



# THE BRIDGE

Fall 2019  
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Issue 1

Serving the students of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek communities since 1976

Bellbrook beat undefeated and state ranked Valley View 30-19 on Oct. 4 in varsity football action.



Photos by Nick Falzerano/Nicholas Studios

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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,

The school year is in full swing with the first quarter already behind us and winter break right around the corner! We have had a fantastic start to the school year, and I look forward to what lies ahead for us. Earlier this school year, **Bellbrook-Sugar Creek Schools was recognized by niche.com in the Best Schools categories in Greene County** as the best district, the safest school district, the best place to teach and the district with the best teachers. In addition, the district was ranked as the second safest school in the Dayton area, as well as fourth for the best teachers and the best place to teach.

The 2019 State Report Card was released in September, and Bellbrook-Sugar Creek Schools was once again **listed as one of the top districts in the state**. This could not be accomplished without the great partnerships that the district has with our parents, students and community.

There certainly is a lot to celebrate although **we also have our challenges ahead of us**.

I want to turn our attention to what I believe is **the biggest issue facing our district right now: our budget**. In July, the board of education made the unanimous decision to postpone placing an issue on the ballot until 2020, which allowed us time to evaluate and reduce our budget through phases of reductions and continue to get feedback from the community. Through a community survey in June, **the sentiment was that before the district placed another levy on the ballot, we needed to make reductions to our budget**.

Following the failure of the May 2019 ballot issue, the Bellbrook-Sugar Creek School District Board of Education and district leadership team began identifying additional cuts and reductions that the district would have to make. Staff reductions in the summer of 2018 before the May 2019 ballot issue and Phase I and II reductions after the failure of the ballot issue have totaled more than \$2.3 million and include the reduction of 20 staff positions, half of which are teaching positions.

Our budget is so lean that **cuts are already hitting the classroom** and the student experience; we cannot continue to make reductions without seriously impacting the quality of our students' educational experience.

This is why, during the November 2019 board meeting, **the Board of Education also took the first of two necessary votes to put a 5.7-mill operating levy on the March 17, 2020 presidential primary ballot**. The passage of this operating levy in March 2020 will help fund the district's day-to-day operations, such as staffing, utilities, transportation and supplies. If passed, the levy will cost residents approximately \$16.60 per month per \$100,000 appraised value.

We know how important it is that you have the facts and we are working hard to better communicate and engage with our community. I have started a blog, called **Dr. Cozad's Corner**, to provide more in-depth information about topics that are impacting our schools. Beginning this school year, we have **streamlined our Facebook communications** to one district page, with the goal in mind that everyone will receive district facts and news in a timely and seamless manner. I have also been hosting **"Coffees with the Superintendent"** as a way to informally meet and chat with residents. I encourage you to attend one, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Respectfully,

*Douglas A. Cozad*

# The State Report Card and Our Inaugural Quality Profile



## Quality Profile 2018-19



Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools has a long tradition of excellence. The 2019 State Report Card was released and the district as a whole as well as each of our individual schools received a "B" letter grade. We look at and examine our results, celebrating our successes and always looking for areas of improvement; however, the report card is just one area of assessment that we look at. We utilize other standardized tests and in-class assessments to really drive our instruction. Additionally, the report card only looks at the academic performance on one test on one day and we know success in schools is much more complex than that.



For the first time, we have created a Quality Profile, which provides a more well-rounded report of our school district as well as our awards and state and national recognition. This report showcases all of the important facts, figures and accomplishments from our last school year; and what a year it was! It is always interesting to take a moment to look at the year in review. Our inaugural Quality Profile was mailed to district households earlier this fall but can also be found on our website at <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/AboutUs.aspx> or by clicking on the QR Code included in this article.

### INCLEMENT WEATHER: NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

From time to time during the school year, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools may close, experience delays or early dismissals, or make changes in school schedules and activities due to inclement weather. In an effort to disseminate announcements in a timely and cost-effective manner, the first step in our notification process will be electronic. We will EMAIL and TEXT all parents and staff using the Instant Connect call-out system. We will post the notification on our FACEBOOK page (@BellbrookSchools), our TWITTER feed (@BellbrookSchool) and on our WEBSITE. Local TV and radio stations will carry announcements and updates as well.

### SAFEROH TIP LINE

Being safe at school is more than just physical safety; it is also about having a safe place to talk, ask questions and be yourself. Beginning this school year, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools now participates in the Safer Schools Ohio's SaferOH tip line. Anyone can anonymously call or text 844-SAFEROH to report anything that is suspicious or might endanger a student, the school or anyone on our campuses.



# Budget Reductions & Increasing Efficiencies

Our budget is the most critical issue facing our district. We take fiscal responsibility very seriously, but we cannot spend what we do not have. In the summer of 2018, the district made \$500,000 in budget reductions. This included four teaching positions, a part-time mechanic, and a reduction in budgets in the areas of technology and our buildings.

After the levy failure in May 2019, the district announced that it would make \$813,000 in Phase I budget reductions. The district continued to look for cost savings over the summer, making an additional \$168,000 in reductions for the 2019-20 school year. Phase I and additional reductions in the summer of 2019 included transportation; postponing the purchase of school buses; reduction of technology and educational aides; elimination of four teaching positions and a custodial position, as well as cafeteria aide positions at Bellbrook Middle School; insurance cost savings, resulting in diminished insurance benefits for all staff, and a reduction in budgets in the areas of technology, our buildings and athletics.

## \$2.3 Million

Amount of reductions in the summer of 2018 and Phase I and II after the failure of the ballot issue

During the November 2019 board meeting - after deliberation and input from the district leadership team, and while working closely with the teachers union - the Bellbrook-Sugar-creek Schools Board of Education adopted another phase of reductions. Phase II reductions, which total nearly \$1 million, will go into effect for the 2020-21 school year and include the following:

Teachers, administrators and non-union staff will take a 0% salary increase for the 2020-21 school year.

The elimination of 3-5 staff positions through attrition.

**Budget reductions in the summer of 2018 (before the May 2019 ballot issue) and Phase I and II (after the failure of the ballot issue) have totaled more than \$2.3 million and include the reduction of 20 staff positions, half of which are teaching positions.**

To further seek out increased efficiencies, the district has chosen to work collaboratively with the Ohio Performance Review Team from the Auditor of State's office. At no cost to the district, this team is reviewing areas of human resources, facilities, financial measurements and transportation. It will compare our processes and protocols to general industry standards as well as to similar districts. The team will then provide recommendations for cost savings. The report will be finalized in early 2020; and a community-based committee will be tasked with examining the report in order to make recommendations and provide further input to our Board of Education.

# Preparing for a March Ballot Issue

The 2019-20 school year will be a critical, defining year for Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools. During the November board meeting, the Board of Education also took the first of two necessary votes to put a 5.7-mill operating levy on the March 17, 2020 presidential primary ballot. The passage of this operating levy in March 2020 will help fund the district's day-to-day operations, such as staffing, utilities, transportation and supplies. The 5.7-mill operating levy will cost taxpayers approximately \$16.60 per month per \$100,000 home market value.

Based on information gleaned from the outcome of the May 2019 election, the community survey that the district conducted earlier this year, and personal interaction with residents, district leadership has been provided with a lot of feedback and they are trying to be as responsive as possible to what they're hearing.

Some of the feedback was that residents wanted the district to make more budget reductions before returning to the ballot. As a result, the district has made over \$2.3 million in budget reductions between the summer of 2018 and Phase I and II reductions in 2019. Bellbrook-Sugarcreek continues to operate on fewer and fewer dollars. All the while, the district has seen inflationary increases that are outside its control, including unfunded and underfunded mandates in addition to an increase in the cost of doing business. District funding from the state has also generally flat-lined.

Due to constraints, such as House Bill 920, which essentially keeps school tax collection flat by limiting inflationary growth on taxes, we are stuck in a cycle like the majority of public schools in our state - one in which Ohio schools need to renew or replace levies every few years because school taxes do not increase when home values increase, forcing the total amount collected by the school district on an existing levy to stay the same. In other words, levy collections increase in the first year and then remain flat, while the cost of business typically tends to increase. Once funds decrease to a certain point, then additional funds must be requested or cuts must be made.

After the implementation of the \$2.3 million in reductions, with an already lean budget, introducing more reductions as a result of another loss at the ballot will hurt the quality of education the district can offer and strike at the core of our community's schools.

# \$16.60

Approximate cost per month per  
\$100,000 home market value.

**“We continue to express our concerns to our legislators about the way schools are funded in Ohio but for now this is the system in which we must operate, which is why the best way to support our local schools is with local tax dollars,” said Liz Betz, board president. “Community support is so critical.”**



## BMS Wins Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence 24th Year in a Row

Bellbrook Middle School has received the Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education and student research for the 2018-19 school year. This is the 24th consecutive year for our middle school, which is one of only 54 Ohio schools to receive this honor. The award recognizes schools and teachers who display excellence in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-based teaching, specifically those who stimulate scientific student research and technological design and extend opportunities beyond traditional classroom activities.

## Substitute Support Staff Opportunities

Applications are now being accepted for substitute teachers, special needs aides, bus drivers and transportation assistants (aides) for the 2019-20 school year. Individuals who qualify will receive all necessary onboard training, as applicable. Download a support-staff application from [www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/Employment.aspx](http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/Employment.aspx) and submit the following to Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools, Attn: Human Resources, 3757 Upper Bellbrook Rd., Bellbrook, OH 45305-8750: 1. District support-staff application, 2. Resume and 3. Cover letter

## Child Find Policy

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools is participating in an effort to identify and locate all children from 3 to 21 years of age who may have disabilities. For more information please contact Tonya Wilson, Director of Special Education and Preschool, at 848-6251.

## State Cross Country Finals

Bellbrook High School Junior Takumi Ford placed 15th (out of 186 runners) in the Division 1 boys cross country state championship.



## BHS Student Wins

## Multi-Year Award for State Science Day Achievement

The Ohio Academy of Science has given Bellbrook High School student Dasha Crocker an award for qualifying for State Science Day four years in a row. According to the Ohio Academy of Science website, each year, thousands of Ohio students complete independent

research projects. The students present their research and the highest-rated projects go on to compete at



State Science Day, which is the high point of student-based scientific research. The Ohio Academy of Science is the leading organization in Ohio advancing the understanding and practice of science, engineering and technology. This year, State Science Day celebrated its 71st anniversary, and approximately 1,100 students competed for nearly \$500,000 in scholarships and cash awards.



## Bellbrook Sugarcreek Hall of Fame Inducted Four

On October 12, the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Education Foundation inducted four members into the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Hall of Fame's 13th class: Dana Kasse Donofree (2000), an innovative business owner supporting breast cancer survivors; Richard A. Isbell (1986), for providing exemplary service to our veterans; Christine J. Long, who was a dedicated English teacher inspiring students in the performing arts; and Dr. Julie L. Williams (1984), an advocate for justice and equity among individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the Hall of Fame is to recognize and honor persons living or deceased who, through their leadership, achievement and service, reflect credit upon the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools community. Visit the website [www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/BSEF.aspx](http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/BSEF.aspx) for more information about BSEF and the Hall of Fame.

## OCTM Middle School Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to Ellen Guthrie for being selected as the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics' (OCTM) Outstanding Middle School Teacher of the Year for the West District! Each year, OCTM recognizes outstanding teachers, professors, emerging leaders and friends of mathematics. OCTM is committed to educating, engaging and inspiring... through the power of mathematics. "Ellen has developed into a very innovative and caring teacher who strives to meet the needs of all students," said Jeff Eckley, principal of Bellbrook Middle School.



## Former Athletic Director Inducted into OIAAA Hall of Fame

Tom Bean, a certified athletic administrator (CAA), was recently inducted to the Ohio Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association's Hall of Fame! Tom was Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools' first full-time athletic director, a position he held for 20 years. Congratulations Tom and thank you for your coaching, mentoring and leadership!



## Third Annual BCI Veteran's Day Breakfast a Hit!

Bell Creek Intermediate (BCI) fifth grade students honored our veterans and those currently serving our country by hosting their Third Annual Veterans Day Breakfast in November 2019. Over 150 people were in attendance.

The breakfast was sponsored by the Sugar Maple Festival Committee, prepared by Sodexo Food Service, and served by BCI staff and volunteers.

Jill Adams, principal of BCI, said, "Having the veterans and military visit the school created wonderful memories for the students and service personnel alike."



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## UPCOMING DATES

- Dec. 12:** Board of Education Meeting at BCI
- Dec. 23:** No school - Winter break begins
- Jan. 6:** School resumes
- Jan. 9:** Board of Education Meeting
- Jan. 20:** No school/Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Jan. 29:** Two-hour delay (K-12)
- Feb. 13:** Board of Education Meeting
- Feb. 14:** No School - Teacher in-service
- Feb. 17:** No School - President's Day
- March 4:** Two-hour delay (K-12)
- March 17:** Election Day