

# EAGLE MESSENGER

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF LIBERTY-BENTON LOCAL SCHOOLS | WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER



This has certainly been a school year like no other. Thanks to the support of our Eagle community though, we are slowly returning to normal. I think everyone would agree it feels good!

Our students returned to “all-in”, five days a week in person learning on February 1. Hearing the excitement from the students as they reconnect with their friends and teachers is like music to my ears. It’s great to have the bustle of students back on campus.

Teachers across the district received their first round of the vaccine on February 27. It’s a day many of us have been waiting for, and is an important step in our return to normalcy.

This has been a snowier winter than in recent years, and as a result, we’ve had several calamity days. I’ve seen plenty of snowmen and mountains of snow adorning yards across our district! Our staff, students and families have taken these fluctuations to learning schedules in stride, and for this I am grateful. I hope these days have provided students and their families with an opportunity to forget about all the worries of the last year and enjoy the free play and fun in the snow. Because we transitioned to remote learning after exhausting our first five calamity days, we will not need to extend the school year.

Not only have students returned to school full-time, we are also excited to be ramping up our extracurricular activities again. As you’ll see later in this newsletter, students recently performed “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.” Additionally, winter sports are wrapping up and spring sports are about to kick off (yes, spring is coming!). While these events aren’t permitted to have as many spectators as usual, abiding by the rules allows our students to return to the things they love. Thank you for your understanding and for your commitment to keeping our students, staff and others in the community safe.

I say this has been a school year like no other in part because, in my tenure as superintendent, I’ve never experienced a year that’s gone by so fast and so slow all at the same time. It’s gone by quickly because since we pivoted to new ways of doing things last year, seemingly overnight, many of us have been operating on adrenaline. From e-learning to wearing masks to finding funding to cover the expense of added safety protocols, our community has pulled together like never before. It’s gone by slowly because we’re all anxiously awaiting the day when we can return to normal—even if that normal doesn’t look exactly like it did pre-pandemic. Whether your year is flying by or going at a snail’s pace, thank you for being part of our Eagle community and for making the most of this year. We couldn’t do it without you.

With appreciation and sincere admiration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Kowalski".

**Mark Kowalski**, Superintendent

## UPCOMING DATES

**MARCH 15**

High School 3.5 Honors  
Banquet at 7 pm

**APRIL 2-5**

Spring Break

**MAY 10**

Liberty-Benton Arts  
Festival at 5 pm

**MAY 15**

Prom at 7 pm

**JUNE 6**

Graduation at 2 pm

\*All dates are subject to change.  
Please visit our website for updates.



# STUDENT REFLECTIONS: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Written by: Chelsea May, Class of 2022



This school year has been filled with many unexpected obstacles as well as new challenges and opportunities. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected schools worldwide by changing the way students attend school either through online zooms, hybrid scheduling, or going back with full time classes.

My experience at Liberty-Benton High School through this pandemic has changed my perspective on how education can be taught to students in numerous ways. The changes that have happened this year have helped me become better prepared for college, especially when school was in the hybrid schedule attending school for only half a day every day. It helped me become more organized with my work, I managed my time better, and I became more flexible when my everyday schedule was changed completely. This has also helped prepare me for future obstacles that I will face in life and helped me realize that the outcome is determined on how I respond to the challenges. Liberty-Benton has given me many life skills and advice to help prepare me for when I graduate and I think many of those skills were used during this school year.

Now transitioning back to full-time in school, the skills I have acquired will continue to be put into play through my life. I am thankful to be able to be back in class with my friends and to return to a somewhat normal schedule again. I am so grateful for the amazing community that Liberty-Benton is and how understanding and helpful all the teachers have been during this stressful time for everyone.

Written by: Allison Hoop, Class of 2021



Along with the other students at my school, I am very fortunate to have attended Liberty-Benton high school during such unprecedented times.

During the shutdown in March, Liberty-Benton did a fantastic job at quickly adapting to the situation at hand. The school district was able to make a seamless transition to online learning, whereas many other schools were sadly unable to finish out the rest of the school year due to a lack of resources. Making the transition to online learning was extremely difficult for many students, and the teachers went above and beyond to be very supportive, helpful, and understanding during this transition. The staff at Liberty-Benton worked hard over the summer to create a plan that would allow the students to return to school five days a week while maintaining safety procedures.

The hybrid schedule put into place was an excellent alternative to online learning. Students and teachers were able to return to school in-person, five days a week. We were able to feel safe due to the amount of safety precautions put into place, such as wearing masks, taking students' temperatures, social distancing, keeping desks six feet apart, and sanitizing desks in between class periods. During the hybrid schedule, the teachers were very understanding that hybrid learning was a new process for everyone and had grace with the students. As the cases of covid-19 continue to decrease, Liberty-Benton local schools are very fortunate to be back in school full days to start the second semester while continuing to maintain safety procedures.

# DID YOU KNOW **FACTS**

1

Liberty-Benton 3rd grade Fall Reading Test average was

**53%**

passage compared to the state average of 37%.

2

During the first semester we had

**37**

positive student cases and 14 positive staff cases of COVID-19.

3

Liberty-Benton has served

**158,428**

meals from September 2020-January 2021; 74,498 breakfasts and 83,930 lunches.

## DEPUTY BRANDON KENDRICK

On Jan. 9, we celebrated Deputy Brandon Kendrick, Liberty-Benton's School Resource Officer (SRO), as part of National Law Enforcement Day. He has been a member of the Hancock County Sheriff Department since 2014, and joined the Eagle family as the SRO in August 2020. He's been an integral part of the team ever since.

Kendrick spends time in all three of our buildings each day interacting with students and staff. From volunteering at Stevi B's PTO night to handing out free pizza coupons to student drivers he sees wearing their seat belt to help promote Click It or Ticket, his love for kids is apparent.

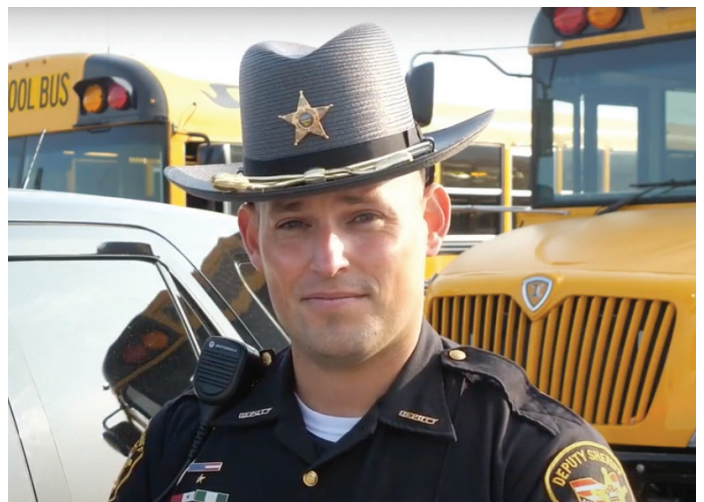


He was instrumental to Liberty-Benton having a smooth start to this school year by helping direct the increased amount of commuter traffic due to the hybrid learning schedule. Each week, he also patrols our bus routes. Kendrick is well known for producing safety videos that are featured on our district website as well, these have included school bus safety and trick-or-treating safety.

Kendrick aims to keep students safe both in and outside of school, as evidenced by his latest educational initiative. He worked with Liberty-Benton's school nurse, middle and high school health teachers and the director of operations to develop a curriculum on vaping. He is currently visiting classrooms with a presentation on the dangers associated with vaping, and with his assistance, the district installed vape detectors in the high school bathrooms and locker rooms last August.

This year, he's also working with Deputies Brunswick and Miller, the K-9 handlers from the sheriff's department, and their dogs Charlie and Sonny, to teach elementary-aged students more about their role in protecting our community.

We are grateful to Deputy Kendrick every day for his commitment to building relationships in our community and protecting our Liberty-Benton School District.





# TREASURER'S REPORT



COVID-19 continues to impact every facet of our lives, including our school finances. But we do have some good news to report. On Jan. 22, Governor DeWine signed an executive order formalizing the budget reductions for FY2021. As part of this order, he released \$152 million back to Ohio's school districts.

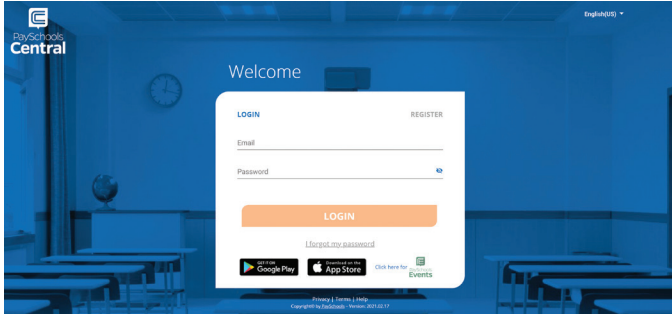
While not a return to pre-pandemic funding levels, this does mean that Liberty-Benton School District will receive more than originally forecasted. Just as we've done throughout the pandemic, we will continue prioritizing our funding allotment to meet the learning and safety needs of our students so they can be successful now and in the future.

In other news, we have some Cares Act monies remaining to help get us to the finish line of this school year. A portion of this funding was allocated to midday bus routes while we were in hybrid learning. Our leadership team is thoughtfully considering the best use of the remaining funds based on spending requirements. Initial discussions have centered around addressing learning loss, and upgrading and improving air quality in our buildings.

We will remain steadfast in our efforts to be good stewards of your taxpayer dollars. Stay tuned for further updates as we continue navigating the uncharted waters of this global pandemic.

Respectfully,

**Lisa Dobbins**, Treasurer



## FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEAL APPLICATION

To help our nation recover from COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has authorized free breakfast and lunch to all students throughout the 2020-2021 school year. It is still important, however, for students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch under the National School Lunch Act and Child Nutrition Act of 1966, to submit their application.

Visit <https://payschoolscentral.com> to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact Wendy Gonso, Food Service Director, [wgonso@liberty-benton.org](mailto:wgonso@liberty-benton.org) with any questions.



## LIBERTY-BENTON STUDENTS TAKE THE STAGE

Liberty-Benton High School has performed a musical every year since 2006. And they didn't let COVID-19 stop them this year.

More than 50 students were involved in this year's "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" performance Feb. 26-28, led by performing arts teacher Ray Wolfe. Students took on a number of roles, from cast and crew to pit orchestra to hair and makeup to set design and building.

The cast and orchestra rehearsed every day beginning in January, and the crew joined them throughout the month of February to bring the entire show together.

# CLASSROOM SPOTLIGHT



## Kindergarten teacher Heagan Sparling goes above and beyond to include all of her students everyday

These are challenging times for all of us, particularly those who were already entering a transitional year like kindergarteners! Their first experiences in school will be remembered by mask-wearing and learning from home on some days. That's why Mrs. Sparling is doing all she can to normalize the year and build confidence in her young learners.

One area where she knew she could make an impact is with students in quarantine. Maybe not surprisingly, 5 and 6-year-olds are curious, so when a student is absent, they are very concerned about the well-being of their friend and classmate.

She said, "As I thought about the curiosity of the students in my classroom, I began thinking the reverse is probably true as well. The student at home is likely wondering what their classmates are doing, does my teacher know I'm not sick but in quarantine and do my friends and teacher miss me?"

So she decided to take the classroom to the student in quarantine and the student in quarantine to the classroom. After all, we've gotten extremely adept at staying connected virtually over the last year. As soon as she learns that a student will be out for more than a day, she gathers all the supplies they will need to learn from home, including instructions on when they should join the class via Google Meet. She delivers the supplies to the student's front porch, along with a prepackaged treat to let them know she's thinking about them.

Back at school, she sets the computer on a seat so when the day begins, the student is back in class... well, virtually at least! She said one of the highlights of meeting remotely with students who are unable to physically be in the classroom is their morning song.

"Each morning, we sing a song and greet each other by name. I can always hear our quarantined friend through the speaker singing loud and proud," she said. "The smile on the face of the student at home when we greet him/her by name will warm anyone's heart."

Her ultimate goal is to provide a well-rounded education to each of her students, one that's focused on academic as well as social-emotional learning. Thank you, Mrs. Sparling, for being the ultimate example of what it means to be an Eagle!

## FALL 2020 SPORTS WRAP-UP



### Boys Cross Country: League & District Champions

Tyler Knestrick—  
Qualified for the State Meet  
as an Individual

### Girls Cross Country: League Champions



### Volleyball: League Champions

Izzy Granger—1st Team All-Ohio  
Karis Willow—2nd Team All-Ohio

### Golf: League Champs— Team Qualified for State

### Football: Overall Record (8-1) BVC Record (6-0)

#### 1st Team—All State

- Mason Richards—Defensive Back

#### 3rd Team—All State

- Dylan Schimmoeller—Linebacker
- Nathaniel Dire—Defensive Line
- Cason Doolittle—Kicker
- Connor Clagg—Offensive Line



### Boys Soccer: Overall Record (7-8) NCOSA Record (2-3)

### Girls Soccer: League Champions, District Champions, Regional Champions

Alexis Rickenbacher—  
1st Team All-Ohio





# CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

Provided by: SHP Leading Design

## New PK-8 Building and High School Interior Remodeling are in Design Development Phase



The new PK-8 school is currently in the design development phase of the project. Construction is anticipated to start this summer with an estimated construction completion date in the spring of 2023.

The interior alterations to the existing high school are early in the design development stage. The majority of work on the existing school is anticipated to occur during the Summer of 2022.

Any questions about the OFCC project should be directed to [superintendent@liberty-benton.org](mailto:superintendent@liberty-benton.org) or (419) 422-8526.

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