

SUPERINTENDENT'S MONTHLY UPDATE



Blue Ridge CUSD#18

December 17, 2021

[#br_u_knighted](#)



We've made it to the Winter Break! I'd like to begin this month's newsletter by thanking our staff for all their efforts to educate our students each and every day. To our drivers, cooks, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodial and maintenance staff, administrators, and department heads, I appreciate you! Our students are so very fortunate to be the recipients of your care and compassion.

This month we have mastered many challenges of running the SHIELD-IL testing program in our schools. We've learned how to order supplies, prepare and distribute them between buildings, self-administer tests on non-screening days, arrange transportation, check the database each evening for results in order to contact families right away, while all other daily responsibilities are still front and center. Thank you to all who play a part in this operation as our goal is to contain the spread of COVID to the greatest extent possible for the safety of our students and staff.

Beginning in January, in consultation with DeWitt Piatt Bi-County Health Department, when a student becomes ill, and complies with testing within 24 hours, **the siblings will be able to remain on campus pending the outcome.** If a negative test is received, the siblings may stay at school and the student who is ill will be able to return when guidelines are met. If a positive test is received, the student who is positive and all household siblings of the student who tested positive would be excluded from school at that time.

I want to also thank our Boosters organizations, our local churches, and IERMP, our health insurance provider, for the special treats that were flowing in our buildings over the last few days. We appreciate how you've generously cared for us!

We have recently accepted the resignation of three of our junior high teachers. Thank you to Mr. Morris, Mr. Acree, and Mrs. Acree for your time at Blue Ridge. You will be missed by staff and students! We are currently working on filling those positions and we have big plans for our junior high staff and students just around the corner. Comeback 2022 will be launched on January 4, 2022. Stay tuned for more details!



PARTIAL ACTION FROM THE SEPTEMBER BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

- Blue Ridge CUSD #18 welcomes Colten Reeves as our BRHS Varsity Baseball Coach. Colten is currently our BRHS Varsity Boys' Basketball Coach.
- We also welcome Jennifer Zimmerman as BRHS Varsity Softball Coach. Jennifer coaches softball for BRIJHS, so we are looking forward to the consistency between these programs.



UPCOMING EVENTS

January

3 Curriculum Day-No Student Attendance
4 School Resumes
17 M.L. King's Holiday – No Student Attendance
19 Board Meeting, BRHS Library 7:00 p.m.

IN OTHER NEWS



SCHNEIDER ELEMENTARY

Balloon Parade - Mrs. Brackenhoff, Mrs. Parson, and Mrs. Wilkinson's classes were so excited to walk in their Post Thanksgiving Balloon Parade! After learning about the famous Macy's Day Parade, students worked hard to create their own balloon floats. We were so impressed with their creativity! It was loads of fun and a great way to kick off the holiday season!



Sounds of the Season- Our K/1 students put on a great performance December 7 at the Moore Gym. Students sang, danced and performed a mixture of new and traditional holiday songs. Thank you to Mrs. Weiler, Ms. Clayton and K/1 team for helping make this a fun and memorable night for our students and families.



PBIS Out the Blue - This month we added a new Out of the Blue theme “Minute to Win It”. Kids rotated between two fun “Minute to Win It” games. We saw lots of smiles and excited students during this PBIS event, which recognizes students for being referral free during the month.



Schneider Elementary Exemplary Knights

K - Laina Flessner- Laina is a kind and caring individual that always puts forth her best effort in everything she does. She works to improve herself as well as those around her. She is helpful towards others, respectful and has a genuine love for learning. Laina has a warm and loving personality and makes those around her feel special.

1 - Lorelei Lueders - Lorelei always tries her best and works hard in class. She is respectful and follows all school rules. She has made many friends as she is very kind and caring. Lorelei encourages her classmates and is considerate of their feelings. She has a wonderfully positive spirit and shows great academic growth as a result of her hard work and determination.

2 - Annabeth Zander - Annabeth is a caring friend and wonderful student. She always has a positive attitude and comes to school each day ready to learn. She is responsible, sets a positive example for those around her and is respectful to her friends and teachers. Annabeth is already to participate in class discussions and is a focused student.

3 - Abby Isaacs - Abby is a one-of-a-kind student! She is kind, caring, thoughtful, and hardworking. She shows up to class everyday with a smile on her face and ready to see what the day will bring. She is a good friend to those in her class and is always ready to help her peers. Abby always goes above and beyond what is asked of her.

Staff Member - Chris Wells - Chris is always so patient. She never rushes her students and speaks to them with respect, no matter what behavior is being displayed. She is very friendly and has an outgoing attitude. Chris is always willing to help her co-workers.



BRIJHS

- Our 7th Grade students participated in the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest as part of their curriculum. The top 4 were honored at the VFW. First place was Broghen Flannell, second place was Kaleb Forrest, third place was Kelly Weiss, and fourth place was Addison Browning. Congratulations to all and to Mrs. Yeagle for incorporating this opportunity into her curriculum.



Ms. Griffen's class practiced their cooking skills. Yum!



Pictures from our Winter Program: Fa La La Land



- BRIJHS Exemplary Knights

- 4th Grade- Emily Drozs-Emily is a sweet kid who is always kind to her classmates. She always helps the students who are struggling and is willing to help out. Emily has good thoughts to share during discussion and never gives up when things get hard.
- 5th Grade- Sebastian Cox-Sebastian is always happy and is a friend to many in his grade level. He works hard in the classroom and is kind to teachers and peers.
- 6th Grade- Hunter Pirtle-Hunter brings such a positive attitude to the classroom! He participates a LOT in class and does not hesitate to put his best foot forward. He is kind and respectful to all of his classmates and teachers.

- o 7th Grade- Drake Hardesty-Drake is upbeat and loves to participate. He helps his classmates when they need it and knows how to cheer them up when they are down. Most of all, Drake makes his teachers and classmates smile.
 - o 8th Grade- Andrew Schumacher-Andy has been working hard in the classroom this year. He shows a new sense of maturity. He gets along well with his peers and is a good example for younger students.
 - o Staff Member-Heather Wilcoxon was nominated by Dawn Stout. Ms. Wilcoxon is always willing to fill ANY shoes, complete any task, and help anyway she can in a split second notice. She has worn soooooo many hats this year, and has fulfilled them with respect, diligence and grace. She is a true blessing to our TEAM at BRIJHS! She uplifts our students and staff daily and shows Daily love to ALL. She is a true GEM!
- Congratulations to Charlie Hale for being the Boy's Basketball Player of the Month. Coach Hanson says, "Charlie first and foremost has been a responsible and hard working student and has kept his grades in good standings during the season. He has shown great leadership during practices by leading by example during drills and skills practice. He has been our floor captain for our games this season as well."
 - Congratulations to Makenzie Woliung for being the Cheerleader of the Month. Coach Madi Houser says, "My athlete choice for November is Makenzie Woliung! Makenzie is dependable and hardworking. She brings a lot of energy to each game and practice and is just overall the epitome of a great leader! She is always focused on the task at hand and ready to learn new cheers and skills, and helps others learn as well. I can't wait to watch her continue to grow and lead throughout the rest of the season!!"



BRHS

The High School Student Council wrote over 200 holiday cards in accordance with WIXY 100.3FM promotion "Happiness for the Holidays". We were asked to purchase or make holiday cards and letters for the nursing homes in the WIXY listening area. We had a lot of fun and very crampy hands afterwards but we all knew that it was going to a great cause! Way to go Student Council!

Winners of the local Fred O'Malley 6190 VFW essay and speech contests were honored with certificates and cash prizes at the monthly meeting at the VFW hall in Farmer City. High School Voice of Democracy winners included first place Senior Sarah Whitehouse, second place Senior Conner Otto, and third place Junior Alex Blake. Sarah Whitehouse performed her speech, "America: Where do we go from here? Healing the Political Divide."

BRHS Exemplary Knights -

We have 2 students that we are recognizing this month - **Conner Otto** (Sr.) and **Sami Boogren** (Sr.). These students were selected by a committee of high school faculty and staff. They were chosen for their achievements and also for going above and beyond the expectations for our high school students.

Here are some things that teachers say about these awesome students:

Conner Otto - He is a leader in the classroom, is always prepared and comes into class ready to learn. Conner has overcome many challenges to be an excellent student. He has started the year as Key Club President, and is doing an excellent job. I have so very much respect for Conner. He deals with so much but always appears to be upbeat. Not sure how he accomplishes that. Wish I had that kind of moxie!

Sami Boogren -She is a leader in the classroom, playing a leading role in class discussions every single day. Sami is an organized and energetic Student Council secretary. Sami is such a joy to have in class each day. Her insight and contributions to our class discussions are truly top-notch!

Our staff winner for Exemplary Knight for the month of November is **Mike Smith**. Mike is our building custodian at the high school. He works hard and takes great pride in making the building look fantastic. He is also really wonderful at working with our students. From year to year there are always a couple of students who have time each day to work with Mike getting the lunch areas ready for lunch or cleaning up after lunch. Mike truly serves as a mentor for these kids.

The varsity scholastic bowl team has started the season with an 11-2 record, led by senior Sami Boogren!
The JV record stands at 5-1, led by junior Alexis Wike.

FFA members competed in a competitive Section 16 Job Interview Contest and the results are in with all 4 members placing in the top 10 in their respective areas. In the JV Division, Lily Enger was 4th overall and Lori Weiss was 9th overall at the event while in the Varsity Division Kallee Steinkamp was 4th overall and Kaleb Southern placed 5th overall.

Congratulations to members of the FFA Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of Chapter Meetings teams. They competed at Decatur MacArthur High School at the Section 16 event and both are advancing to Districts in April. The parliamentary procedure team placed 2nd overall and consisted of Kaleb Southern 2nd place chair, Gracie Shaffer 1st place floor member, Sydney Rausch 2nd place floor member, Hank Mitchell 4th place floor member, Kallee Steinkamp, and Brenna Friel 10th place floor member. The Conduct of Chapter Meetings team placed 1st overall with Lily Enger 1st place chair, Rachel Light 1st place floor member, Lori Weiss 2nd place floor member, Gavin Friel 3rd place floor member.

The FFA Agronomy team was 4th overall at the Section 16 Agronomy event hosted by Parkland College. Team members included Kaleb Southern, Gavin Friel, Brenna Friel, Kallee Steinkamp, Rachel Light, Aaron Miller, and Morgan Drozs. Morgan also placed 6th overall in the event individually.

TECHNOLOGY



- New website was put on hold when remote learning became our reality
 - Should debut within the next month
 - With parents accessing the website for learning or lunch requests, a delay was needed
- JH Gym - new amp installed, training scheduled for staff & AD
- Attended Illinois Education Technology Conference on 11/18 & 11/19 in Springfield
 - February Training Topics for teachers grades 1-12
 - SAMR - evaluating technology usage in classroom lessons
 - Student Choice to reach higher levels of learning with technology
 - Future Training Topics
 - Digital Citizenship across all disciplines / grades
 - Getting more from Google Slides

- Interviewing Tech. Asst. role Tuesday, Dec. 14
- Carts readied for Schneider Viewboards
- Addressed several Navigate Prepared issues for staff
- Adjusted Final Exam grade weight for HS students
- Checked out many jetpacks to families for remote learning Internet use
- We've had a more exits / enrollments than usual; working to keep those up to date with the state
- E-Rate Category 2 planning, initial submission complete - focus will be Mansfield JH cabling (that side of the building only has one network drop per room) and Wyebot licensing (helps identify WIFI issues)
- Coordinated the installation and configuration of new live streaming camera system from IHSA/NFHS for the new gym at the high school and the football field
 - System will allow for high school post season play to be broadcast via without penalty from IHSA
 - System was no cost to the district
 - Once live, any one with a NFHS network account can watch any of the games broadcast (pay per view or with a season pass)
 - District gets 10% back of any purchases made by viewers
- Installed several replacement systems for staff
- Progressed on network move in the HS closet. Working to organize cabling prior to move
- Performed firmware upgrades to most of the district switches over a several day period
- Began evaluating new networking hardware as a possible replacement for the Meraki Systems
- Participated in several webinars and demos for new phone systems, Vape detectors, wireless systems
- Evaluated digital signage solutions and hardware solutions as replacements for current ChromeBits

Continuing our year...

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