A Message from Program Director Jodi Pesek

After winter break, a new decade will be upon us. One wonders what discoveries and advancements will be made in the next ten years, and which of our OPS students will be at the vanguard of exciting changes that advance the course of civilization. One thing I do know is that no matter how gifted a scholar is, if they are not at school, they are limiting their options. Attendance matters! Despite the talent and commitment of our staff, they cannot make a difference in the lives of our students if the students are not here. That is why we strive for 95% attendance!

We understand that there are barriers that affect a student’s ability to get to school—work pressure, family obligations, transportation, etc.—we can help work through barriers if we know what they are. We want our students here so they don’t miss out on any opportunities!

Luckily, many of our students have been diligent about taking advantage of their education. Blackburn will graduate 45 students by the end of the school year—we will have 20 February graduates alone! On December 20, three of our students graduated and walked with the Accelere program. Those students are Mikheal Rouse, Emile Bango, and Victoria Grant. We are proud of our students’ accomplishments and join them in celebrating their successes!

In other news, you may hear a new voice when contacting Blackburn via phone. Ms. Shelaine Hamby is our new Data/Intake Secretary as Ms. Lysa Swan has been promoted to Office Manager. Congratulations to them both!

Blackburn Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students return</td>
<td>1/07/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Dr. King Day</td>
<td>1/20/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>2/13/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Students</td>
<td>2/14/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presidents’ Day</td>
<td>2/17/20</td>
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<td>Family Night</td>
<td>3/5/20</td>
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<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>3/9-3/13/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prom</td>
<td>4/3/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniors only ACT</td>
<td>4/7/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Students</td>
<td>4/10/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>5/15/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day of School</td>
<td>5/22/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer School</td>
<td>6/1-6/26/20</td>
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Spotlight on Students: Food Box Assembly

On December 9, Blackburn held the annual Food Box Assembly gathering with staff, community partners, students and families. This event is such an annual highlight because so many in our community come together to be of service.

As is our tradition, everyone gathers for pizza and treats and then lines up to fill bags with turkeys, hams, and all of the trimmings for a holiday dinner. This year, we were able to assemble 50 complete food boxes for families, thanks to a community of generous givers!

Of course, the evening would not be complete without a raffle! Prizes included Christmas trees, gift cards, household appliances, and toys. Every family left with something from this lovely night of fellowshipping!

The Blackburn community loves to celebrate its value of service,

Our Food Box Assembly is a fine example of doing just that!

Counselor’s Corner

This year’s senior class has been dubbed “College & Career Champions” because of our focus on helping these students be mindful and planful of their futures! Along with monthly meetings, Dr. Busby engages students in activities that introduces them to college and career options. In this image, students are visiting OPPD.

NO PLACE FOR HATE

On October 30, Social Worker LaKeisha Bonam accompanied interested students to a day-long workshop conducted by the Antidefamation League. They connected with students from multiple high schools around Omaha and discussed some of the issues facing teens today. Students came away with a new appreciation for people who are different from them and a better understanding of themselves!
Help Kids Balance Their Media Lives

Check out these 5 tips

1. Create screen-free times and zones.
Help tweens and teens take breaks from tech by limiting screen time in bedrooms, during study time, or at the dinner table. Consider carving out regular family time when screens are either put away or enjoyed together.

2. Explore built-in digital well-being tools.
Together with your kids, check out the features on their devices and in their apps that can help them use tech more intentionally. Consider turning off autoplay functions, limiting notifications from certain apps, using settings that turn off devices at a certain time each night, and more.

3. Model the behavior you want to see.
Tweens and teens learn more from watching adult behavior than listening to lectures. Consider how you use your devices and other media, and make changes if your use doesn’t follow your expectations for your kids.

Ask kids to notice their feelings, both physical and emotional, during screen and non-screen activities. Does their heart rate increase when their phone vibrates? Does their self-esteem dip after viewing a friend’s Instagram feed? Do they feel good when they get positive feedback on a post? Encourage kids to keep the constructive activities and let go of the rest.

5. Understand how tech companies make money.
Along with your tween and teen, research how digital devices, social media platforms, and apps and games get paid. Do they sell ads? Do they sell kids’ data? Discuss why companies might want kids to spend more time on their platforms and what tricks they use to keep their attention.

https://www.commonsense.org/education/family-tips/6-12-media-balance-and-well-being
Every semester, under the direction of Foods teacher Staci Christiansen and assistant Beverly Middleton, our culinary students produce and serve a weekly meal for approximately 50 individuals at Adams Park Community Center, our community partner of 10 years. So many of our senior citizen friends have been with us since the project’s inception that our weekly visits feel like a family event. Our university partners on this wonderful project are Jeff Knapp’s UNO Social Work 1500 students with tremendous support from the UNO Service Learning Academy. They help prepare the meals at Blackburn and serve alongside Blackburn culinary students every Wednesday during the school calendar. Once per semester, our senior citizen friends and other invited guests visit Blackburn for a celebratory meal and fun activities.

Our Fall Harvest was particularly special this year because we celebrated our tenth anniversary with our wonderful community partners from the Adams Park Senior group. We were additionally gratified when, on October 21, the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education recognized this project and celebrated us at the board meeting! Please enjoy some pictures from our 10 year journey in learning and serving!
Mr. Tim Welling by Koreyi James
This is Mr. Welling’s first year working at Blackburn as a security guard. I asked Mr. Welling what his job was before he came to Blackburn, and he told me he worked at Walmart for a year and also at the Lincoln Regional Center as security. Why did he choose to work at Blackburn? He said that he loves kids and wanted to work with students who have struggled with behavior and have been through a lot. He said his favorite part of working at Blackburn is the variety of kids here, the different diversity of culture and also the staff.

My next question for Mr. Welling was, what is one thing you want people to know about you? He said he wants people to know he is a father of two and has been married for 26 years. He also likes to play PlayStation with his son. Both of his kids are in college, and his son plays college basketball, and his daughter can sing very well.

The last question I asked Mr. Welling was what the most challenging part of his job was. He said that getting kids to realize he is only doing his job and it’s nothing personal. He also said he can’t hang and get to know students like he wishes.

Mr. Richard Murcek By Nyokia French
Mr. Murcek is a new interventionist here at Blackburn. I asked him multiple questions during our interview. I asked him what his job was before he came here, and he said he worked with a community-based aid grant that funds non-profit programs. I also asked him why he changed careers, and he said he knew he wanted to work with kids in a positive setting because he had done so before.

And the most important question of all – why did he want to work at Blackburn? Murcek said he worked at South High School and heard about openings at Central and Blackburn. Mr. Murcek said he chose Blackburn because he felt positive about the setting after visiting here. I asked him what the most challenging part of his job was, and he said knowing students, helping kids not take sides, and kids fighting. The last question I asked Mr. Murcek was what he likes most about working at Blackburn. He said he likes connecting with students and getting to know them one-on-one. He also likes being relied upon.

Miss Jazz Hobza by Destiny Cooper
I sat down with Mrs. Hobza and talked to her. Mrs. Hobza is new to Blackburn this year. She said she came to Blackburn because she wanted to be at an alternative school.

But Mrs. Hobza is not new to teaching – she’s been teaching for five years. What she likes most about teaching is the kids. What she likes most about Blackburn are the kids and the small setting.

Mrs. Hobza said some fun facts about her are that she is goofy, she likes to have fun, and she loves Harry Potter.

Ms. Jayne Kreifels by Keki Houston
Ms. Kreifels is new this year to Blackburn. I spoke to her and she shared some information about herself.

Keki: Where did you work before coming to Blackburn?
Ms. Kreifels: I worked at Thomas Jefferson High School for five years, and before that I worked at Omaha Central High School.
Keki: Why did you choose to work at Blackburn?
Ms. K.: I wanted to work with at-risk students, including myself, ha ha.
Keki: What do you like the most about working at Blackburn?
Ms. K.: I like the diversity and the amount of community involvement.
Keki: What is your favorite hobby?
Ms. K.: I like binge watching Netflix and spending time with family and friends.
Keki: What is one thing you want people to know about you?
Ms. K.: That I have a genuine, kind heart, and I also have patience for a lot of things.
Meet Mr. Matthews!

Mr. Stryder Matthews is a new Social Studies teacher this year. He comes to us by way of Little Rock, Arkansas. We first met Mr. Matthews when he graciously subbed many days at Blackburn during the last school year. We are glad that Mr. Matthews came on full time this year!

Flu season is upon us and there are many ways parents/guardians can lessen the chance for the flu season to affect their student and themselves. First – start with getting everyone a flu shot!

Here are some additional tips:
· It is very important to have your student stay home when ill, specifically when they are running a fever above 100 degrees.
· Once diagnosed, your student should remain at home until they are fever free for 24 hours, without fever reducing medication.
· Remind students to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and have them throw the tissue away after they use it.
· Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
· Remind students not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth - germs often spread this way.

With your help, we can keep the flu from spreading. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our school nurse, Timara Kroeger, at 531-299-2821.

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