



THE BRIDGE

Spring 2024

Volume 47

Issue 3

Serving the students of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek community since 1976



Financial Update

A deep dive into the District's current financial standing, including enrollment, per pupil spending, cost-saving resources and state shortfalls.

INSIDE



District Spends Less Than State Average Per Pupil

District Enrollment Remains Steady



Community, Generous Benefactors Help District Succeed

Unfunded/Underfunded Mandates Cost District Nearly \$7 Million

**Better Today than Yesterday,
Better Tomorrow than Today**



SUPERINTENDENT

Welcome to the Spring Bridge newsletter, financial edition. We adopted our new District Goals last fall, and one of those goals is to annually update the community on our school finances, hence this edition of the Bridge!

Inside, you will find information about our enrollment trends (they may surprise you) and our per-pupil spending, which is lower than the state average and districts similar to ours, once again.

Additionally, our community partnerships with the city and township with School Resource Officer's has saved the district money while protecting our students. We also work with the Greene County Career Center to provide top-notch programs that come with a significant cost savings to the district. The Lions Club, always a supporter of our schools and community, has partnered with the school district to provide an inclusive playground, Eagleland 2.

Read about another interesting bit of information to learn how our local tax burden is lower when compared with some surrounding communities. Mandates from the state and federal levels continue to come down on the school district to the tune of about \$7 million just last school year. Couple that with the state funding formula that does not benefit communities like ours, and it can be a real challenge for all of us. But as stated above, we spend much less per-pupil than the state average and similar districts and still yield excellent results.

Even though the focus of this edition is school finances, we must keep in mind, first and foremost, that the end goal of our school finances is to provide the best possible academic program enhanced by our extra-curriculars in a safe learning environment. I am very

proud to say that I believe that we do an exceptional job in these areas.

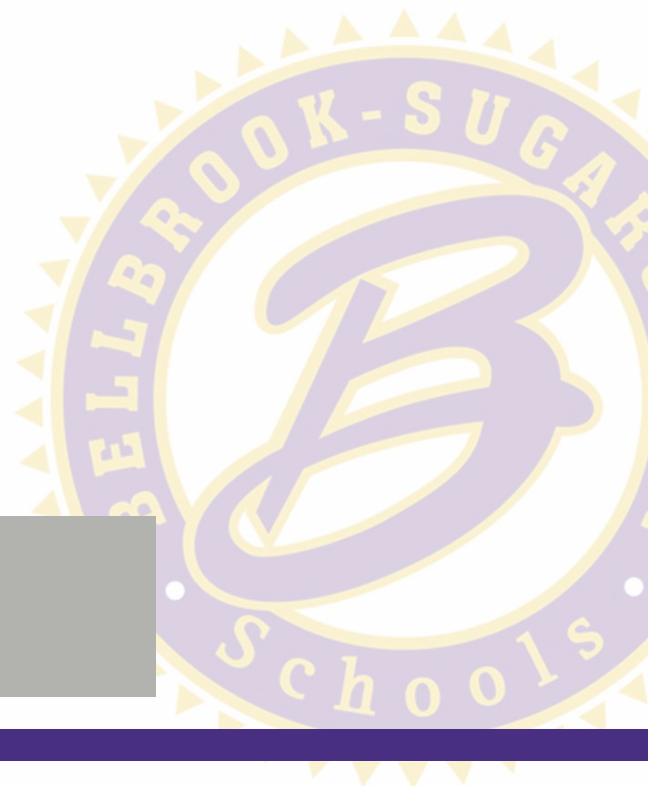
We were one of only eight schools in the state to have earned the highest rating – five stars overall – and five stars in all categories on the 2022-23 state report card. We are a five-star school district in a five-star community. Our staff is second to none and we have fantastic students and parents. Additionally, without the support of our community – that's you – we wouldn't be able to celebrate our numerous accomplishments. We know our community is the key to helping us grow and continue our success!



Go Eagles,

Douglas A. Cozad, Ph.D.

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local Schools Superintendent



District Spends Less Than State Average Per Pupil

When it comes to finances, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools has continued to be careful with the money it spends – and it spends less than the state average and similar districts when it comes to educating students.

As one of only eight districts in the entire state that received six 5-star ratings, that's just a little of the proof that the district is educating its

students well and using its money wisely.

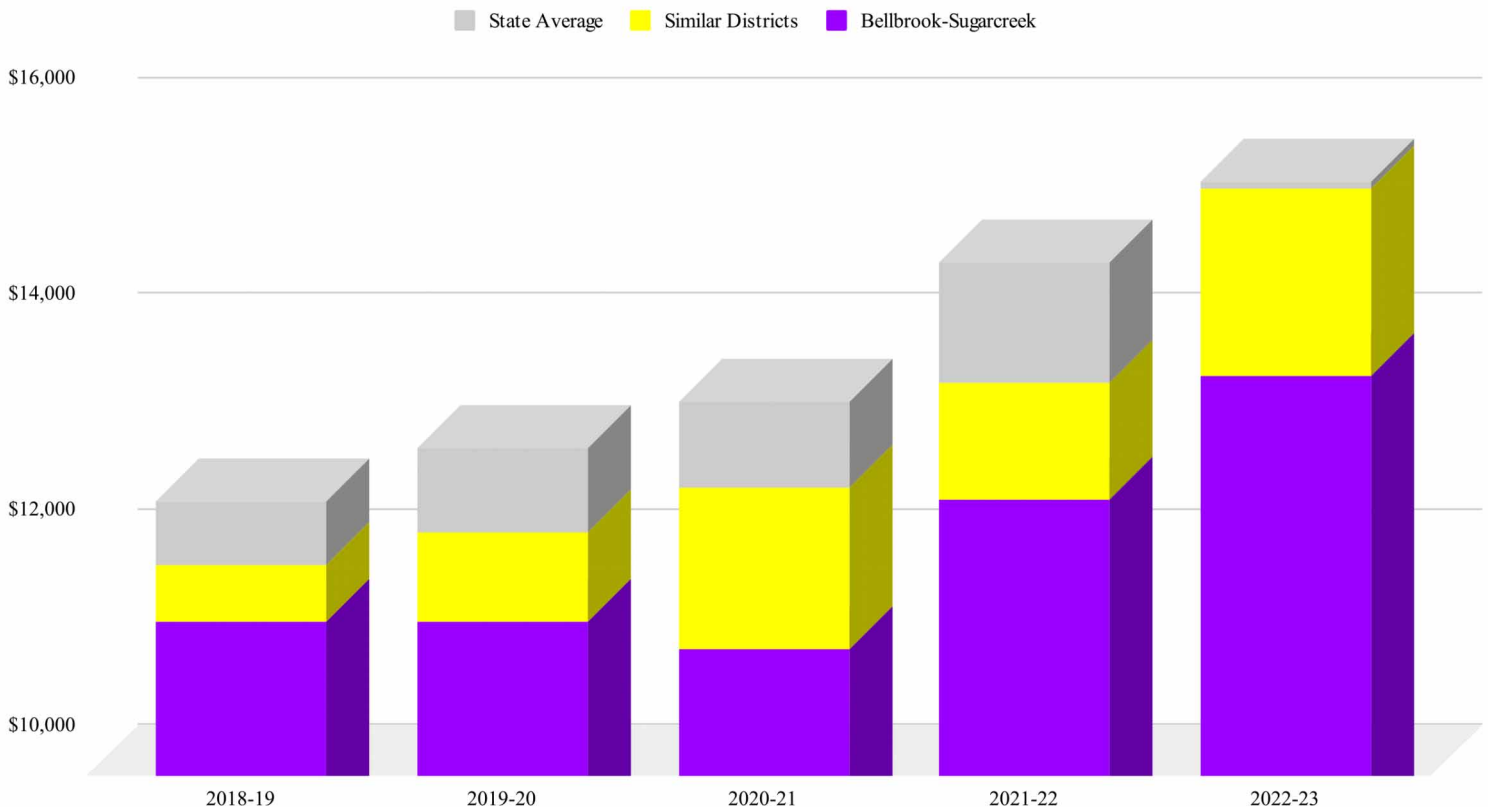
It's a trend that has been around for a while, too.

Since the 2018-19 school year, Bellbrook Schools has spent less than what schools across the state on average spend on education per pupil and also less than similar districts. But

there's a reason for that – beyond being fiscally responsible. We also receive less from the state in terms of funding than both the state average and the average of similar districts.

This past school year, the district spent \$13,633 per pupil for education. Similar districts spent \$15,367 and the state average was higher than that, at \$15,428.

Per Pupil Expenditure Average



Follow Us on Social Media

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local School District

Want to get the news straight from us?

on X and Threads @BellbrookSchool

on Spotify: The Eagle Eggs Podcast

on Instagram @bellbrookschools

on Facebook @Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools

BELLBROOK-SUGARCREEK 3757 UPPER BELLBROOK ROAD,
LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BELLBROOK OH 45305

<http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us>



District Enrollment Remains Steady Over 2-Plus Decades

It doesn't seem to match what community members are seeing, but the numbers don't lie.

While a boom in the construction of homes and apartments in Bellbrook and Sugarcreek Township seem to suggest enrollment in the school district would go up, the numbers say the district hasn't seen a significant bump in its student population.

This school year, the district has 2,693 students in its buildings. That means the district is near, but still

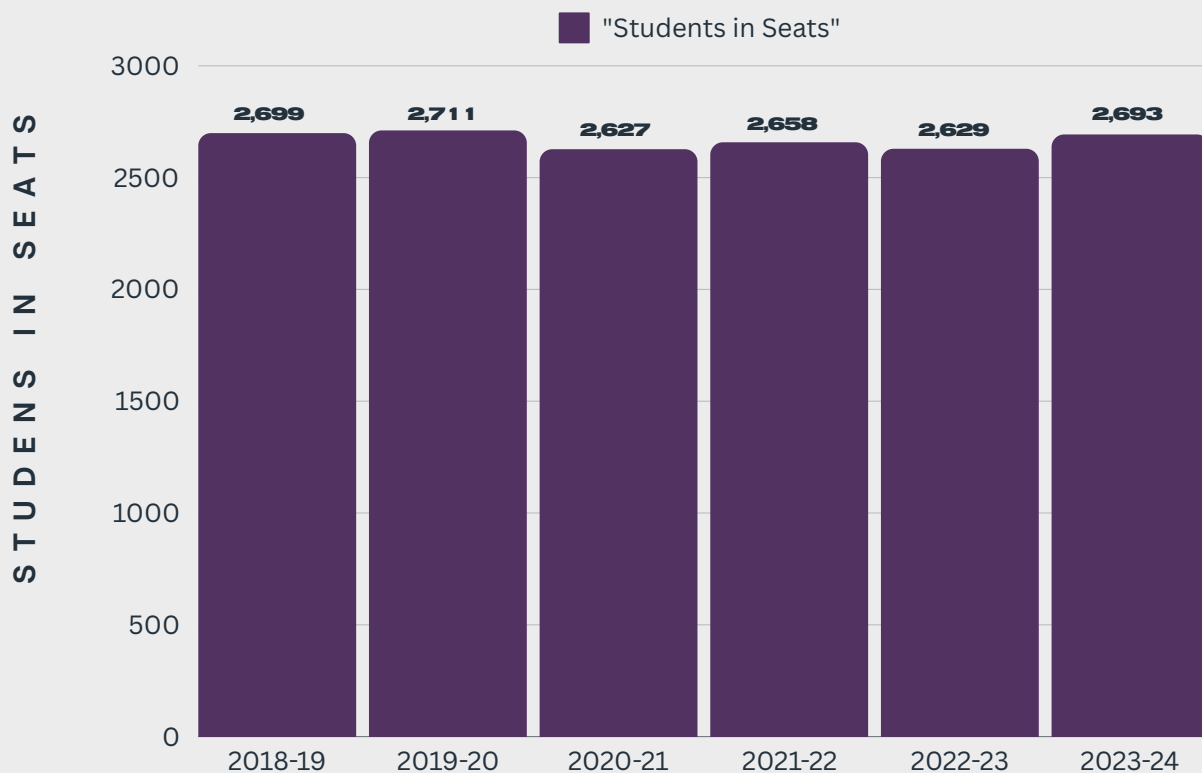
below what enrollment was in 2006 – the highest enrollment has been – which was 2,768.

The chart below illustrates the last six school years, showing the district jumped over 2,700 students just before COVID, but hasn't yet returned to that level.

Enrollment year-to-year has varied by only about 90 students at the most – about seven students per grade level on average, meaning about one extra student per classroom.

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek K-12 Enrollment

From 2018-19 School Year to 2023-24



District Works With Area Resources on Cost-Saving Partnerships

The Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District is always hard at work behind the scenes making moves to reduce expenditures.

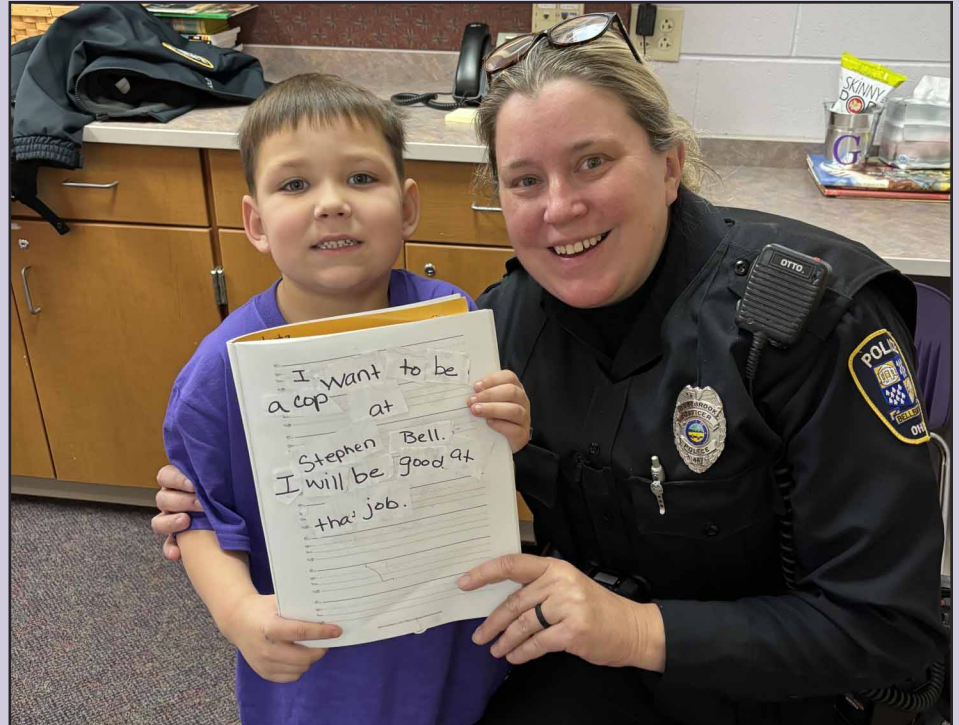
Some of them, the community is well informed about and others go under the radar.

One of the most notable cost-saving partnerships is for our school resource officers.

Through partnerships with both the Bellbrook police and the Sugarcreek Township police departments, the district funds half the salary of each of the two officers who currently work at the schools.

Sugarcreek Twp Police Sgt. Craig Black vacillates between the high school and the middle school while Bellbrook police officer Stephanie Bennington works Bell Creek Intermediate and Stephen Bell. The district and township are in agreement for one more SRO who will spend their time at the middle school while Black is assigned specifically to the high school once that person is brought on board. That saves the district at least \$100K already, especially compared to contracting with private services.

Another huge cost savings comes in the form of teachers. The GCCC provides three teachers to our district helping provide programs the district couldn't reasonably



afford without them. That is a cost savings of approximately \$600K per year when the teachers salaries and benefits are factored in.

Another major cost savings is actually an influx of cash. Premier Health, which formerly had the naming rights to Miami Valley South Stadium, gives the District \$75K per year to be the official medical group of the District and aids in health care by providing athletic trainer Mandy Woll free of cost, picking up her pay and benefits.

"Doing business with partners like these is an incredible savings not only for our district but for our entire community," Superintendent Doug Cozad said. "Not only do they provide relief of



funding but their wealth of knowledge is immeasurable. Each of these entities provide amazing services in what they do."

Total Tax Burden Low in Area, But Home Values are High

The City of Bellbrook and Sugarcreek Township have a lower Real Estate tax rate than most people might realize.

Based on the value of a \$100K home, residents in Sugarcreek Township pay just \$1,938 per year – or \$161.50 per month – in real estate taxes. It's similar in the city, at \$1,972 per year and \$164.33 per month.

When it's compared to places similar to our area – cities like Beavercreek, Kettering, Centerville and Oakwood – it's actually quite a favorable comparison.

Beavercreek residents pay \$325 more per year than Bellbrook City residents in their real estate taxes when comparing homes values at \$100K, while Kettering and Centerville are just a touch lower, but both have City income taxes, raising the annual tax burden well above the threshold here. Oakwood is significantly more expensive before the city income tax is added.

So why does it seem like residents in our area pay more in taxes? According to a study on Zillow, the home values are higher in our area than most. Only Oakwood, Yellow Springs and Beavercreek have a higher average house price than Sugarcreek Township and the City of Bellbrook.

Centerville is close behind and then a wide margin before Kettering and Xenia home values come into play, which are close to the state average, which sits at \$217,698.

So in layman's terms, people in the Bellbrook and Sugarcreek Township areas simply have higher-valued properties, but do not have a higher tax rate.

Average House Value

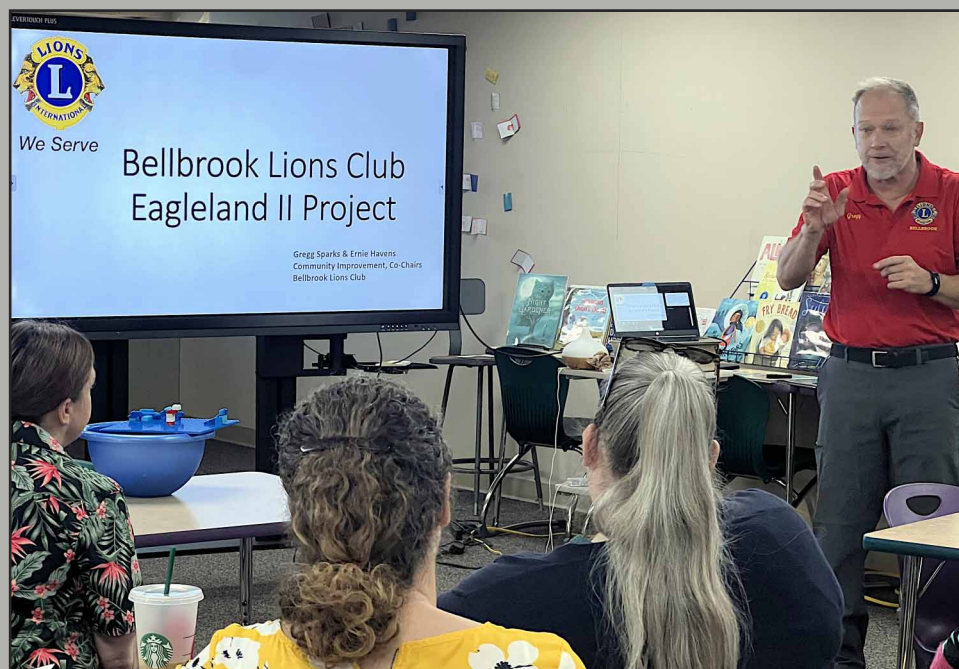
District	Average House Price
Oakwood City	\$365,084
Yellow Springs Village	\$339,342
Beavercreek City	\$299,633
Sugarcreek Twp.	\$295,785
Bellbrook City	\$285,646
Centerville City	\$277,188
Kettering City	\$220,743
Xenia City	\$218,607
State Average	\$217,698
Fairborn	\$178,760

Total Tax Burden

District	Real Estate Taxes	City Income Tax	Sch. Dist. Income Tax	Total
Sugarcreek Twp	\$1,938	\$0	\$0	\$1,938
Bellbrook City	\$1,972	\$0	\$0	\$1,972
Beavercreek City	\$2,297	\$0	\$0	\$2,297
Fairborn City	\$1,653	\$750	\$250	\$2,653
Xenia City	\$1,486	\$1,125	\$250	\$2,861
Kettering City	\$1,904	\$1,125	\$0	\$3,029
Centerville City	\$1,956	\$1,125	\$0	\$3,081
Yellow Springs Village	\$1,983	\$750	\$500	\$3,233
Oakwood City	\$3,303	\$1,250	\$0	\$4,553

* Real estate taxes are per \$100K value

* Income taxes are per \$50K of income



Community, Generous Benefactors Help District Succeed

If you follow us on social media you've probably seen the hashtag #5starschools5starcommunity.

It's a pretty simple concept. Without you, there is no us. Without our community being as amazing as it is, we wouldn't be as successful as we are as a school district.

And, if you hadn't heard yet, we are a 5-star school district. According to the Ohio Department of Education – now renamed the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), we were one of only eight schools in the entire state to score five stars on our report card and five stars in each of

the five component areas. And for that, we can't thank you enough. Your support, either taking care of the students at home or in the community, coming to concerts and games and a myriad of other ways, helps our school district be its best.

There are some other very generous benefactors as well.

The Lions Club is one such benefactor. In the last two years they've contributed bike racks for BCI, a \$10K check to Supportive Peers, and more than \$200K worth of funds to help update the playground at Bell Creek Intermediate and create EagleLand 2.

They have helped in numerous other ways, as well, including band uniforms, gowns and tuxedos for musical performances and more!

There also is Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Educational Foundation – better known as BSEF. The Foundation offers grants for expanded arts, sciences, special projects, and innovative teaching practices or programs that enhance student learning and support the standards in grades K-12. Grants are awarded for programs/activities not paid for by school funds. The BSEF was started nearly 25 years ago. Through community donations, BSEF has paid out over \$400K in grants to fund hundreds of special academic programs. Recent grants were used to purchase controllers for our national champion drone teams, a sensory path at BCI, art display panels and more!

The Parent-Teacher Organization also is a huge fundraiser for our district. The PTO is a volunteer organization that maintains a close working relationship between parents, teachers/staff and students. Its goal is to enhance the educational experience by supporting the students and teaching staff through fundraising efforts to provide additional equipment, technology, educational resources, educational services and special projects. The PTO has raised nearly \$140K in the past four years.

And of course our Booster organizations. Our Athletic Boosters and Music Boosters raise thousands of dollars each year and contribute to sports and the musical arts throughout the district.

State Funding Plan's Flaws Cost Local Tax Payers

Here's the easy one. How much does a gallon of gas cost today as opposed to just a few years ago? Is it higher for you? It costs the same for the school district, too. But the State of Ohio isn't contributing significantly more money to local school districts, despite its \$3.5 Billion budget surplus.

Lawmakers passed the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) with the 2022-23 biennial budget in an effort to fix Ohio's unconstitutional school funding formula, but with no commitment to it beyond the current 2-year budget period. The full promise of the FSFP will not be achieved unless lawmakers fully phase it in over the next six years, according to Policy Matters Ohio.

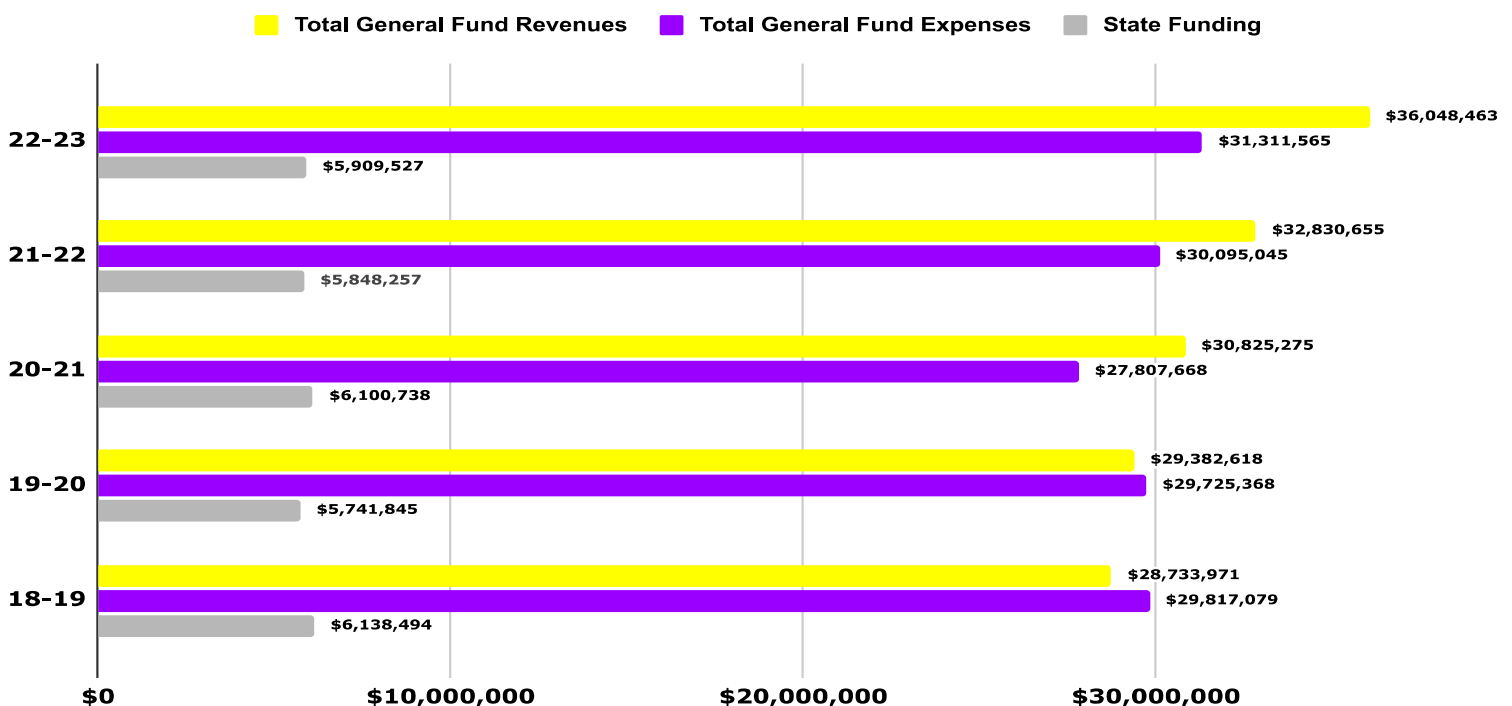
The state expanded funding for privatized education by hundreds of millions of dollars while only modestly increasing it for public schools – where the vast majority of Ohio students (roughly 80 percent according to the Department of Education and Workforce) attend.

This is problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because while public schools have yearly financial audits and a state report card non-public school have no accountability measures in place for finances or academics.

The state, in fact, dropped its funding of public schools by 5 percent in the last budget, relying more heavily on federal funding. Though that money follows the same path – districts with lower income and lower property values receive more funding. Schools in higher income areas are forced to rely on taxing their local residents more often.

While the state average of local funding used is 44 percent, the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek community makes up more than 70% of the \$35 million budget the district relies on. And it has been that way for a long time.

State Funding Vs. Our General Fund



Unfunded/Underfunded Mandates Cost District nearly \$7M This School Year

If you watch or listen to our Board of Education meetings, or speak to our staff out in the community, you might hear the term “unfunded mandates” bandied about.

It’s a somewhat difficult-to-understand term, and like so many other things these days, can often be confused with other politically charged topics. However, what it means to Bellbrook Schools is when the state of Ohio or the Federal Government enacts policies or laws, the school district must follow them, whether or not they are backed financially.

Most of them are enacted in good faith. They are necessary or productive for all students. The problem, however, is that many times it is a policy that must be enacted without the financial backing from the state or government and it can put a great financial strain on our district.

Oftentimes, there is funding for a year or two of the programming and then school districts have to figure out how to fund the program on their own after money from the government has dried up.

A few of the more costly mandates in the past two years are things like College Credit Plus, Gifted Instruction, Special Education instruction, Preschool and instructing English Language Learners.

In just the last two completed school years, those alone have come at a net cost of nearly \$6.7 million per year, and this year it will top the \$7 million mark.

In total, the mandates shown in the chart cost the district \$15 million over a two-year period, while funding for those programs totals only about \$1,665,000 in the same span.

BELLBROOK-SUGARCREEK SCHOOLS UNFUNDED/UNDERFUNDED MANDATES

(GENERAL FUND ONLY)

	2021-22	2022-23
English Language Learners		
Expenses	\$136,841	\$141,733
Funding	<u>\$15,891</u>	<u>\$13,163</u>
Net Cost	\$120,950	\$128,570

College Credit Plus

Expenses	\$90,773	\$70,204
Funding	<u>\$- 0</u>	<u>\$- 0</u>
Net Cost	\$90,773	\$70,204

Gifted

Expenses	\$689,640	\$984,077
Funding	<u>\$122,417</u>	<u>\$99,099</u>
Net Cost	\$567,223	\$884,978

Preschool

Expenses	\$1,102,065	\$1,220,488
Funding	<u>\$280,078</u>	<u>\$265,880</u>
Net Cost	\$821,987	\$954,608

Special Education

Expenses	\$5,256,893	\$5,309,059
Funding	<u>\$479,318</u>	<u>\$389,161</u>
Net Cost	\$4,777,575	\$4,919,898

EAGLELAND 2



AUGUST 10, 2024

THE LIONS CLUB

5K TO PLAY

5K RUN/WALK

\$30



8 AM: REGISTRATION | 8:45: ROLL & STROLL FUN RUN | 9: START

START/ENDS AT BELL CREEK INTERMEDIATE

Come support our playground project to make EagleLand 2 accessible for all. Started by a group of third graders, your donation to run will bring us closer to completing this awe-inspiring project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://bit.ly/5k2play>

Cost is \$30 before July 28, and \$35 after.
Price includes race, T-shirt and awards.
After July 28, T-shirts are not guaranteed.

Stay Connected With Us...



The Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local School District started a community-wide email newsletter in February to stay more connected in between the times The Bridge comes to your door.

So far six newsletters have been sent and subscribers are being treated to more stories, more ways to get involved with the community at large and with the school.

The newsletter comes to your email every other week. It is brief and centers on what's happening in the district that you can be a part of and will definitely want to know about. From events to initiatives and more. It's also a way for you to give the district feedback through various surveys.

We deliver news in a lot of ways in this district, from The Bridge, to the website and social media to podcasts and videos, too. And we want to make sure you are aware of all the amazing things going on in our buildings and on our grounds.

Along with important events, it also will have important facts that will keep you informed of everything going on in the district. You'll know about events well in advance

and we hope you will begin enjoying more and more events with us. You will be truly amazed at the things our students accomplish and are capable of.

We do amazing things in this district and we can't do it without you. More than that, we want you to be here, experiencing as much as possible with us!

To submit flyers or public advertisements for the community newsletter, please email flyers@bss.k12.oh.us and include a copy of your flyer. It will be reviewed by district staff for approval and posted where appropriate.

We are a five-star district through and through, and the reason we got there is because we have a five-star community behind us, supporting us.

So please, take the time to scan the QR code above or go to this link: <https://bit.ly/BSSnews> and give us your email so you can stay informed on the great things going on in our schools and in the community.

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools
3757 Upper Bellbrook Road
Bellbrook, Ohio 45305

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. Postage
Paid
Dayton, OH
Permit No. 620

ECRWSS
Postal Customer
Bellbrook, Ohio 45305

UPCOMING DATES

May 2-4: High School Musical "Little Mermaid"
May 6: Elementary Art Show
May 6: Middle School Band Concert
May 7: National Junior Honor Society Induction
May 7: High School Spring Band Concert
May 7: College Signing Ceremony
May 8: Spring Choir Concert
May 9: Stephen Bell Fun Run
May 9: Board of Education Meeting
May 13: Music Boosters Meeting
May 13: 6th Grade Choir Concert
May 14: PTO Meeting
May 15: Senior Recognition Ceremony
May 15: Athletic Boosters Meeting
May 16: 6th Grade Band Concert
May 16-17: Kindergarten Celebration
May 19: High School Graduation
May 20: Party on the Playground/Groundbreaking at BCI
May 22: Preschool Graduation
May 22: Stephen Bell Field Day
May 22: Second Grade Luau Sendoff
May 23: Last Day of School/ I-Hour Early Release

Child Find Policy

The Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District is participating in an effort to identify and locate all children ages 3-21 years of age who may have disabilities. For more information, contact Bridgett Pritchard, Special Education Supervisor, at 937-848-5001 extension 6013 or bridgett.pritchard@bss.k12.oh.us

Winter Guard finishes 11th in World Championships

The Bellbrook High School Winter Guard brought home 11th place during the WGI World Championship World Class Finals in the Scholastic World Division at the University of Dayton Arena on April 13. The team scored an impressive 85.250 in the finals, finishing as the top school in the area in their division. Avon High School was the overall winner.

 Premier Health



Find Your New Doctor Fast

Choose your new doctor – in as little as three minutes. An easy search, customized to you. Go directly to our Find a Doctor tool by visiting PremierHealth.com/NewDoctor.

