

Burlington Elementary School
Administrative Linkage Report
June 8, 2026

During the 2025-26 school year, the staff and students at Burlington Elementary School celebrated many successes. For this linkage meeting, the list has been narrowed down to priority successes and challenges to be shared with Board of Education members.

Successes:

- A huge positive this year was the positive change we saw in substitute availability. This is a direct result of the increase in pay-thank you for making this a priority. We were able to fill 3 long term positions this year and still have subs available to pick up ordinary leave requests. In addition, the number of black out days was limited to a few days in May when there are a variety of student activities that impact the substitute pool.
- This year we continued to see more consistency in our para staffing levels. We are starting to be able to build a school model of growing capacity in our staff to help broaden the way we provide services. While the need to student support is still high and we have had more significant behavioral issues, we were more fully staffed and able to provide services as required. Our new on-boarding process for new hires was a positive as well.
- The addition of the itinerant PreK special education teacher was a huge positive this year. Transitioning Amy Birk to this role and filling her teaching spot with Maisie Totty allowed us to provide better special education services to these early learners. Additionally, this allowed Amy Birk to manage student behaviors and general education teachers to continue to manage their whole classroom.
- The OPAA experience and transition was a big improvement to food service in our school. The quality of meals was much better, students enjoyed having three choices and the increase in fresh fruits and veggies was also a hit. It needs acknowledged that there were some challenges with personnel issues, but we are confident that OPAA is working to reset BES in the upcoming year.
- The early retirement incentive yielded positive results and filling certified staff earlier in the school year (December – March) was much easier with the extra time. Serving as a PDS school for Emporia State has helped keep our district name relevant in the community of upcoming professionals.
- With the addition of Brian Shank as our transportation director, overall transportation and bus service seemed to operate more effectively and efficiently. I appreciate his leadership style, cooperative nature, and willingness to work with principals and staff at the building level.
- We continue to value the opportunity to work in cooperation with Emporia State University as a PDS (professional development school) site. Hosting student teachers brings fresh ideas from the field into our classrooms, gives us extra adult help and brings positive exposure to our building and school system.
- The after-school program continues to be a well-supported extra-curricular. With an average daily attendance this year of 51 kids per day, we see a continued need for this program. Homework help with our 3rd and 4th grade students was a major component of the program this year.

- Our new staff members transitioned into our school system successfully. Kudos to Devra Parker for her help in mentoring these professionals and providing them ongoing support and feedback as well as the to their mentor teachers they were paired with. All of our new hires from this year are returning for another year!

Challenges:

- Certified Staff Recruitment & Retention
 - Late resignations and special education positions are proving difficult to fill. Despite a variety of efforts, we still have 2 teaching openings with limited qualified applicants.
- Special Education
 - Over the past 5 years, the special education department has struggled with retention in these positions. We have consistently had to fill these positions with staff that are seeking licensure. These staff members deal with some of the most significant and challenging students in our school and time demands are real as well as burn out. We again have 2 teachers leaving this department this year. One position is filled at this time.
 - This year, we used a SDI classroom (specially designed instruction) that was formerly a conference area in the office to provide individual students with a smaller individual classroom with less visual stimulation. We had 3 different students utilize this space during the year. Our district also invested in cubicles to help teacher create some less restrictive individual learning spaces within the resource rooms as well. This information is being shared to ensure that you understand the level of special education services being delivered. At times, it is difficult to meet the needs of these students successfully at BES.
- Behavioral and Social Challenges of students
 - Both general education and special students are displaying an increase in challenging behaviors including lack of social skills, bullying, lack of motivation, screen time dependency, self-harm statements and physical behaviors. These issues require an adult intervention and can require an intense of amount of time which takes away from other responsibilities.
- On-going and Increased (and unfunded) mandates
 - New information released from KSDE regarding literacy expectations and requirements was shared with staff. These requirements include:
 - New and increased reporting for fall benchmarking (PreK-9). We currently do this at BES in grades K-4 but haven't been required to report to KSDE.
 - Statewide screening tool to be implemented in 2027-28. This means that all schools will use the same screener. (We use Aimsweb Plus, BMS/BHS use Fastbridge).
 - In 2027-28, all students in K-3 that are considered high risk (unless in special services) will have to have an individual literacy plan developed in partnership with parents.
 - In 2029-2030, school districts shall employ a licensed reading specialist for each elementary school.

Focus and Transition for future:

Looking ahead, the future of BES (new building vs update/renovation) is still up in the air. While we continue in this period of transition, I think it is important for the board to remember there are big money items that need attention.

At our end of the year ceremony, multiple BES staff members received recognition for significant years of service, signifying that these staff members will be reaching early retirement eligibility. Continuing to keep teacher recruitment and development as a priority should be noted.