



# PIRATE PRIDE!

## BLACK RIVER LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Proudly Serving the Communities of Albion, Cinnamon Lake, Homerville, Huntington, Spencer and Sullivan.*

October 2019

### Message from the Superintendent



It seems like just yesterday we were congratulating the 110 students of the 2019 class on their graduation in May. It is hard to believe that the 2019-2020 school year is already upon us.

During this school year, there will be a lot of activity occurring within the district.

By December, the adoption and implementation of a Strategic Plan will take place. This plan will not be developed by the Black River Board of Education but by the people who live and work in this community and have a vested interest in the outcome of the Black River Local Schools. This Strategic Plan will be the guiding force as the district begins to make decisions in future operations.

Also, this school year will be a time for celebration – the district will be making their last bond repayment on the Black River Education Center. After this repayment in December, we will then focus the district's attention on Permanent Improvement. In the fall of 2018, this community agreed to convert the current bond issue to a permanent improvement levy that did not include new taxes, but allowed for a way to start improving our current facilities without a tax increase. The Black River Board of Education does have a five-year plan for utilizing this levy. Currently by January, you should

begin to see the implementation of the five-year plan take effect.

In the near future, you will see data concerning the district's report card from the state. This report card is used to determine a district's effectiveness in educating a student. The Black River Local Schools have been continuing to improve its report card and will continue to improve throughout the school year.

Another item you may want to review about the Black River Local Schools is our Quality Profile. The purpose of this Quality Profile is to emphasize what is important to a community, what are the important items that would occur in our district and what we are most proud of. This Quality Profile can be obtained off of our district website, or we would be happy to send one to you if you contact the Black River Board of Education Office.

We wish that all of our students and families have a great school year! Please do not hesitate in contacting our offices if you have questions.

Sincerely,  
*Chris A. Clark, Superintendent*

#WeAreBR



# School Calendar

Visit [www.blackriverschools.org](http://www.blackriverschools.org) to view our full calendar of events.

## October 2019:

**Oct 3:** HS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**Oct 11:** NEOEA Day – No School  
**Oct 24:** EL Parent Teacher Conference Night  
**Oct. 25:** End of the first nine weeks (42 days)  
**Oct 29:** EL Parent Teacher Conference Night  
22 Student Days

## November 2019:

**Nov 7:** MS Parent Teacher Conference Night  
**Nov 12:** MS Parent Teacher Conference Night  
**Nov 27:** 2-Hour Early Release  
**Nov 28 & 29:** Thanksgiving Break  
19 Student Days

## December 2019:

**Dec 2** Conference Payback Day – No School  
**Dec 10:** HS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**Dec 23-Jan 3:** Winter Break  
14 Student Days

## January 2020:

**Jan 16:** End of the second nine weeks (46 days)  
**Jan 17:** Records Day – No School  
**Jan 20:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No School  
18 Student Days

## February 2020:

**Feb 17:** President's Day – No School  
**Feb 20:** MS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**Feb 25:** MS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**Feb 27:** HS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
19 Student Days

## March 2020:

**March 20:** End of the third nine weeks (46 days)  
**March 24:** EL Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**March 26:** EL Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
**March 31:** HS Parent-Teacher Conference Night  
22 Student Days

## April 2020:

**April 6-9:** Spring Break  
**April 10:** Good Friday – No School  
17 Student Days

## May 2020:

**May 22:** Graduation  
**May 25:** Memorial Day – No School  
**May 29:** Last Day  
End of the fourth nine weeks (44 days)  
20 Student Days



# *Mental Health Services*

Black River Local Schools is pleased to partner with OhioGuidestone for the 2019-2020 school year in order to help make mental health services more accessible to our students and families. Each building's administrator(s) or guidance counselor may make a referral to the agency after contacting a student's family or on behalf of the family to OhioGuidestone. We are excited to have three mental health professionals working with us this year. Brooke Gifford and Deanna Taylor are returning to the district, having started partway through the 2018-2019 school year, and new this year is Val Coble.

OhioGuidestone can offer one-on-one counseling services as well as small group services based on student needs, such as social skills, divorce support, anger management, grief support or any other topic for which our students have a need. At the high school level, we are also going to offer an opportunity to develop student leaders who wish to be peer ambassadors. In doing so, they will become more informed about pressing issues, such as as bullying and suicide prevention or any other issues in which the peer ambassadors see a need.

We are excited about the continued partnership with OhioGuidestone and look forward to seeing what the second year brings for one-to-one and small group prevention services. If you have any questions, please contact your child's building administrator.

## *Chromebooks*

In July, the Black River Board of Education decided to put 1,000 Chromebooks into the hands of students in grades 3-12. This decision was something the board did not take lightly. Up to this point, the district has been a 1:1 district, meaning that every student has access to at least one electronic device to assist with the educational process. The district entered into a lease agreement with Trinity3 Technology, a company based in St. Paul, Minn. The company is willing to create a lease agreement with the district, allowing us to create a six-year replacement cycle. The reason for a replacement cycle is because Chromebooks have a typical technology life of six years, at the end of those years, they can no longer be serviced or be supported by any type of technology upgrade. In two years, the district will remove 250 of the original 1,000 Chromebooks that we are leasing, and crediting the district with a portion of their use, Trinity3 will lease out 250 new Chromebooks. This will aid in creating a replacement cycle and allow the district to maintain a set yearly expense, rather than obtaining a large cash expense every five to six years.





# Lorain County Eight League or LC8

The Patriot Athletic Conference has been dissolved with Buckeye and Fairview going to a new conference together. Brooklyn and Lutheran West are also going to a new conference together. The remaining eight schools from the PAC have created the LC8. The schools of the LC8 are Brookside, Clearview, Columbia, Firelands, Keystone, Oberlin, Wellington and Black River.

The athletic directors, principals and superintendents have met over the last year to create a constitution, game schedules and develop an atmosphere that will be in the spirit of great competition and sportsmanship in the conference.

**We will have conference champions in the following sports:**

**Fall sports:** Football, Volleyball, Boys and Girls Cross Country, and Golf

**Winter sports:** Boys and Girls Basketball and Wrestling (Bowling will compete in its same league.)

**Spring sports:** Baseball, Softball, and Boys and Girls Track and Field

---

## Admission Prices:

**At the gate:** High school events are \$6.00 for each individual.

Middle school events are \$4.00 for each individual.

Passes for athletic events are available for purchase in the high school office with a variety of packages available. The packages are only good for use at home events.

Black River is looking forward to the competition and the continued development of the LC8!

# Staff Updates

## New Staff:

**Michael Valentine** - 8th-Grade Language Arts Teacher

**Hunter Bell** - 8th-Grade Science Teacher

**Sarah Woessner** - Paraprofessional

**Dawn Yourich** - High School Aide

**Jessica Brodwolf** - Food Service Assistant

## Position Changes:

**Grace Brewer** - Middle School Career Connections Teacher from Middle School Library Paraprofessional

**Rachael Strader** - High School Guidance Counselor from High School Language Arts Teacher

**Katherine Kidd** - Kindergarten Teacher from Preschool Teacher

**Victoria Gordon** - Middle School Paraprofessional from Elementary School Paraprofessional

**Patrice Timothy** - Integrated Preschool Teacher from Title 1 Teacher

# Summer Projects

Over the summer, while students and a majority of staff were not around, the district worked on some major projects. One of the projects at the high school was the completion of the fire alarm system. The previous system was an alarm with no out call for fire department support. It also did not support a tornado or intruder alert system. The high school now has this safety capability. This system matches what is in place for the Black River Education Center.

Another project that was completed over the summer was the removal of the overhead electric power lines at the high school and the installation of a new electrical panel in the high school. Prior to this new installation, the electrical panel was at its maximum use as it was the original panel from when the high school was first built. With the increase of electrical items at the high school, there was no way to support the current electrical demand. Now the district will have the capability to support future electric projects to the high school. While the district moved the current electrical service lines and poles to the high school, other items that we also addressed, a fiber optic line was installed, which connects the current athletic field house to the

high school. Also, the fiber optic line that provides the district Internet access was also rerouted and converted to underline services.

A number of issues that arose during last winter's safety audit were also addressed this summer. Safety film was placed on windows. Many of the trees and shrubs were removed, and those areas will be re-landscaped and planted with more safety-minded plants that will not restrict views. Lastly, high school lockers were painted, and also the district has continued with the painting of hallways at Black River Education Center and the high school cafeteria.



# *Focus for the Year*

## *Black River Elementary School*

The elementary school is starting off the year by welcoming new students and families to the building. The staff here is excited to continue with setting the foundation for future learning. Our focus this school year continues to be on building the early learning foundations that are necessary for reading and writing. The preschool has been restructured this school year to include more hours for our 4-5-year-old students to better prepare them for kindergarten. Our kindergarten through second-grade literacy instruction includes meeting the various needs of our differentiated learners and helping students progress and solidify their emergent literacy skills. These grade levels focus on learning

how to read. At grades 3 to 5, our focus changes to reading for understanding. We are also putting an emphasis on how our young learners express themselves in their writing and improving written communication.

Our staff continues to work on how students treat each other and being kind. We have also started a kindness club that will be meeting after school once a month. As we work on kindness, it ties into our building PBIS initiative of being ready, being responsible, being respectful and being resourceful. Our elementary students are being reinforced for their positive actions of kindness.

---

## *Black River Middle School*

BRMS welcomed 265 students to the 2019-2020 school year for what is sure to be a challenging yet rewarding year. The start of the year marks the beginning of a new journey for our sixth-graders and the final chapter of middle school for our eighth-graders. The journey toward employment, enrollment or enlistment begins now. This journey requires integrity and self-discipline. Our daily schedule and course structure is designed to support the development of both of those life skills. The BRMS staff has spent countless hours learning new skills and finding resources to help you through an amazing journey. All students will participate in an enriched core curriculum, explore elective courses connected to real-world applications and be offered a variety of opportunities to engage in throughout the school

year. We are excited to have added a Career and College Connections course to our encore/elective sequence. We have restructured the Academic Extension time provided to all students in grades 6-8. We have also added a monthly focus to the PBIS system. September will set the stage for a successful year with the challenge to meet a target attendance rate of 95% or higher. The vision of Black River Middle School is to provide our students with opportunities and resources to become well-rounded, responsible citizens who work to achieve their maximum potential. BRMS is committed to pride, excellence and in being the best school that we can be. We hope that you will become committed with us and become involved with the various activities BRMS has to offer.

---

## *Black River High School*

This year our high school students were welcomed back with our school bleeding black and gold throughout the building. Our hallways, offices, library and cafeteria now resemble the spirit of the Black River community and our "Tradition of Excellence." Many of our classrooms were also able to be updated, thanks to the Class of 2019, who wanted to leave their legacy for our current and future students. We appreciate them honoring their four years at BRHS.

Our staff is proud to announce an increase in our academic offerings this year. We are now able to offer Honors classes in all of our core subject areas and an increase in our STEM classes. Electives are now aligned to offer more choices to our student body. With this individual student focus and the creation of student success plans, our students have already experienced greater academic achievement, increased our performance on the Ohio State Report Card and raised our graduation rate. Our students have opened their pathways to success and are ready to be world-class citizens.

# *What's Up with STEM?*

STEM is moving at full steam! Students are now able to access three years of STEM classes that allow them the opportunity to learn at the highest level. Specifically, students will learn transferable skills such as leadership, creativity and critical thinking that are applicable to all three pathways for success – employment, enlistment and enrollment. We welcome all students that want to be challenged and have fun doing it!

## *Junior Solar Sprint*

Junior Solar Sprint has been a great opportunity for Black River students! As part of this hands-on project, students are able to practice the Engineering Design Model and deeply collaborate with their peers. Additionally, the experience connects seamlessly with fifth grade physical science standards.

Students quickly become confident in background research, stating a specific problem and working to meet competition constraints. Specifically, students were challenged to create a car that would withstand multiple tests and meet a set criteria. The project allowed students to practice problem solving, speed calculation and also elements of redesign - especially when they were not getting the results they wanted.

Our classes were fortunate to have the opportunity to have multiple competitions with four other rural school districts leading into National competition. During competition, students were able to see examples of display boxes and portfolios at different stages of completion. This initiated rich conversation among our teams and positive feedback from other students throughout the region and country.

The monies provided through the AEOP grant have made it possible for hundreds of students to have the opportunity to be a part of this experience. The friendships built with students & colleagues in other districts has added another layer of resources for science growth Black River.

## *Army Educational Outreach Program (AEOP)*

During the 2018-2019 school year, 8th grade STEM students from Black River Middle School participated in the AEOP eCYBERMISSION Challenge. eCYBERMISSION is a web-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) competition for students in grades six through nine that promotes self-discovery and enables all students to recognize the real-life applications of STEM. Teams of three or four students are instructed to ask questions (for science) or define

problems (for engineering), and then construct explanations (for science) or design solutions (for engineering) based on identified problems in their community.

BR Middle School had a group of three students place 2nd in the State of Ohio. The team consisted of Jessica Kozik, Gabriel Sterzer, and Keith Krnac. Each student received a \$500 U.S. savings bond as a reward for their design.

# Camp Invention

Camp Invention allows time for STEM concepts to come to life! A student's school day is filled with what is best to grow as a reader and mathematician. However, often times students don't have the time to plan, discover, create, recreate, problem solve, discuss, test, brainstorm, invent, stop & think, re-evaluate, push through failure, help others, collaborate, and just keep trying. Invention is much more than a eureka moment! All kids can invent and Black River is building a strong STEM foundation for our students.

Camp Invention is run by certified teachers, parents, middle school volunteers and a very supportive administrative team. The National Inventors Hall of Fame provides everything

that is needed from the beginning of recruitment flyers, to ALL camp materials, lesson plans, and daily checking on district needs as camp is in action. In 2019, Black River was awarded an additional six scholarships to allow even more of our students the opportunity to have an incredible week of invention.

Camp Invention continues to inspire campers with various needs and skill levels to step out of their comfort zone, challenges students to persevere when times get tough and to trust that if it doesn't turn out the way they predicted the first time, there is always another try tomorrow.

# e-Communication Sign Up

The district is continuing to reduce the number of paper and printing that is used and also attempting to allow families more access and quicker turnaround time for information. There are a couple of ways to allow families the opportunity to work through some of the district forms digitally.

The first alternative is our district website. The portal (<https://blackriver.esvportal.com/>) allows parents to create an account, connects students and family and permits parents to fill out the emergency medical form electronically. This also is the same site where users would complete a Transportation Request form in the event that district transportation needs have changed. Also, in this electronic repository, users will find the Emergency Plan form so as

in the event of early dismissal, the district will be able to identify how parents would like their child to be taken home. The Free and Reduced Lunch forms are also included in the ESV portal.

Another digital item you may want to sign up for is our e-communication. Those interested can visit the following link on the Black River Website: <http://www.blackriver.k12.oh.us/protected/PublicUserLogin.aspx>. There, users will have the opportunity to sign up, choose different buildings and select their daily and weekly announcements. Also, in the event that there be a building cancellation, an email will be generated and sent to users of this platform.





## CONTACT US

257-A County Road 40  
Sullivan, OH 44880  
419.736.3300

Black River Local School District  
257-A County Road 40  
Sullivan, Ohio 44880

Non-Profit  
US Postage Paid  
London, OH  
43140  
Permit #48

## *Black River Local School District is on Facebook!*

Follow us on Facebook  
to stay up to date with  
the latest happenings  
at Black River. Visit  
[www.facebook.com/  
BlackRiverSchools](http://www.facebook.com/BlackRiverSchools)  
and click the "Like" button.



Don't forget to use our hashtag:  
**#WeAreBR**

## *Get Reminders with Remind*

If you would like to be part of the  
Remind communications, please  
contact the main office of each  
building.

# Treasurer's Update

By: *Connie Hange, Treasurer*

Black River ended fiscal year 2019 with a \$3,200,548 cash balance. Of this balance, \$2,475,638 was in general operating funds with the balance being in restricted funds. The \$2,475,638 represents about two months of operating expenses. As we begin the new school year, our challenge is to maintain a budget that provides for the educational needs of our students while responsibly managing the resources provided by our community.

Administrators play a significant role in the budgeting process, along with the superintendent and treasurer. They are asked to find the most cost-effective ways to operate their buildings and continue to support academic excellence for our students. We all work together to find ways to reduce our spending each year.

The State of Ohio has not included a new school funding formula in the current biennial budget. This means that Black River will most likely receive the same amount of state funding in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 as we received in 2019; approximately \$7,150,000. State aid currently makes up approximately 47.5% of our total general operating funds. This means that we rely on our community to provide 52.5% of the funds needed to educate our students. At this time, there are no plans for the district to place any type of new levy before our voters. We will, however, be asking our community to renew our emergency levy sometime in 2022 or 2023.

If you have any questions about the finances of the Black River School District, do not hesitate to contact the treasurer's office at 419-736-3300.