



PIRATE PRIDE!

BLACK RIVER LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Winter 2019

Message from the Superintendent



On behalf of the Board of Education and the faculty and students of the Black River Local Schools, I want to thank the voters in the district for passing the Permanent Improvement levy that will

not take effect until January 2020. This is a huge positive decision for our district and one that the Board of Education is not taking lightly. While we did not hear many concerns about the levy prior to Election Day, the number of negative votes has caught our attention.

Consequently, the Black River Board of Education will be forming a strategic planning committee made up of community members throughout the district. The purpose of this plan will be to help guide the district for at least the next five years. In

this plan, we hope to incorporate all the aspects of the Black River Local School District, which includes curriculum and programming, technology, and physical updates to our buildings.

We encourage any interested community members to participate in this strategic planning as our district seeks to serve and represent our entire community. As district residents, your input is greatly valued. If interested, please contact us at 419-736-3300.

As a district, we are looking forward to this process and will provide additional details as we get started.

Sincerely,
Chris A. Clark, Superintendent

#WeAreBR



SCHOOL CALENDAR

February		21	Elementary School Parent-Teacher Conferences	19	Good Friday – NO SCHOOL
18	Presidents Day – NO SCHOOL			22-26	Spring Break – NO SCHOOL
21	Board of Education Meeting, BREC Media Center – 7 p.m.		Board of Education Meeting, BREC Media Center – 7 p.m.	May	
28	High School Parent-Teacher Conferences	26	Elementary School Parent-Teacher Conferences	16	Board of Education Meeting, BREC Media Center – 7 p.m.
March		April		24	Graduation, BREC Gymnasium - 7 p.m.
7	Middle School Parent-Teacher Conferences	2	High School Parent-Teacher Conferences	27	Memorial Day – NO SCHOOL
14	Middle School Parent-Teacher Conferences	18	Board of Education Meeting, BREC Media Center – 7 p.m.	June	
				4	Last Day of School for Students

Visit www.blackriverschools.org to view our full calendar of events.

Black River Board of Education Updates

At its Jan. 2 organizational meeting, the Black River Board of Education named Scott Meredith as president and Chuck Stiver as vice president. Matthew Clark, Dan Sexton and Pam Wheeler make up the rest of the Board.

Meredith, a four-year Board member, said, "It is an honor to serve the Black River community as Board president. This year, I hope the district can develop a strategic plan to focus permanent improvement

expenditures on items that will provide the greatest impact to the district, with priority to student safety and learning environment."

The Board of Education meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Media Center at Black River High School. These meetings are subject to change. Please check the district website at <http://www.blackriver.k12.oh.us> for updates.

Black River Organizes Audit of District's Safety Plan

Coordinated by Superintendent Chris Clark, Black River Local Schools recently underwent an audit of the district's safety plan, including its policies and procedures. The audit was conducted with participants from the Media County Sheriff's Office, Spencer Township Fire & Rescue Department, Sullivan Fire & Rescue Department and Ashland County Sheriff's Office, along with various Black River building administrators and the district's maintenance supervisor.

The purpose of the audit was to find the strengths and weaknesses of the district's safety plan. Black River will continue to consider items that will improve communication across the district and aid in the identification of safety concerns.

Parents visiting the school buildings may see activities with vendors completing security work both during school hours and after school hours as the district addresses the audit's findings. As time goes on, the Black River Board of Education may assist the treasurer and Superintendent Clark by creating a priority list. Since the security and well-being of students is Black River's top priority, the audit was completed to reflect the district-wide commitment to augment safety.

Recent Changes in State Law Provide Additional Graduation Pathways for Students for Class of 2019

Outgoing Governor, John Kasich, signed into effect a state law that will continue to offer students graduating in 2019 alternative pathways to earning their high school diplomas. These changes will positively benefit graduates from Black River High School.

"Providing students with alternative pathways to graduation is important as it allows the doors to different opportunities to remain open for all students, regardless of their path," said Black River High School Principal Tracey Lambdin. "It's our goal to help students to leave high school prepared for employment, enrollment in a college or university or to enlist in armed forces."

The alternative pathways give students who may not meet state testing or credit requirements for graduation. Examples of alternative pathways include completing a specific number of hours of employment, meeting attendance requirements and completing a student portfolio, to name a few.

For more information on the graduations requirements for 2019 and beyond, visit the ODE website at: education.ohio.gov.

Black River Local School District is Now on Facebook!



Follow us Facebook to stay up to date with the latest happenings at Black River. Visit www.facebook.com/BlackRiverSchools and click the "Like" button.

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

Black River Receives New School Bus with Assistance from Ohio EPA

Black River Local Schools is excited to announce that the district has a brand new diesel-powered school bus! The new bus is a result of Black River applying to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to receive funding for projects to reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment over one year ago.

Black River applied for and was awarded an additional grant from the Ohio EPA this year for a second new bus, which the district can order beginning in January. In total, Black River received \$68,637 for 75% of the cost to replace one model year 2002 diesel-powered school bus. The district is currently deciding whether to purchase another diesel-powered bus and to make this bus handicap-accessible.

"These vehicles will allow our transportation services to be more environmentally friendly, which is our duty as a district," said Treasurer Connie Hange. "Thank you to the Ohio EPA for selecting Black River as a grant recipient. It is important to us that we reduce our carbon footprint as much as we possibly can."

Since Black River Local Schools has a high volume of school buses already, the district also qualifies for Fleet pricing with some manufacturers. As such, the district also received a 10-passenger van purchased from Ford Motor Company in December through fleet pricing.

Black River Enriched by Community Partnerships

For over three years, Black River Local Schools has made an effort to partner with local ministers to discuss how the district and church communities can better assist each other. These local partnerships have proven to be beneficial as they have streamlined communication and made it easier for the district to share news and information with the church communities.

The goal of the partnerships is ultimately providing outreach, giving ministers the chance to ask questions about district operations so the answers can then be relayed to church members. Following the monthly meetings, Black River Schools try to publicize what services are offered at the churches for the community, such as family meals and food pantries. Also, the district is planning to assist some of the ministers and church members with “Stop the Bleed” training, since churches are similarly soft targets like school buildings.

The meetings with local clergy are open to all the churches in the Black River Local Schools area. They include Homerville Grace Brethren Church, Spencer United Methodist Church, Homerville United Methodist Church, First Congregational Church of Sullivan, United Church of Huntington, Cultivation Church and County View Baptist Church. Any church leaders wishing to participate, please contact the Black River Local Schools at 419-736-3300.

If you are a family in need, please contact the Black River Local Schools so we can assist you with information about local churches that might be able to assist you and your family.

Hiring Process Underway to Name New Head Coach for High School Football Team

The search for a new varsity football head coach at Black River High School is currently underway following former head coach Al Young’s retirement after the 2018 season. Young held the position for more than thirty years and was an integral part of the Black River community.

“Al’s shoes will be hard to fill,” said Black River High School Principal Tracey Lambdin. “However, I am confident that with this interview process, we are taking a holistic approach to finding a coach who will be a tremendous asset to the Black River community.”

Qualified candidates will be interviewed in a two-round process. The first round of interviews began following the first of the year. The interview panel is comprised of administration members, key Black River alumni, community members, staff members and professionals with athletic and coaching backgrounds.

Committee members will meet following the interviews to discuss the candidates and provide their recommendation to the superintendent. The superintendent will then present the recommendation to the Board of Education at the February 2019 Board meeting. Additional updates will be provided to the community at that time.

Kindergarten Registration for the 2019-2020 School Year

Kindergarten registration will take place Thursday, March 21, and Tuesday, March 26, from 4-7 p.m. at the Black River Elementary School’s office for the 2019-2020 school year. If either of those dates do not work for you, registration will also take place daily from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the district’s Board Office.

Completed enrollment packets will be collected during these times. Parents also need to bring their child(ren)’s birth certificate, proof of living in the district, immunization records and custody papers (if applicable), as the district will need a copy of each form.

Parents who have a child(ren) who will be five years old by Sept. 30, 2019, are encouraged to register.

Kindergarten screening will be done on May 2 and 8 by appointment only.

Please call Mary Stefanik at 419-736-3300 to receive an enrollment packet and schedule a screening appointment.

Enroll Your Child in Black River’s 5-Star Preschool Program

If you are interested in enrolling your child in Black River’s preschool program this year, there are still several openings available:

Public Preschool

- Monday-Wednesday AM class (3 and 4-year-olds)
- Tuesday & Thursday AM class (3 and 4-year-olds)
- Monday-Friday PM class (4-year-olds going to kindergarten next school year)

Integrated Preschool

- Monday through Thursday AM class (3 and 4-year-olds)
- Monday through Friday PM class (4-year-olds going to kindergarten next school year)

Registration forms can be picked up in the elementary office or the board office. Enrollment for the preschool program for the 2019-2020 school year will begin in March. Students ages three to five are eligible to enroll in the preschool program. Completion of the enrollment packet is required to begin the registration process. These will be made available in the elementary office or the board office.

The Black River Local School District preschool was awarded a five-star rating from the Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) Step Up to Quality Program. The five-star rating is the highest rating a preschool program can receive from ODE.

E-Communication Now Available

Black River Local School District now offers an option to register for eCommunication. The goal is to provide tailored communication for parents and community members. When you create your account, you will be able to choose which types of information you are interested in receiving. By choosing the Online Dashboard Weekly Updates, you will receive weekly updates on any new content added to the sections you select. Information can be sent via e-mail or text. If your contact information changes or you wish to change the type of information you receive, you can update your account at any time.

Please visit www.blackriverschools.org/protected/PublicUserLogin.aspx to register.

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District Property Value Increases

By: Connie Hange, Treasurer

Last month, the district received the property values and estimated tax receipts from the county auditor for 2019 based on the sexennial property value reappraisal for our district (Lorain County 2018, Medina County 2019 and Ashland County 2020). Lorain County values increased by approximately 14 percent. The Medina County auditor predicts single digit increases for Black River residents and the Ashland County auditor predicts 15 percent property value increases for Black River.

Normally, the reappraisal of real estate property means a reduction in the effective millage rate as long as property values are increasing. By law, the millage rate cannot be reduced below 20 mills. As Black River's effective millage rate has hit the 20-mill floor, it cannot be reduced further. This means the increased property values will produce additional funds for the district.

This increase in property taxes, however, is NOT related to the passage of the district's recent permanent improvement (PI) levy.

The 1.6 mill bond for the BREC will be collected through 2019. The 1.4 mill PI levy will not be collected until 2020.

If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact me at 419-736-3300.