

MAKING STRIDES THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Earlier this school year, all Liberty-Benton High School students participated in the STRIDES Leadership Day, interacting with and getting to know people they might not know otherwise.

Since 2003, district high school students have participated in STRIDES, which stands for Students Taking Roles in Developing Educational Success. Through the STRIDES program, which lasts all school year, students from all different interests and grade levels are mixed together into small groups to cheer for each other, support one another and come together to make a difference in the school and the community.

“We created this program as a way to come together as one family and create a culture of understanding, compassion and acceptance,” said Brenda Frankart, Liberty-Benton High School principal. “It’s a great program for getting everyone to work together through leadership development and service.”

Every student is assigned a group and every third week the 31 student groups meet and do a 30-minute activity, focusing on building trust, working together, team-building, and service learning. The groups are 100 percent student led by people such as Chloe Wright, who is a senior that felt compelled to become a leader her sophomore year when she became really involved and engaged with STRIDES and “realized I had a sense of belonging and empowerment in that role and wanted to try to help as much as I could.”

“My favorite thing about being a STRIDES leader is getting kids involved that might not have cared otherwise. At the end of the year, I feel I have succeeded as a leader when someone in my group wants an application to become a STRIDES leader themselves.”

Each group chooses a service-learning project, such as volunteering at a shelter, caroling at a nursing home or stocking a food pantry. Throughout the year, the groups also compete in things like pumpkin-decorating contests, penny wars, box top collections and canned food drives. The totals for the groups



are displayed in the high school foyer and the winning group at the end of each school year gets a trophy and ever-important bragging rights.

“The wall starts off bare and by the end of the year it’s filled up and you’re so proud of what you’ve done in the year; it’s cool to see what we’ve accomplished,” said Chloe.

Frankart said that many of Liberty-Benton High School graduates continue on with doing service projects or taking on leadership roles in college as well.

“I believe this program helps maintain the small school atmosphere we have here at Liberty-Benton and it really contributes to our culture,” said Frankart. “The expectation is that we can all make a difference in our community.”

LETTER FROM THE TREASURER

Some of the most important financial planning work we do occurs each year with the five-year financial forecast. Why? Because budgets and financial planning tools are statements that provide the district’s financial trend over time and roadmaps for decisions aimed at encouraging financial sustainability and stability. At Liberty-Benton our five-year financial forecast shows that our priorities are about maintaining a sound budget while sending dollars to the classroom for students.

We direct 67 percent of the district’s operating funds into classroom instruction, where they can be the most effective. But our buildings are older and need significant work to meet 21st century safety and learning standards; it’s work that far exceeds the district’s current budget. This is why we’re currently engaging in a Master Facilities Plan. Without this plan, the district will soon have to divert operating funds from the classroom to address critical facility needs.

Added to that, the district’s ¾ percent income tax, which was renewed at the May 2010 election and the district began collecting in January 2011, will expire December 31, 2020. Last year, this income tax made up 12 percent of the district’s overall funding. This is a need we will be addressing in the near future as well.

Our financial forecast provides a detailed look at the historical and projected financial sources. We use it when assessing the financial health of our district and in identifying any stressors to the budget or future challenges. Looking ahead, ensuring strong financial budgeting will remain a critical part of the district’s planning. While the cost of new or upgraded facilities is looked at separately from our operating expenses, our board is considering how to address both of these issues in the near future.

If you would like to view our current five-year forecast, please visit <https://education.ohio.gov>.

I am incredibly grateful to our residents for the continued support for our schools, which are such an important part of our community. It is my privilege to serve our community and to ensure we do everything we can to provide our teachers and staff with what they need to help our Eagles soar.

Respectfully,

Lisa Dobbins

Lisa Dobbins, Treasurer



FALL SPORTS WRAP-UP

Our Eagles had another outstanding season in sports! We saw excellence in all seven of our fall sports–16 student-athletes were named 1st Team in their conferences, one student was named 1st Team All-Ohio, another student was named Player of the Year in her conference and one of our coaches was named Coach of the Year.

Our golf team won six tournament invitationals while our boys’ cross country squad competed at the regional level.

Of our seven fall sports teams, two teams had undefeated records–volleyball and girls’ soccer. Both teams won district and were named league champions and represented us well at regional finals. For our volleyball team, this is the first time since 1998 that the team was named district champions.

We are proud of all of our student-athletes and grateful for the leadership they show both on and off the field, court and track.

Way to go, Eagles!

UPCOMING DATES:		
December 4, 2018 High School Winter Concert, 7:30 pm, LBHS	December 5, 2018 Community Presentation #2– Master Facilities Planning, 6:30 pm, LBHS	December 11, 2018 Eagle Singers/Beginning Band Winter Concert, 7 pm, LBMS
December 18, 2018 Middle School Winter Concert, 7:30 pm, LBHS	December 22 2018– January 2, 2019 Winter Break	January 21, 2019 MLK Day, no school
February 18, 2019 Teacher in-service, no school	February 27, 2019 State of the Schools Address	March 1, 2, 3 2019 High School Musical “Shrek”

DID YOU KNOW?

FACT 1

We drive 714 miles daily on 11 bus routes, transporting 722 students



FACT 2

Our average ACT score is 22.6, which is more than two points higher than the state average of 20.3



Liberty-Benton Local Schools
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BLENDING TECHNOLOGY WITH TRADITION TO ENGAGE TODAY’S LEARNERS



Six years ago, the Liberty-Benton Local School District started its one-to-one technology initiative. Since then, district teachers have infused technology with research-based, time-tested best practice strategies for education. Welcome to the world of blended learning.

Last year, the staff at Liberty-Benton Middle School amped up its concentration on blended learning and engaged in an all-staff book study with the book “Bold School: Old School Wisdom + New School Technologies = Blended Learning That Works” by Weston Kieschnick, who is considered a blended learning expert and spent time earlier this school year with all district staff for professional development. Through his presentation and the book study, middle school staff adopted his five-step process:

- Identify your outcome
- Select a goal
- Choose the digital tool that will enhance the activity
- Plan the blended learning environment
- Self-assess

The staff has coupled this approach with findings from researcher John Hattie’s meta-analysis about what instructionally works in the classroom—anything with an effect size of .46 or higher will present an expected educational outcome of more than one year’s of growth in one year with a student.

“When implemented with fidelity, research-based strategies work,” said Bruce Otley, Liberty-Benton Middle School principal. “We’re seeing tremendous growth from our students as a result of this approach to teaching and learning.”

And he is right. Recent state report card data shows that in every area regarding student growth, Liberty-Benton students showed more than one year’s growth in one year’s time. Because of this approach, students are engaged on an individual level, allowing teachers to personalize education for each student while also monitoring each student’s individual progress.

“Blended learning takes the best of ‘old school’ research-based best practices and enhances them with today’s technology tools. The technology streamlines feedback so teachers can pitch it where

students can hit it. The goal and the strategy are the important things and then you choose the best tool, and we’re picking strategies we know are effective.”

But what does this actually look like in the classroom? The district has identified 13 key strategies that have an effect size of .46 or higher, according to John Hattie’s research. These include strategies like concept mapping, direct instruction and reciprocal teaching, which has an effect size of .74.

“Reciprocal teaching is a literacy strategy that can be used in any content area. After introducing new vocabulary, the teacher asks the students first to define the word and then explain in their own words what it is and what it isn’t,” explained Otley. “Then, students use their iPads and Google to find an image of the word in a way that’s meaningful to each student. Students Airplay their images for the class to see, explaining the connection between their images and the new vocabulary term creating a connection between an image meaningful to each student and the new term.”

And these types of activities are happening every day.

In Lyndsey Fox’s 8th grade science class, she recently used the interactive video method, which has an effect size of .54, to study earthquakes. Fox built a shake table on which the students tested structures they built, based on what they gleaned from a video about how engineers and architects are developing technologies to build structures to reduce damage and how those technologies are being deployed in real life. They then used their iPads to record the data and complete the lab.

“Our teachers are using blended learning strategies to create interesting, engaging, real-world learning experiences with their students; they are using the technology to drive their instruction,” continued Otley. “Technology gives the teacher the ability to get real-time feedback from the students every day. One hundred percent of our students are chiming in on the conversation. We’re still having oral discussions in the classroom but students are also providing digital responses so the teachers can see what every student is learning. It’s pretty cool stuff.”



GIVING OUR EAGLES THE SPACE TO SOAR

As we enter the season of giving, I find myself reflecting on the experience we provide here at Liberty-Benton Local Schools. Our goal is to give our students opportunities to reach their potential in academics, good character, American citizenship, independent living, and critical thinking at a cost that is financially sustainable by the community.



Which is why it is so important that we involve the community as much as possible in our master facilities planning. Held in early November, our first community meeting was a success; we gathered a lot of useful feedback from those who attended and I am grateful for the input. If you were not able to attend that meeting, I hope you will still share your voice. Paper copies of the survey are available in all school offices as well as the Board of Education office. A link to the survey is also on the district homepage. We will have our second community meeting on December 5 at 6:30pm at our high school and I encourage you to attend.

We are looking at our facilities now because not only are they aging but our enrollment continues to steadily increase. A solution will be needed in the future but we want to be absolutely sure as to what our needs and solutions are. That is why we are engaging the public now, and there is some urgency and a real need to do this.

A Master Facilities Plan looks holistically at both the physical condition of the buildings as well as how well they support current best practices in education to ensure students are provided what they need to be successful in the future. Experts look at what existing buildings require for long-term maintenance and operation and compare that to what new, energy-efficient buildings would cost the district and community long term. This is coupled with educational assessments of district buildings to determine what the future facilities should and could be.

Our schools belong to the community so this process must involve the community. We have a lot of work to do, there is no doubt about that, but this is critical work if we are going to continue to give our Eagles a safe and empowering environment to learn to soar.

Respectfully,

Mark Kowalski, Superintendent

ATTENTION:

Liberty-Benton Local Schools is in need of qualified substitute employees for the following positions: bus driver, cook, custodian, educational aide, and secretary. If interested in obtaining more information, please call the superintendent’s office at 419-422-8526.

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Bruce Otley, Liberty-Benton Middle School Principal



THE PURPLE STAR AWARD: DESIGNATING OUR DISTRICT AS MILITARY FRIENDLY

In October 2018, State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria paid a visit to the Liberty-Benton Local School District to acknowledge the district for the Purple Star designation it received last spring.

“I try to make a point of visiting schools that are doing great things,” said DeMaria. “And it’s a great thing that Liberty-Benton has done, ensuring it is a military-friendly school district. The military presence in Ohio is tremendous and it’s important for us to make sure we’re being specifically sensitive to the needs of these families, which is why we launched the Purple Star program.”

To receive the Purple Star Award, the district has to follow guidelines and complete activities outlined by the Ohio Department of Education, such as maintaining a dedicated page on its website featuring resources for military families, providing professional development for staff on special considerations for military students and families, hosting a military recognition event, and identifying a staff point of contact for military students and families. For Liberty-Benton, this person is Chad Marzec.

Marzec, who is a West Point graduate, veteran, science teacher and head wrestling coach, was instrumental in getting this process underway as the primary liaison between military families and the school.

“The statistics alone on how often military families move convinced me that this is highly important work,” said Marzec. “Like all families, we need to ensure that military families feel welcome and know they have a safe place and family here at Liberty-Benton.”

As a liaison, Marzec also identifies and informs teachers of the military-connected students in their classrooms and the special considerations military families and students should receive.

“From a staff standpoint, this designation adds to the conversation we have about how we can take better care of all of our kids. At the end of the day, we want to provide stability and an improved quality of life for all of our students and families.”

On November 12, the high school hosted a military recognition event in which they invited and recognized local veterans. “After all,” continues Marzec, “it’s because of the people who have served that we have such a more positive military culture now.”

Marzec commends the district administration for taking the necessary steps to receive the Purple Star Award. “Our district administration puts emphasis on ensuring the culture at Liberty-Benton is always about developing relationships, and when we talk about the Purple Star it fits into the culture of inclusion we try to demonstrate every day in our schools.”

