

The Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Board of Education is taking a closer look at the future of the Sugarcreek Elementary campus in downtown Bellbrook.

THE BRIDGE

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Serving the students of the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek community since 1976



Snap Shot

The 2024-25 school year is off to a busy start! Students, teachers and staff are working hard to make this a successful year.

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Better Today than Yesterday,
Better Tomorrow than Today



SUPERINTENDENT

We've had a great first half of the school-year and are ready to take on the challenge of the second semester!

We had a very exciting moment in our first semester, as we held our first ever Five-Star-Schools, Five-Star-Community week to celebrate our 5-Star rating on the 2023-24 State Report Card.

We took the time to recognize all those who had an impact on this achievement – the staff, students, schools, community and families. Our 5-star Report Card also included a five-star rating in four of the component areas: Achievement, Progress, Gap Closing and Early Literacy.

To celebrate the achievement, we also held our first-ever State of the Schools performance, a combination of live and recorded clips, during the November board meeting. We showcased the fantastic things going on in our schools such as strong academic performances, the arts, clubs, student activities, and athletics – all the things that build well-rounded individuals. Here are some of the State of the Schools performance highlights:



In video format, we asked students at all levels what they thought made us a five-star district. And we asked Stephen Bell to help us understand how we SOAR together.

Venus Aggarwal interviewed the Middle School Student Government to find out what they have accomplished and their hopes for the future.

Aly West talked to Mr. Scott Anderson about our Veterans Day celebration and got in touch with Mrs. Danielle Taylor to discuss how important our Purple Star designation is to each of our schools.

Jordan Frantz sat down with Mrs. Stacy Tincer to discuss the Kids Heart Challenge and the charitable giving that is so important to our entire district.

We covered finances, including the fact that at this point in time we are in a strong financial position.

Katie Griffin spoke with one of the captains of the football team, Johnny Brown, about how he overcame obstacles to be a big part

of the Golden Eagles' success on the gridiron and Katie wrapped up our year of athletics, as well.

Finally, Olive Varvel took on the school that never sleeps, and spoke about all the great things happening at Bellbrook High School, from the Spirit Committee to the Hope Squad, Supportive Peers and all the activities students can be a part of outside the classroom.

And then there were the performances! Our Fourth grade sang "Beautiful Ohio" and our Marching Band performed their show, "Edward Scissorhands," both via video recording.

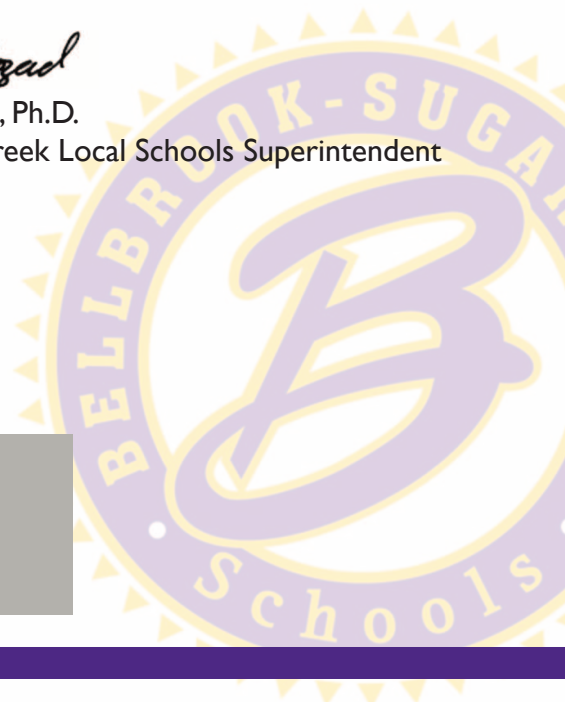
We also had live performances by our High School Choir, several middle school students performing a number from the Middle School musical and the three-time National Champion drone teams also took the stage.

A big thanks to the high school students named in this article as well as others who worked hard on the project including Emme Volmer, Lexie Holding and Alexis LeMieux, who assisted us in telling you all about the wonderful State of our Schools, in addition to our Parent/Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator Henry Conte for leading it. If you didn't have a chance to check it out, the videos are on our YouTube page and you can watch them by scanning the QR code on the left side of this page.

If you didn't take the time to be there or see the videos already on social media, I hope you will take the time to watch it now and see all the wonderful things our students and staff can and have accomplished.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Cozad, Ph.D.
Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local Schools Superintendent



Future of Sugarcreek Elementary Campus up for Discussion

The Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Board of Education is taking a closer look at the future of the Sugarcreek Elementary campus in downtown Bellbrook.

The district is not currently using, and does not anticipate using these buildings for district students in the future. The campus is made up of five total buildings – a three-story school building, a one-story school building, the old bus barn and a garage with the total size being 8.41 acres, which is located in a flood plain.

“What we are doing right now is taking a look at our facilities and laying out the facts and then we are letting the community have its say in what people think should happen, so we are inviting them to come out and let their thoughts be known,” Superintendent Dr. Doug Cozad said. “We see this as following the District Goals we laid out for ourselves.”

Facilities are one of the four goals the Board and District set as part of the 2023-26 plan, adopted October 26, 2023. The plan includes:

- Creating a 7-year Master Facilities plan
- Exploring the feasibility of replacing, repairing, building, and/or divesting of buildings and grounds infrastructure, and anticipating both short-term and long-term needs
- Examining enrollment trends

The Board heard a presentation from Cozad and Manager of Business Jeff Eckley at the October meeting, providing information on the uses of

the building, current expenses and possible expenses over the next five years on the building and the legal possibilities of what can be done with the building if it decides to divest it.

“We looked at enrollment trends over the past 20 years, six years, and three years and based on these trends, the district does not anticipate large enrollment increases in the near

Focus on the Future of Sugarcreek Elementary Campus Coffee Chats

Jan. 21, 3-4 p.m. at Winans
Jan. 22, 9-10 a.m. at BellHOP
Jan. 25, 8 a.m. start, BOE Meeting at BMS



future,” Cozad said. “We do not see these buildings as a part of the district’s future vision of educating students. The cost of updating this building to keep it relevant to today’s educational standards would be astronomical.”

It is important to note that the sale of real estate owned by a school district is governed by the Ohio Revised Code.

The law states that if the property is worth more than \$10,000, the Board must follow a roughly defined statutory process. If there are no eligible community schools (there are none in the district) seeking the real estate, the Board may:

- Sell the property at a public auction;
- Sell the property to a government entity, college, or charter school;
- Sell the property in an ordinary private sale IF at least one public auction has failed to secure a buyer;
- Trade the property for other real estate the Board needs; or
- Donate the property to an eligible non-profit (if the value is less than \$2,500).

The district currently is spending a little over \$40,000 per year and intends to put actions in place for next school year that will lighten the financial burden of the property. However, the possible costs of major items such as roofs, HVAC, and asphalt could be well over \$500,000 in the next five years.

The Board gathered feedback from tenants and local government entities at the December 12 board meeting. The District will be holding two Coffee Chats to allow community members to provide thoughts in a more casual atmosphere and will provide time during the January 25 Board of Education meeting for those who are willing to come and discuss.

The Board anticipates having serious conversations starting in February about what the future is for this property.



Bottemiller Eager to Learn to Fly

Bellbrook High School junior Laney Bottemiller is eager to learn to fly, even though she's already had her hands on the controls.

The JROTC Flight Commander was accepted into Flight Academy this summer while Emily DeArmond was selected as an alternate.

The Flight Academy is a scholarship funded by the United States Air Force to send AFJROTC cadets to attend private pilot training at partner universities and colleges during the summer of 2025 for an eight-week program. The process was extremely competitive and the selections were identified through a competitive boarding process.

"To even have this opportunity is great," Bottemiller said. "In the past, Lt. Colonel Christine Gangaware gave some of us the opportunity to go to Greene County Airport and I got to fly there and we learned about the instruments and flight planning. I learned a lot and that was just one day. This is every day for a summer, so I am going to learn so much."

Cadets will be engaged in an accelerated flight training program that operates up to 6-7 days a week, weekends and holidays included.

Ethan Bui, class of 2023, went through the program during the summer of 2022.

Bottemiller said the experience is even exciting for her family as several aunts, uncles and grandparents have served in the Air Force.

"In the past, Lt. Colonel Christine Gangaware gave some of us the opportunity to go to Greene County Airport and I got to fly there and we learned about the instruments and flight planning. I learned a lot and that was just one day. This is every day for a summer, so I am going to learn so much."

BHS junior Laney Bottemiller

"My Great Uncle is really excited about it for me," she said. "But I have a lot of family members who have been talking to me about it."

To earn her way in, Bottemiller had to fill out a lengthy application which included an essay, a letter of recommendation as well as math tests, where she scored above the national

average.

"I had so many people help me and proofread the essay for me," Bottemiller said. "It was hard because the prompt was vague. It was basically 'why do you deserve (getting into the program).' I think that was the most stressful part, along with the Aviation Qualification Test."

Bottemiller said she is a little scared to miss some of the things she'd do in a "normal" summer, but the junior shouldn't be mistaken for a normal teenager.

She is involved in National Honor Society and plans to apply to be an officer next year. She is the Flight Commander for the JROTC and plans to apply to be one of the Top 3 next year. She is a part of Key Club, is in Supportive Peers, does Peer Tutoring and takes College Credit Plus classes.

"We could not be more proud of Laney and her selection for this scholarship," Gangaware said. "Since her freshman year, she has been a very active cadet and leader in our program and it's great to see her recognized and rewarded for all her hard work."

For Bottemiller, learning to fly will just be one more thing that sets her apart.



New BCI Principal Making Strides

When Dr. Terress Monroe took over at Bell Creek Intermediate in August, she knew there would be a lot of work to do right away to get ready for the school year.

Dr. Monroe came to the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District with eight years of experience as a principal in the Dayton Public School District, spending the last four years as the principal at Edison Elementary and the four years prior to that as the assistant principal at Belle Haven Elementary.

With that experience, she knew her biggest hurdle would be familiarity.

"I think my biggest challenge has been trying to know the names of every student and staff member as well as all the families," Monroe said. Not an easy task as there are, on average, about 225 students in each grade level. Bell Creek has grades three, four and five, meaning Monroe's goals include nearly 700 students.

Monroe finds every opportunity to be involved, whether it's pick up or drop off, being at all the events on the playground after hours, taking a large part in the Veterans Day celebration and Pumpkin Auction and so much more.

"Relationships are important," Monroe said. "You have to make those connections so families will trust that when decisions need to be made that we are making them in the best interest of the students."

Monroe said her job is made easier because she can trust what is going on in the classroom at any time.

"The easiest thing to do is to walk into a classroom, because I know I am going to see quality instruction and engaging lessons that use the data we have to meet the needs of the students where they are and bring them forward," Monroe said. "We have classrooms where all the students matter. We have hard-working teachers and clean buildings and conscientious people in our cafeterias who care about how our students nourish themselves. And our ladies out front are kind and friendly and always have smiles when people walk in. It's an all-hands on deck approach."

So what's the next step for Monroe and BCI?

"Mr. (Zack) Cline (BCI's Assistant Principal) and I will continue to grow our positive school climate. Our academic progress incorporates WIN (What I Need) which is when 100% of our students receive targeted instruction based on their academic growth needs," Monroe said. "That continues to close learning gaps while every student moves forward."

"All of this work takes support and collaboration from Bell Creek families, teachers and administration across the building and the district."

Pancake Breakfast

**8 a.m. to noon,
February 22, in
the BCI Cafeteria**

**ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT
PANCAKES, SAUSAGE, FRUIT
TOPPINGS, ORANGE JUICE,
MILK AND COFFEE**

**REGISTER FOR OUR
BLOOD DRIVE**



**PROJECT READ
BOOK DRIVE**

More Than a Guidance Counselor

Newsome's First Year at Stephen Bell Full of Connections

It's Jonathan Newsome's first year at Stephen Bell Elementary as a full-time school counselor and if there is one thing he wants you to know, it's that he's more than a guidance counselor.

"It no longer encapsulates everything that is this job," Newsome said. "I help students with not only their social and emotional needs but also their academic success and make sure they understand the curriculum and have access to it. (The term) guidance is outdated."

The change of the name lies within the definition. Not just in the change of guidance counselor to school counselor, but also how the school itself is defined. While it used to be the building and the students in it, now, school is more about community. That change has certainly revealed itself in a big way not only at Stephen Bell Elementary, but throughout the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District.

There are other definitions that help make the point. There is the Tier system, which helps define which students and families have needs and how they receive assistance from Newsome, others within the school district or even outside entities.

Newsome broke it down like this:

"Tier 1 is everyone. It's the community. It's how we can help their families, our teachers, anyone who works in the district," Newsome said. "Tier 2 is selected students who need extra support – whether that's to understand and access the curriculum the way we'd want at that grade level, or maybe a skill deficit. Tier 3 are our students and families with the highest needs. Whether



that is an individualized education plan (IEP) to help students with academic goals, a mental health referral, or finding resources to make sure all of the needs of our students and families are met."

Newsome said it is the most rewarding part of his job.

"We helped a family the other day that was going to experience homelessness and got them shelter. Being able to help our families is the most rewarding part. Being able to actually see the work," Newsome said.

Newsome went on to say he believes there is at least one student in each classroom whose family struggles with financial instability or food insecurity or just getting bills paid.

Those connections are not the only ones Newsome enjoys making.

Though the season has turned to winter, the first-year Stephen Bell School

Counselor said he enjoys dismissal and drop-off because it's a good opportunity to meet families.

"It kind of lets me know how my day is going to go, too, just by the way they are walking in," he said with a laugh.

It is certainly not all struggles for Newsome as a School Counselor.

One of his favorite parts of the job is vocational training, which starts at a very young age at Stephen Bell.

"I just ordered a pack of 20 different vests of all different careers so they can explore and role-play with different careers," Newsome said. "I also have a game called 'Guess That Job,' it's like Guess Who but with different jobs - what it takes to have that job, the tools and the setting it would be. I love doing vocational things. Understanding what kids want to do when they are older really helps me understand where they want to go in life."

Happier Project Continues as Day Moves Up

As it goes with young people, they learn by watching the example others set for them.

Bellbrook High School freshman Ember-Marie Day learned by the example her grandfather set by visiting people in nursing homes.

Day said her grandfather, Tom Franz, used to visit his mother (her great-grandmother, Mary Weller) in a nursing home up in Napoleon, Ohio. While doing that every day, he noticed there were plenty of people who did not get visitors.

So he spoke to the nurses, then chatted with the residents, and instead of just visiting his mother on a daily basis, he visited all sorts of new friends, too.

“He’d ask them when their birthdays were, what their favorite food was,” Day said. “Every day for two years, he’d go and visit them.”

Sadly, Day’s grandfather passed away in 2020. But the mark he left on her with his kindness lives on.

“I think if he knew I was doing this, he’d really like it,” Day said.

Day created the Happier Project because



of the mark her grandfather left, but she also was inspired by the Eagle Outreach class when she was in 7th grade at Bellbrook Middle School.

While many times that's a one-and-done scenario – where students learn about giving back to the community and then move on to the next trimester – Day took it as an opportunity to continue her work.

She made an in-school website to solicit students to help color pictures to give to residents of nursing homes. In eighth

grade, she took it school-wide.

This year, she reached back out to BMS Principal Jenna Hill to spread the word once again. In total, more than 360 colored pages were handed out, which included all of her outreach efforts. Day passed pages out at places children Trick or Treat, asking them to help, too. Now in high school Day said it isn't as easy to get her peers to assist in coloring as she would have liked.

“It’s difficult to get people to listen to you when you are a freshman,” she said. “Last year as an 8th grader I had more influence.”

The freshman knows how important it is to brighten the day of others, saying even at her lowest point – during the COVID pandemic – she knew how important it was to feel some semblance of family and love to make her, well, happier.

The Happier Project isn't the only project Day participates in to help give back. Though she calls them Beta outreaches, she has plenty of ideas of how to continue giving back to those who need it.

And all of them started with the simple thought of just trying to make someone happier.

Hall of Fame Nominations

Due by March 1

Go to <https://bit.ly/BSEFHof>
or scan the QR code to
nominate

Class of 2024

TIME TO START KINDERGARTEN!

LET'S GO, CLASS OF 2028!

Incoming Kindergarten Parents MEETING

Learn about our kindergarten programs for **2025-26**

TUESDAY
February 25,
2025 **6-7 P.M.**

Stephen Bell
ELEMENTARY
Gym

RSVP
marjorie.horvath@bss.k12.oh.us

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UPCOMING DATES

Jan. 9: Board of Education Meeting
Jan. 14: PTO Meeting
Jan. 15: Athletic Boosters
Jan. 17: No School, Professional Development
Jan. 20: No School, MLK Jr. Day
Jan. 25: Board of Education Meeting
Jan. 25: District Chamber Music Showcase
Feb. 1: Winter Formal
Feb. 3: Music Boosters Meeting
Feb. 8: Little Sweethearts Dance
Feb. 11: Stephen Bell Spread the Love
Feb. 13: Board of Education Meeting
Feb. 14: No School, Professional Development
Feb. 17: No School, Presidents' Day
Feb. 19: Athletic Boosters Meeting
Feb. 20: Bellbrook Concert Band Festival
Feb. 25: Kindergarten Registration Event
Feb. 27: Board of Education Meeting
March 3: Online Kindergarten Registration Begins
March 5: BMS Book Fair Family Night
March 5: 6th Grade Choir/Band Concerts
March 6: High School Band Concert
March 7-8: Middle School Play
March 10: Middle School Band Concert
March 12: MS/HS Choir Concert
March 13: STEAM Night
March 13: Board of Education Meeting

Inclement Weather Policy

During the school year, Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools may be forced to close, have a delayed start or dismiss early due to inclement weather or other situation. In an effort to disseminate announcements in a timely and cost-effective manner, the first step will be to send notifications via the Remind app. We highly encourage our district families to install the app and regularly check that notifications are set up to receive announcements in the way they prefer. Our next step is to post the information on our social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Threads) as well as our website. The next step will be to notify local media outlets.



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.

