



## **Belmond-Klemme Community School District**

Interim Superintendent's Report, Chris Bergman, 5.16.24

### **School Administrators of Iowa (SAI)**

Earlier in the year, SAI asked administrators about their most pressing needs, and the answer was resounding...an effective, convenient, and reliable advertising platform focused solely on education openings for administrators, teachers and support staff. They listened and responded! Beginning on May 15, districts that pay membership dues will be able to submit positions to the platform which will be available through the Career Center portion of their website. These posts will not incur an additional fee.

### **Years of Service**

A TLC-identified area to grow BK as the best place to belong and grow led to finding ways to show staff how much each individual impacts the lives of all within our district. To date, I have met with the teaching staff at each building and with staff from the transportation, nutrition, and buildings and grounds teams. I also scheduled times to celebrate with our paraprofessionals on the following dates (May 9th - Jr.-Sr. High and May 24th - Jacobson Elementary). Recognition pins in 5-year increments were/will be shared along with words of gratitude, and a message of using our last days with students and one another to become the best we can be and to enjoy the moments that make each day special for students, staff, families, and the community.

### **Communication**

#### [May Community Newsletter](#)

### **Outdoor Learning Center**

The board will take action tonight to "name" the outdoor classroom. The recommendation from the community-based, volunteer committee is "The Outdoor Learning Center."

#### [Link to Outdoor Learning Center Invitation on Website](#)

I want to express my gratitude to Connie and Al Mattison and Nell and Rex Boyd for the hours and hours they have dedicated to creating the space for outdoor learning and experiences. Projects of this magnitude require patience, perseverance, partnerships and pure hearts for passing along a preserved natural habitat. Few communities are blessed with such patrons and resources. I look forward to watching students, staff and families grow as they take time to take in this space.

Below, you will see informational articles featured in *The Belmond Independent* which were written by Connie Mattison:

An Open House for the public is planned for the recently completed Belmond-Klemme Community School District's Outdoor Classroom for Thursday, May 16 from 5:00-6:30 p.m. Located at 1324 Highway 69 North, the dome house and grounds will be open for tours and refreshments.

Refreshments will be provided by BK's foods class. Wright county Extension 4-H representatives Paige Dagele and Paige Stewart will be handing out crafts for kids to make/take. Members of the HS choir will sing the National Anthem on the ramp of the building at 5:30.

Members of the Outdoor Classroom committee will be on hand to give tours of the dome house, the trail and grounds. The committee will be serving hot dogs, and weather permitting will have a bonfire to roast marshmallows for s'mores.

Outdoor classroom committee members Al Mattison and Rex and Nell Boyd said, "We are so excited for Belmond to have their own learning center! It has taken literally hundreds of hours of volunteer work over many years for this vision to become a reality." They added, "We know that the Belmond-Klemme School District will be able to use the space for curriculum for biology, art, PE and chemistry classes. We're excited to see their vision for this wonderful outdoor space."

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To call this project a labor of love would be an understatement. Work on the outdoor classroom on highway 69 north on the edge of Belmond began in 2003. That's when 11 acres of land was donated to the Belmond-Klemme School District by the Northern Iowa River Greenbelt Association. The intention was for development of an outdoor classroom.

The land is the perfect ecosystem and habitat. It includes timberland, a pond, native prairie grasses and a mowed trail around the property. The Iowa River borders it on the east and the south.

An outdoor classroom committee, made up of teachers and community members was formed to raise funds and create a vision for the newly acquired outdoor space.

Seed money was used to clear the land and make improvements to the pond. Donations were accepted for tree and vegetation improvements. The outdoor classroom committee continued raising money through grants and fundraisers. Their ultimate goal was to have a structure (and bathrooms) to accommodate students and classes.

A yearly spaghetti dinner sponsored by the committee was held for over 15 years with all funds going toward the purchase of a building.

Fast forward to 2017 when the outdoor classroom committee raised enough money and was able to purchase the dome house adjacent to the acreage. Since then, improvements have been made to the geodesic building by volunteers from the outdoor classroom committee.

Improvements to the outside include new siding, a handicap ramp access, two bathrooms (one handicap accessible), a full kitchen (with stove, refrigerator and dishwasher), upgrades to the septic system, a new furnace and air conditioning, and most recently internet access.

The committee added a windmill and aerator for the pond. Five Eagle Scout projects have been completed at the outdoor classroom acreage and plans are for the space to become a Monarch

Way Station. Another possibility is that the space could be used to tag and release Monarchs each year.

The vision for the outdoor area is to have students plant a raised garden and tend it through harvest, nature studies, water quality, animal and vegetation exploration. Art classes can sketch in a nature setting and PE classes can learn canoeing, kayaking, fishing and archery.

The PE classes can use the rope challenge course (an Eagle project). Science and biology classes will be able to do leaf, plant and tree identifications, entomology and bee keeping with an active hive in the middle of the property,

The classroom can be utilized by the community for picnics, reunions, graduations, and birthday parties. The Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops will be able to use the facilities for day camps and meetings. Arrangements must be made by calling the school to rent the space and a fee will be charged for upkeep.

An open house is planned for Thursday, May 16 from 5-6:30 p.m. for the public. Watch the Independent for more details next week.

### **Operational Sharing and Social-Emotional Health**

I collaborated with principals to seek their input regarding an offer from West Fork Community School District to engage in operational sharing for school social worker services. With the increasing needs of our students and the fact that we will have two counselors next year, we believe this cost-savings option is important for our BK students and families.

If a hire is made, and this all unfolds as planned, B-K would have additional support two days per week as a portion of the contract.

### **Teacher Leadership Compensation (TLC) for Next Year**

I met with principals and all teaching staff received communication regarding their ability to apply to be a part of the Teacher Leadership Compensation (TLC) team. All teachers from the 2023-2024 TLC team and remaining in the district, as well as all-teachers meeting the deadlines outlined in the application process are being recommended for the 2024-2025 school year:

Jacobson: Amy Carlson, Annabelle Chizek, Claudia Guerrero, Kendra Haugen, Peggy Nielsen, and Christine Schultz

Jr.-Sr. High: Wendy Meints, Justin Meyer, Jennifer Pruisman, Erin Slifer, Callie Stein, and Julie YskerErin Slifer

### **Alternative Programming, Weight Room, Buildings and Grounds**

Last week, Cory Heifner, Ckay Jensen, James Severson and I met with Gary Anderson, owner of the architecture firm who worked on BK's last project. We analyzed the location moves of the alternative school, weight room and buildings and grounds office area. I have been collaborating

with the State of Iowa Code/Inspector regarding the requirements for smoke/fire safety in the event of an emergency.

## Hiring

I had a great question come my way...

How will being a part of the Teacher Innovation Shortage Team impact BK's hiring process and ability to obtain quality job applicants?

I have added a few of my thoughts based on conversations with superintendents around our region:

The Innovative Solutions Team has a mission to support one another, and I don't believe it will cause harm regarding our applicant pool. In fact, it can only enhance our ability to serve our students at the highest levels.

At this time, the team is focused on shortage areas and are specifically targeting content areas where schools only need a few periods/courses covered. This is true of B-K. At this time, we do not need a full FTE to cover our science needs; we need two sections of chemistry and one of physics. Other districts need a science teacher for a similar amount of time in another content area such as biology or earth science.

With all of this shared, the Innovative Solutions team would like to consider partnering to make full time hires (not next year). The teacher shortage is very real, and if three districts are looking for the same licensed teacher to cover coursework for graduation requirements, there is limited accessibility. Depending on what an applicant is looking for, this puts him/her in the driver's seat for choosing the best personal fit. This is true of any educator looking for a teaching family---new and experienced. There are many factors impacting desired location of employment.

In terms of salary, the new legislation has also leveled the playing field for applicants. In the past few years, B-K has taken intentional and successful steps toward offering a strong compensation package which has been above the norm for schools our size. Now that salaries are similar, this variable in the equation is less valuable. The number of applicants for positions might not be similar to the past.

With the new legislation, culture and climate, location, offerings of the community, etc. will be paramount. With the board, I have shared that a few other schools within this team expressed lower numbers of applicants this spring. It is important to note that teachers are especially cognizant of the impact of culture and climate on their desire to work in a certain district.

In order for applicants to choose us, we need to continue our focus in this area. Our Willow work, along with our intentionality in providing opportunities for teachers to have their voice heard, feel supported, and feel valued each day will be deciding factors on who will want to join, remain in, or leave our district.

I want BK to continue to be a destination place of work; I know we all want this. Thus, we all need to ensure that our staff feels valued, safe, confident, and heard. Teachers continue to ask for accountability, and this means for and from everyone---each other, administration, school board, etc. Similarly, we need to share the story of our district and community. Few small towns

have beautiful parks and trails, a movie theater, a bowling alley, historic museums, amazing school buildings/facilities, an outdoor learning center, and the list goes on...

People are our greatest asset, and we need to continue to demonstrate care and respect for our staff each day.

### **AEA Update**

At our regional meeting, we learned more about the 40/60 percent resolutions regarding state funding. As districts, we were encouraged to think about our costs for next year as a “credit/invoice” model. The money we dedicated to AEA through our board-approved commitment is a “credit” that will cover as many services as possible, depending on their costs for next year. When our “credit” has been expended, we then move to an “invoice” model in which we pay individually for desired or needed services.

The year after next, all services will be incurred through a fee structure set at the current market rate. AEA will have individual “service call” meetings with districts to mindfully plan along the way. (The principals and I have already met with our Regional Administrator to share BK needs for next year.)

### **Calendar Events**

5.15.24	Baccalaureate @ 6:00 and Senior Awards @ 7:00 (Auditorium)
5.16.24	Belmond Growth Alliance Meeting
5.16.24	Outdoor Learning Center Open House @ 5:00
5.16.24	Board Meeting @ 7:00 (Jr.-Sr. High School Media Center)
5.19.24	Graduation (Jim and Ryan - Diplomas) @ 2:00
5.23.24	SCRIPT Computer Science Planning, CRAEA and BKCS D
5.23.24	Spring Sports Banquet @ 6:30 (Jr.-Sr. High Auditorium)
5.27.24	No School (Memorial Day)
5.31.24	Last Day of School for Students and Support Staff
6.3.24	Last Day of School for Teachers
6.20.24	Board Meeting @ 7:00 (Jacobson Elementary)