, we can always get better and always strive to do so, which is why we surveyed our students, parents and staff in May asking questions such as "What went well and what could go better next time?" Additionally, we asked questions about next school year. We will use all of this information to prepare for next school year so that we can continue to provide a high level, student-centered experience for our students, regardless of whether students are back in the classroom 100% of the time, 100% remote learning, or a blended approach.

And in these times of social distancing and with school out for the summer, I want you to be able to get your questions answered in regards to our school district. Please email questions or comments that you have to [superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us) and I will do my best to answer them as quickly, and thoroughly as I can as well as post my response in my blog, Cozad's Corner. Additionally, if you would like to receive updates periodically from the school district please send your email address to [superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us).

At this time, we are not quite sure what next year will look like but we continue to gather all of the necessary information, follow any directives from the state and health department and communicate our plans in order to do what is best for the safety and well-being of our students, staff and community.

I am grateful to our staff for its can-do attitude and creativity during this time, but I am especially grateful to the parents for all of their hard work, patience and collaboration. Our true partnership with our families was never more evident than it has been over the past few months.

*Douglas A. Cozad*  
Superintendent

# Congratulations to the Class of 2020

On May 16 graduation ceremonies took place in the BHS auditorium. Principal Dave Hann announced the name of the graduate while a family member presented the diploma to their child. Immediate family was also able to attend this unique event. It was a special day for all!



Lucas Flanagan's parents congratulate him on graduation day.

## District Donates Medical Supplies

When Governor DeWine called on Ohioans to help the medical community be as prepared as possible to safely work through the pandemic, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools jumped into action. Dr. Cozad partnered with volunteers and district nurses to obtain and distribute crucial supplies - including 15 boxes of gloves, 200 masks and 12 containers of disinfectant wipes - for Miami Valley South Hospital/Premier Health.



## Bellbrook Middle School Wins 2020 STEM Awards

Congratulations to Bellbrook-Sugarcreek's STEM and art teachers, Kim Lord, Debi Schwieterman, Lisa Bakita and Allyson Geis, on receiving first place in the 2020 Dayton Regional Stem Center's STEM Education School-Based Collaboration Award.

They received the award for their efforts in developing and expanding Bellbrook's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) programs, their collaboration with local STEM and art agencies in the area, as well as their partnership with Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Parks.

In addition, we congratulate STEM teacher, Kim Lord, on receiving the second place 2020 Dayton Regional STEM Center's STEM Leadership and Service Award. Lord received this award not only for her dedication to STEM in Bellbrook Sugarcreek Schools, but also for promoting STEM and art as part of the district's annual district STEAM Night.



(from left to right sitting) Lisa Bakita and Ally Geis (from left to right standing) Debi Schwieterman and Kim Lord

# Financial Update

The financial situation of Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools continues to be the single most important issue facing our school district. Without our finances on solid ground, it is extremely difficult to offer the type of well-rounded education our students deserve. With the disappointing failure of the March levy - combined with the staggering \$659,000 reduction in state funding (since reduced to \$517,000) for this school year announced after the due date of absentee ballots to be returned - the district's budget is at an even more perilous situation.

Due to the district's financial situation and the uncertainty of what the next school year will look like, district leadership has taken on the heavy task of examining every personnel decision to keep expenses to a minimum, while constantly looking for ways to seek efficiencies.

For example, the Board had considered suspending the All Day Every Day (ADED) Kindergarten program for the 2020-21 school year due to a current lack of enrollment, the uncertainty of additional enrollees for next school year due to the COVID-19 concerns, and the likely situation that kindergarten tuition would have to be reimbursed if a switch to remote learning is made during the school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Suspending ADED Kindergarten could also result in future repercussions to district enrollment. While even thinking about this saddens me, we have to explore every option for cost savings and possible revenue losses. After much consideration, it has been decided to continue the All Day Every Day (ADED) Kindergarten program for the 2020-21 school year.

The Phase III and IV reductions include 13 staff positions that the district eliminated due to the levy failure and in light of current district finances. This adds to the number of positions that have been reduced in the district since 2018 to 33, which is about 10% of district staff. Further, 85 supplemental positions had to be eliminated resulting in

losses impacting sports teams, middle school play, Math Pentathlon, high school clubs, and Pep Band.

Let's reiterate this - these are not easy decisions to make. The fiscal reality however, is that we simply cannot continue to make reductions without seriously impacting the quality of our students' educational experience, and unfortunately, that is where we are right now. For a complete list of the cuts we will have to make as a result of the loss at the ballot, please visit our website to view the press release and presentation from February 13: <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/PressReleases.aspx>.

The updated five-year forecast, which was presented to the board in May, shows that with this most recent levy failure, the district will be making \$2.5 million in cumulative reductions for school years 2020-21 and 2021-22. The forecast also takes into account the almost \$1.3 million in state funding reductions for 2019-20 and anticipated in 2020-21. To summarize the district's financial situation over the new few years as it stands right now, the ending balance for the 2021-22 school year is \$414,198, for the 2022-23 school year it is -\$2,738,581 and for the 2023-24 year it is -\$7,175,606.

The Board is also discussing possible options for putting a levy on the November ballot. These discussions and decisions will take place this summer. Believe us when we say that we are doing everything we can to have the least detrimental impact on the high-quality educational experience that our children deserve, but we are to the point where we cannot help but feel these cuts and reductions in the classroom and beyond. And as you can see from the information above, there is no way we can continue to operate our school district without additional local funding.

Earlier in the year the Auditor of State's Ohio Performance Team (OPT) conducted a performance audit of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District. Due to an already lean budget, the auditors found it very challenging to find many areas to reduce without striking at the core of our schools and forever changing the well-rounded and high-caliber educational experience that our students deserve and our community expects. Unfortunately, with the levy failure and reductions from the state, these types of reductions are becoming a reality for our school district.

# Reductions made due to March 17 levy failure and state budget reductions

- \* Eliminate
  - o Art at SB & BCI
  - o STEM at SB & BCI
  - o STEP (the gifted pull-out program) at BCI
  - o World language offerings at BMS
  - o Keyboarding at BMS
  - o Art for 6th grade at BMS
  - o 1 Social Studies, 1 English & 1 Science (outsource Biomed to GCCC) teachers at BHS
  - o 2 librarian positions across the district
  - o 85 paid supplementals and/or athletic positions across the district
- \* Increase sports participation fees from \$150 to \$200 for BMS and \$300 for BHS
- \* \$50 of marching band/color guard/winterguard/IPE fees will go to district budget
- \* No parking lot resurfacing or landscape mulch in summer 2020
- \* Delay purchase of Chromebooks for 1 year
- \* Busing
  - o Eliminate for BHS, grades 9-12
  - o Reduce to the minimum two-mile state requirement for BMS and BCI
- \* Reduce district-wide staff development
- \* Delay curriculum adoptions in math and science
- \* Non-renew select electronic curriculum subscriptions
- \* Non-renew contract with our communications consultant



## Bell Creek Intermediate Students Take on the Kindness Challenge

The “Kindness Challenge” was created by Bellbrook-Sugarcreek teachers and administrators to encourage and recognize positive behaviors of students during remote learning. The challenge took place over the course of three weeks, each with its own theme: Be kind to yourself, be kind to someone in your home, and be kind to someone outside your home.

“We are proud of the many students who participated in the challenge,” said Jill Adams, Bellbrook Intermediate principal. “We received new photos of the students showcasing kindness in action every day, which I really loved, because I missed seeing them in school.”



# Golden Eagles Soar into Remote Learning

By Betsy Chadd, Director of Curriculum and Gifted

On March 12, 2020, Governor Mike DeWine made an unprecedented announcement ordering all of Ohio's public, community and private K-12 school buildings to be closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

At that time, we knew that the traditional spring plans of students, teachers, and families would be turned upside down. With little time to plan, anticipate roadblocks, or have preparation-centered discussions with students, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools unveiled its educational response for remote learning.

Remote learning requires use of online programs that connect teachers with students as well as the organization of instructional objectives, schedules, and parent communication. Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools has employed one-to-one technology since 2015, when students in grades 6-12 were assigned a Chromebook (personal computing devices) for school use. Since then, the one-to-one initiative expanded to elementary grades as well. On March 13, Chromebooks were sent home with all students in grades K-12, and although the district was prepared, no one could have predicted that that would be the last day of traditional face-to-face school this school year.

To make the remote learning experience as successful as possible, Bellbrook teachers followed a coordinated schedule to balance student workloads, provide time for parent-teacher communication, and allow critical staff collaboration. Teachers met online by grade or subject area at least once a week to plan for and communicate about student needs. Building principals and district administrators held virtual meetings with staff each week as well.

Although studies have shown that instructional planning for an online environment is significantly more intensive than for traditional face-to-face teaching, there have been some positives that have come from this situation. Meeting online has opened up opportunities for teachers to plan with each other without traditional school schedule constraints. Added to that, many teachers are collaborating across grade levels and buildings, which is difficult to accomplish during traditional face-to-face education.



## Join Us for our Inaugural Community Literary Initiative

One example of a district-wide online experience is a community-wide effort known as "BellBOOKS: Taking Root 2020." Early this school year, second-grade teachers began planning a grade-level reading of the Katherine Applegate novel, *Wishtree*. When their plans came to a halt due to the school closure, they were motivated to adjust and expand their efforts across the entire school community.



Teachers across grade levels began meeting online to develop a district-wide literacy effort, which included incorporating *Wishtree* discussions and projects in their virtual classrooms. Fifty-one teachers and administrators recorded chapter readings in both English and Spanish for students to listen to at home with their families. These videos are posted on the district *Wishtree* website available for anyone to view. Join us through the QR code.

In the words of Donnie Phelps, Bellbrook High School English and Spanish teacher, "This will be a great way to promote connection, albeit virtual, to a common reading experience and to see this book touch the lives of all of our Bellbrook Golden Eagles!"

# Bus Drivers Connect with Students

District bus drivers, Tom Brixey and Belynda “Bo” Frieden, emailed student bus riders to let them know they were thinking of them and provide a light-hearted hello during the pandemic.

Hi,  
This is Mr. Brixey, your bus driver, in case you forgot. Just wanted to send a short note to let you know that I miss all the “Good Mornings” and smiles as you got on the bus. Hope you are all safe and healthy during these crazy days. I hope your home studies are going smoothly. Believe it or not I have to do home studies also if I want to get paid. Sure is hard to study at my age, ha ha. Be careful and hopefully I will see you sooner rather than later.  
Respectfully,  
Mr. Brixey

Hello,  
This is Miss Bo. I am a sub on bus 18 for Mr. Ray. I am just reaching out to tell you that I hope you and your family are staying healthy and safe. These are difficult times, especially for the seniors, but we will get through this. I hope you are keeping up on your school work, and are able to find and enjoy other things you like to do while being home. I miss seeing you, as I was just trying to get to know you. Mr. Ray sends his best and misses you too!! Take care of yourself and stay safe!!!  
Hope to see you soon!!!  
Miss Bo

# Bellbrook High School Teacher Creates 3-D Mask Extenders for the Community

Upon hearing of the urgent need for medical supplies during the pandemic, Blake Barnes, civil engineering/architecture teacher at Bellbrook High School, found an open source design for mask extenders and, with permission from principal Dave Hann, used the school’s 3-D printer to make them.

“Wearing a mask periodically is usually a non-issue for most people, but for those who need to wear them hour after hour, day after day, the pain and pressure on the ears can be pretty awful,” said Barnes. “The extenders are designed to help eliminate that pain, and from what I have heard from the community, they work.”

The extender functions by hooking to the elastic of a mask and wrapping around the back of the head/neck. Barnes has printed extenders for doctors, nurses, pharmacy workers, nursing home employees, the Bellbrook Police Department, school staff serving lunch to students each day, and many others. He estimates having distributed around 150 extenders.

Recently, four engineering students - Allie Lewis, Lucas Smallwood, Glenn Ochsner and Cambree Bernkopf - volunteered to continue the work from their homes over the summer while Barnes cares for his new baby. The students will use 3-D pen kits to maintain production. In addition, Barnes was able to create a similar mask extender design using the school’s laser cutter/engraver, which produces at a much faster rate.



Mask extenders made by Barnes for the Bellbrook Lions Club, whose charitable donation enabled the school to purchase a laser cutting/engraving machine. Extenders are being given to the Lion Club's 50+ membership as a small thank you.

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools  
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## Sodexo Springs into Action

During our period of remote learning due to COVID-19, Jennifer Hoehn and the entire Sodexo food services staff sprang into action to ensure that Bellbrook-Sugarcreek students did not go hungry. Hoehn and her staff set up a drive-thru system at Stephen Bell Elementary, where they assembled and distributed 400 breakfasts and 440 lunches each day. When the team saw an additional need, they went mobile, delivering meals to area apartment complexes. We are grateful for our amazing food services team's relentless work to provide meals for our kids. They have truly made a difference in our community!



## UPCOMING DATES



- July 9** Regular Board Meeting
- Aug. 13** First Day for Students, Gr. I-12
- Aug. 13** Regular Board Meeting
- Aug. 20** First Day for Preschool, 5-Day and Gold Kindergarten
- Aug. 21** First Day for Purple Kindergarten
- Sept. 7** No School/Labor Day
- Sept. 10** Regular Board Meeting
- Sept. 16** 2-hour delay K-12
- Oct. 9** End of the First Quarter
- Oct. 16** Hall of Fame Ceremonies

\*These dates are subject to change. Please visit our website for updates.

**Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools**

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