



# THE BRIDGE

Fall 2020

Volume 44

Issue 1

Serving the students of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek communities since 1976

Bellbrook High School JROTC Color Guard



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,

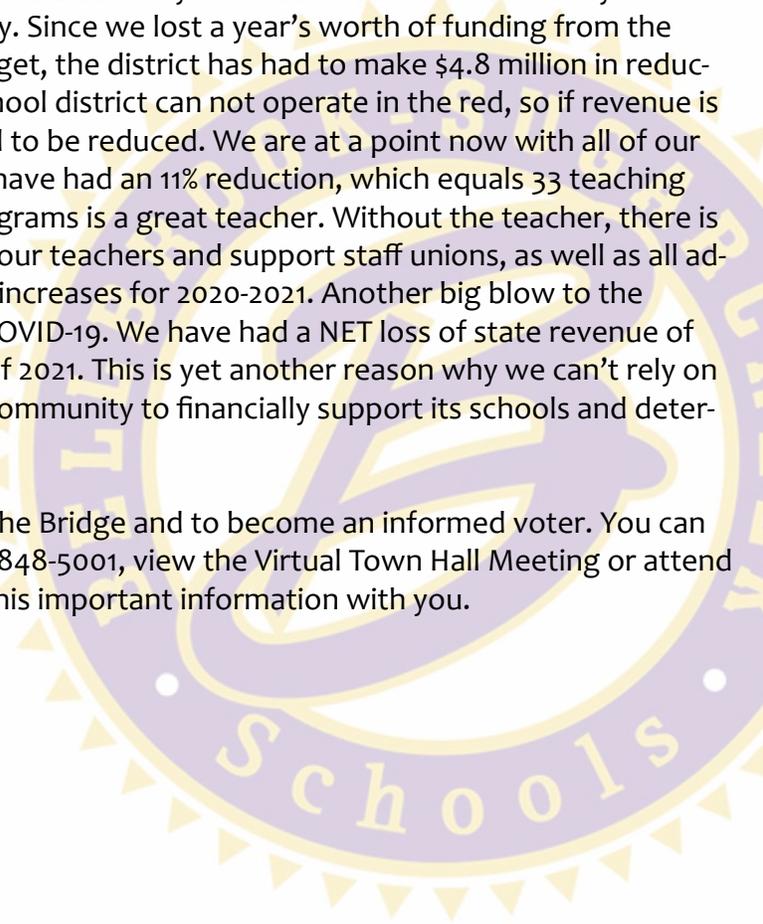
We have had a return to school like none of us have ever experienced as we deal with living in the era of COVID-19. It has been very challenging as we planned our return to school but it was truly a team effort to get this year up and running. I would like to thank our Back to School Committee who met numerous times over the summer to help craft our Fall 2020 Reset and Restart Plan. We all know that there is never a perfect plan, especially with the ever-evolving COVID-19 situation, but many hours and much thought went into the plan. Through a multilayer approach such as mandated mask wearing, increased handwashing and hand sanitizing, enhanced cleaning, and as much social distancing as possible, we have tried to provide the safest in-person learning environment possible. We are also providing a solid experience for the 22% of our students who chose to go online at our Bellbrook Online Academy (BOA). Eighteen Bellbrook teachers are working full time with our BOA students.

I heard someone say the other day that planning for this school year is like planning for a vacation with an unknown destination. You have to pack and mentally prepare for a multitude of experiences and be flexible enough to change your mindset and be patient enough to calmly expect the unexpected. We must all remember that each student only gets this one year to experience 1st grade, 4th grade, 8th grade or their senior year, etc... Our administrators, staff, parents, and students have done a fantastic job preparing for this unique school year and are continuing to go above and beyond to make our schools an enjoyable place to learn. I would also like to thank district families for doing their part in supporting not only their child(ren) but the schools as well. It is a team effort!

I would be remiss if I did not once again discuss and mention our financial situation. We are on the ballot on November 3 with Issue 21, a 5.7 mill operating levy. This request is essentially for the same amount of money as the past two levy requests because the need has not gone away. Since we lost a year's worth of funding from the 2019 levy failure, about \$3.3 million, and to balance our budget, the district has had to make \$4.8 million in reductions that go back to 2018 and continue through 2022. A school district can not operate in the red, so if revenue is not coming in from property taxes, then expenditures need to be reduced. We are at a point now with all of our cuts, that they are hitting straight into the classrooms. We have had an 11% reduction, which equals 33 teaching and staff positions since 2018. Behind each of our great programs is a great teacher. Without the teacher, there is no program from which students can benefit. Additionally, our teachers and support staff unions, as well as all administrators, are on a complete pay FREEZE, including step increases for 2020-2021. Another big blow to the school district were the recent cuts from the state due to COVID-19. We have had a NET loss of state revenue of approximately \$1,013,000 from May of 2020 through June of 2021. This is yet another reason why we can't rely on the state to properly fund our schools. It is up to the local community to financially support its schools and determine what kind of school district it wants.

I urge you to check out the facts on pages four and five of the Bridge and to become an informed voter. You can also contact me at [superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:superintendent@bss.k12.oh.us), call 937-848-5001, view the Virtual Town Hall Meeting or attend a Tailgate Talk and I would be more than happy to discuss this important information with you.

*Douglas A. Cozad*  
Superintendent



# Bellbrook Online Academy is Launched

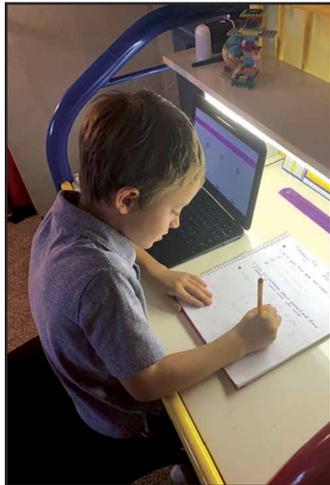
In response to the ever-changing landscape of public education in the time of a global pandemic, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools launched the Bellbrook Online Academy (BOA) on September 8, 2020.

Over six-hundred students are participating in their education while at home. The district assigned eighteen full-time teachers to manage the learning of their students, with twelve additional content-area specialists available during office hours for remote student tutoring. District-issued Chromebook computers were provided for at-home learners, ensuring a consistent experience for students.

Many teachers began the first week with students in live Google Meet sessions, to provide time to get to know each other. Students had not been in school physically since mid-March, 2020, so providing an opportunity to be social, meet the teachers, and learn about the online learning platform was welcomed by all.

## Safer Schools Ohio's 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. Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools 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.



# USDA Announces Free Meals for All Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Students

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools is excited to announce that free meals for students age 1-18 are back! USDA has announced that they will make meals free to all children in our district through December 31, 2020. Students can take advantage of these meals in the cafeteria for those attending in-person, as well as by ordering meals if your student is doing virtual meals, homeschooling, or not quite school age. This option is available to ALL children that reside in Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Community.

Food Services looks very different this school year. We've had to adapt to the complex challenge of in-person meal service, remote meals, and Bellbrook Online Academy (BOA) meals. No matter what environment we serve our meals, we ensure our menus reflect our students' preferences and abide by social distance guidelines. No matter how we get to serve our students, we look forward to providing safe, nutritious, and delicious meals this school year. For additional information, menus, and ordering of meals visit <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/Fall2020MealsInformation.aspx>

The school lunch program had its fair share of changes in the past 6 months. After the schools were mandated to shut down and go online in March, Sodexo Food Services jumped in to help provide our families pandemic relief. We went from donating perishable items on March 13th to converting Stephen Bell to accommodate assembly lines to make up to 600 breakfast and lunches per day for pickup. Later we worked with transportation to do mobile drop-offs in the community. USDA made it possible for all meals to be free. We had tremendous help from our community in the way of volunteers, food service employees, and our maintenance and transportation department to make this all possible.



Melissa Betts always has a smile for our BCI students.

# Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools

## Operating Levy on the November 3 Ballot

# **FACTS** about **ISSUE 21**

The district is on the ballot for a 5.7 mill operating levy.

The levy will raise \$3.3 million per year.

An operating levy helps fund the day-to-day operations, such as staffing, utilities, transportation, maintenance, and supplies.

If passed, the levy would cost the district taxpayers \$199.50/year or \$16.63/month per \$100,000 appraised market value.

- ☞ The district has saved \$4.8 million in four phases of budget reductions from 2018 through 2022.
- ☞ **Program Cuts for 2020-21:**
  - ~ K-5 STEM, K-6 Art, World Languages at BMS, S.T.E.P. Gifted program at BCI
  - ~ BHS busing eliminated, reduced to the 2-mile state minimum at BCI & BMS
  - ~ Increased sports participation fees for BMS to \$200 and BHS to \$300
  - ~ 85 sports, clubs, advisors, or department chair positions (examples include-class advisors for 9th, 10th, 12th grades, Math Pentathlon at BCI & BMS, BHS pep band, all staff department chair positions, BMS play, freshman boys basketball, JV lacrosse teams, and BHS academic team)
- ☞ Teacher and support staff unions, as well as all administrators, are on a **complete pay FREEZE**, including longevity and step increases, for 2020-2021.
- ☞ All staff took a **reduction in insurance benefits** starting in 2019-20.
- ☞ **11% REDUCTION (33)** in teaching/staff positions since 2018.
- ☞ Per pupil spending is \$530 **LESS** than similar districts and \$1,121.18 **LESS** than State Avg.\*\*
- ☞ The district has **17 LESS** teachers compared to peer districts.\*
- ☞ The district has **7 LESS** administrators than similar districts and state average.\*\*
- ☞ School teachers and staff are paid **LESS** over their careers compared to local peer districts.\*
- ☞ **44% of the district buses NEED TO BE REPLACED** (12 years or older or over 150,000 miles).\*
- ☞ **90% of student and staff computers are in their 4th year of life** or older.
- ☞ Facilities expenditures per square foot is **13.5% LESS** than peer districts.\*
- ☞ Resident tax effort (community's tax burden compared to other districts) is **BELOW** the state average and local peer average.\*
- ☞ Due to the COVID-19 state budget cuts, the district has an **additional net LOSS** of state revenue of approximately \$1,013,000 from May 2020 through June 2021.

## What if the November Levy Passes?

It will provide much needed financial stability for years to come. The Board has agreed to reinstate the following Phase IV reductions during the 2020-21 school year: K-5 STEM & Art, 85 supplementals for sports/clubs/advisors, 2 full-time librarians, BHS busing as soon as we have enough trained drivers, and 6th grade Art for the 2021-2022 school year.

## What if the November Levy Does Not Pass?

All of the \$4.8 million in reductions will stay in place and the future of our high-caliber programs and providing a well-rounded student experience will be in serious jeopardy as reducing costs and making reductions will play an increasingly bigger role in decision-making. These cuts and reductions will move our district closer and closer to state minimums regarding electives, programs, class sizes, and busing.

\*Ohio Auditor of State Performance Audit (conducted at no cost to district) <http://www.auditor.state.oh.us/performance/Bellbrook-Sugarcreek-2019.html>

\*\* FY19 ODE District Profile Report <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Payment-Reports/District-Profile-Reports>

## VIRTUAL LEVY TOWNHALL MEETINGS

**When:** September 21 and October 21, 6-8 PM

**Watch:** Link can be found at [www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us](http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us) on the days of the meeting.

**What:** Superintendent Doug Cozad, Treasurer Kevin Liming, Board President David Carpenter, and Greene County Auditor David Graham (Sept. 21 only) will provide important information and answer questions.

Questions can be submitted prior to or during the meeting to [info@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:info@bss.k12.oh.us).

## TAILGATE TALKS

Superintendent Dr. Cozad will be hosting Tailgate Talks (previously known as Coffee with the Superintendent) as a way to informally meet and chat with residents. We will meet outside in the parking lot in front of Bell Creek Intermediate gym. COVID-19 protocols such as masks and social distancing will be in place. Dates are Sept. 28 from 6-7 PM, Oct. 14 from 9-10 AM and Oct. 27 from 6-7 PM.

## 2019 Area Tax Costs

**How do the costs of real estate taxes, school district income taxes and city income tax compare in surrounding districts?**

If you take into account real estate taxes, city income tax, and the school district income tax, and you base that on \$100,000 home and \$50,000 income, we are the lowest in the area. This is based upon the 2019 property tax rate paid in 2020 and this information was pulled from the Montgomery County and the Greene County Auditor's websites. It is worth noting that if this levy passes in November, it will be applied to the current values, not the values after the reassessment. The reassessment does not go into effect until December. If the levy fails and another is put on the ballot in 2021, that levy would then be applied to values after the reassessment. While the district will get a small increase from revenue, due to new construction, this levy will not generate any additional income due to the 2020 reassessment.

City/Village/Township	(1) Real Estate Taxes	(2) City Income Tax	(3) School District Income Tax	Total
Sugarcreek Township	\$2,672.76	0	0	\$2,672.76
Bellbrook City	\$2,809.22	0	0	\$2,809.22
Beavercreek City	\$3,084.75	0	0	\$3,084.75
Fairborn City	\$2,231.08	\$750.00	\$250.00	\$3,231.08
Xenia city	\$2,000.31	\$1,125.00	\$250.00	\$3,375.31
Yellow Springs Village	\$2,461.20	\$750.00	\$500.00	\$3,711.20
Centerville City	\$3,172.40	\$1,125.00	0	\$4,297.40
Kettering City	\$3,183.25	\$1,125.00	0	\$4,308.25
Oakwood City	\$3,715.60	\$1,250.00	0	\$4,965.60

(1) Home Value of \$100K. Real Estate includes taxes for County, City/Village, School, Twp., Vocational School & Board of Health.

(2) Estimated earned income \$50K in the City/Village of residence. (If income is earned in other than the place of residence, that city's earning rate would apply and thus change the total cost.)

(3) This column represents a school district that votes in an income tax above the property tax amount. Based on \$50K income with one personal, one spouse and one dependent exemption.

Real Estate Taxes are based upon the 2019 property tax rate paid in 2020.

2020 Tax Rates can be found on the Montgomery County and the Greene County Auditor's websites.

## Stephen Bell Elementary

### Play To Learn

We know that recess and outdoor break times will provide a safe and supportive learning environment for our students and we aim to provide just that!

Rebecca Montgomery, Speech Pathologist at Stephen Bell, led the Playground Project Team with support from generous donations to add painted games to the playground, providing fun activities, enhanced learning, and social distancing. Donations were received by Atherton Barker Group, Berkshire Hathaway Home Services, Bellbrook Wee Eagles, Mr. & Mrs. Carlos Rivero. The Manson Family, Lowe's Home Improvement and the Hileman Family.



### Families Donate Masks

We'd like to extend a special thank you to the families who have donated extra masks to Stephen Bell Elementary! We are fortunate to have such a caring community! If you are interested in donating, please contact any of our school nurses.



## Bell Creek Intermediate

### Students Express Themselves

Though the state has mandated that all staff and students wear masks while at school, students can still express themselves and their individuality while wearing a mask. Students in Mrs. Seela's fifth-grade class completed an activity in which students colored a picture of themselves with his/her favorite mask design. Students and teachers are all adapting and learning together to make this an enjoyable year, mask and all.



## Bellbrook Middle School

### BMS Students Organize Summer Book Drive

This past spring the 6th grade book club, led by Heera Nair and Katherine Pryor, organized a book drive with PROJECT READ. Heera said, "...at the beginning of May, our expectation was about 100-200 books..." But, thanks to community donations at different spots around town, the club was able to gather nearly 1,500 books. What an accomplishment for this great group! Thank you to all who donated and to the book club for spearheading the effort!



### Science and STEM/STEAM Departments Win Governor's Thomas Edison Award

Congratulations to our Science and Stem/Steam Departments for winning the Governor's Award for the 24th year in a row. Bellbrook Middle School is one of only 37 schools in the state to receive this award, which is given to schools that promote integration of science technology, engineering, and mathematics for all PK-12 students. It incorporates scientific inquiry and technological design through student-focused, project-based curricula.

## Bellbrook High School

### Learning Looks a Little Different

Students in Señor Phelps's advanced Spanish classes completed their first spontaneous speaking practice in the style of the Advanced Placement Spanish Language and Culture Test. They were given a choice of personal opinion questions relating to the identities and relationships unit theme to respond to. They had one minute to plan a response and then had to call Señor's Google Voice number and record.



### Speed Challenge for BHS Engineering Students

Introduction to Engineering students experienced their first speed challenge. Students used the Engineering design process to build a device to launch a small bean bag as far as possible. They had only 5 minutes to actually build the device. Next, they will evaluate the designs after collecting data and comparing graphical representations and statistical summaries.



# Fall Sports Are a Go!

By Charlie O'Dell BHS Athletic Director

The Coronavirus has impacted nearly every facet of our society and athletics is no exception. After the disappointment of learning in late April that spring sports would not take place, it was encouraging when summer activities were given the green light by Governor DeWine in late May. I am happy to report that the summer went smoothly, and the safety plan was embraced by all of our coaches and athletes. Fall sports are now taking place.

However, across Ohio, only families of athletes are allowed at the games and are required to adhere to strict social distance guidelines and wear masks the entire time. Our athletic department, coaching staff and sports medicine professionals have gone to great lengths to create an environment that is as safe as possible. Our athletes have always been fortunate to enjoy great community support and your support is greatly appreciated! Team sports are special and the opportunity to be a part of a team can be a life-altering experience because life is a team sport! Besides the opportunity to be a part of the team, our athletes also get an opportunity to be held to a high standard. This high standard has two parts, academics and athletics. We call it the Purple and Gold Standard and every athlete has the privilege of being held to this high standard. Please continue to do your part by wearing your mask and maintaining social distancing. We want to keep playing and can't do it without you! Thank you!



## BSEF Looking for Donors

The Bellbrook Sugarcreek Education Foundation (BSEF) seeks to secure donations and raise funds from interested citizens, organizations and businesses to support projects not affordable through public funds. Contributions are used to enrich learning opportunities for Bellbrook- Sugarcreek School students in expanded arts, sciences, special projects, and innovative teaching practices or programs that enhance student learning and support the standards in grades K-12. We would like to thank our many past donors! If you would like to join the list of our many donors supporting BSEF, donations can be made online and more information can be found out about BSEF at <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/BSEF.aspx>. Just click on the Donate Now button. Donations can also be made via check by mailing it to BSEF, 3757 Upper Bellbrook Road, Bellbrook, OH 45305. Contact Jenness Sigman ([jenness.sigman@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:jenness.sigman@bss.k12.oh.us)) for more information.

## Substitute Staff Opportunities

Applications are now being accepted for substitute teachers, special needs aides, bus drivers and transportation assistants (aides) for the 2020-21 school year. Individuals who qualify will receive all necessary onboard training.

Download a support-staff application from <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: district application, resume, cover letter

## The Bridge e-edition

Do you know of a Bellbrook alum, former community member, grandparent or someone that has moved out of the community that would like to stay connected to our schools and receive an electronic version of the Bridge? Email [info@bss.k12.oh.us](mailto:info@bss.k12.oh.us) and request that an The Bridge e-edition be sent to them.



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# Voter Information

- ~ Voter Registration ends October 5
- ~ Early Voting Starts October 6
- ~ November 3 is Election Day
- ~ LAST DAY TO REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT: October 31, 2020
- ~ MAIL-IN BALLOTS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY: November 2, 2020
- ~ MAIL-IN BALLOTS MUST BE HAND DELIVERED BY: November 3, 2020



For more information visit <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/Levy.aspx>

## UPCOMING DATES

- Oct 9:** End of Quarter 1
- Oct 12:** No school - K-5 Parent-Teacher Conferences/6-12 Teacher PD
- Nov 3:** Election Day
- Nov 11:** No school -Teacher PD
- Nov 23-27:** No school - Thanksgiving break
- Dec 18:** End of Quarter 2
- Dec 21:** No school - Winter break begins
- Jan 4:** School resumes
- Jan 13:** Two-hour delay K-12
- Jan 18:** No school - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

## INCLEMENT WEATHER: WHAT DO WE DO?

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 post the notification on our FACEBOOK page (@BellbrookSchools), our TWITTER feed (@BellbrookSchool) and on our WEBSITE. We will EMAIL and TEXT all parents and staff using the Instant Connect call-out system. Local TV and radio stations will carry announcements and updates as well.

**Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools**

3757 Upper Bellbrook Rd., Bellbrook, OH 45305 P: 848-6251/848-4800



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