



2020-2021

# YEAR IN REVIEW

Featuring updates from the Superintendent, Business Office, Curriculum, Operations, Food Service, Transportation, and Technology Departments.

# PATRICIA ROBINSON

## SUPERINTENDENT

The 2020-2021 School year is closing and the leadership team at Buchanan Community Schools would simply like to say, Thank-You! Thank you for trusting us with your child during this unpredictable year. No one knew what this year would bring or how it would end, but you were committed to your child's education and well-being

and you allowed us to provide learning opportunities that supported your child's learning process. In the information below, I outline highlights from this school year and share objectives for the next school year.

### This school year we were successful at:


- Providing a safe and healthy space for learning by ensuring masks were provided and worn, students and staff stayed a safe distance from each other and hands were being washed often
- Creating learning environments where students learned both in person and virtually/remotely
- Distributing devices so that there was at least one device per family
- Arranging access to wifi by distributing hotspots as needed to students
- Keeping families updated through monthly video updates
- Relaunching our Facebook page
- Continuing to monitor our finances to ensure financial stability for the upcoming year

The 2021-2022 school year is looking to be exciting as we develop and establish our re-emergence which may include a variety of ways of learning, new structures and procedures and new ways of operating moving forward.

### During 2021-2022 school year we will focus on:

- Implementing our strategic plan (see below)
- Continuing what we provided during the 2020-2021 school year
- Providing additional opportunities for students at the highschool level
- Creating a district-wide structured framework for students to receive necessary support at each building

### Buchanan Community Schools Strategic Plan

 <b>BUCHANAN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS</b> <b>STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY   2020-2025</b>				
<b>1. ACADEMICS and PROGRAMS</b>		<b>2. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT and CULTURE</b>		
<b>Strategic Goal Statement:</b> Buchanan Community Schools will increase student achievement and interest for all students through engaging and inclusive curriculum programming. <b>Priority Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Increase resources and opportunities for students with identified needs through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)</li><li>o Create assessment plan and adopt district wide data analysis process to develop plans and approaches for every learner.</li><li>o Prioritize and support the development and improvement of staff and capacity to deliver innovative learning experiences through enhanced time, team-planning, and professional development.</li></ul>		<b>Strategic Goal Statement:</b> Buchanan Community Schools will deepen our systemic academic and social-emotional supports for the health, safety, and well-being of the whole child, recognizing that our learners need to balance academic, physical, social, and emotional demands. <b>Priority Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Increase resources and develop plans for students with identified physical, social/emotional, behavioral and mental health needs through collaborations with community partners utilizing systems such as MTSS.</li><li>o Establish the desired climate and culture within each of the District's schools that successfully engages students to improve learning outcomes through the use of frameworks such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)</li></ul>		
<b>3. RECRUITMENT and RETENTION</b>		<b>4. COMMUNICATIONS and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>		<b>5. FINANCE and OPERATIONS</b>
<b>Strategic Goal Statement:</b> Buchanan Community Schools will attract, retain and recruit a diverse student and staff population. <b>Priority Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Develop a retention and recruitment plan for teachers and students and market the district through various platforms</li><li>o Collect and utilize exit interview feedback to improve staff hiring and retention</li><li>o Ensure onboarding process fully informs and prepares newly hired staff for the expectations of their assigned position</li><li>o Showcase current and former students to demonstrate BCS' excellence and opportunities to attract new students and families</li><li>o Create a communication process to inform necessary members of staff changes</li></ul>		<b>Strategic Goal Statement:</b> Buchanan Community Schools will strive to develop and sustain effective structures for communication and ongoing engagement of students, staff, families and community. <b>Priority Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Support proactive and transparent communication with all stakeholders to foster trust and increase collaboration</li><li>o Enhance family outreach &amp; communication tools to impact student success</li><li>o Broaden partnerships with community organizations and individual volunteers to create programs and resources needed by students and families</li></ul>		<b>Strategic Goal Statement:</b> Buchanan Community Schools will develop and sustain efficient use of all resources (people, time and money) by providing quality technology, facilities and business services to optimize operations for improved student achievement and fiscal responsibility. <b>Priority Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Establish and maintain long-range financial, technology and facilities that support a positive learning environment.</li><li>o Develop a fair and equitable system of distribution of funds between schools and departments</li></ul>

### [Buchanan Implementation Plan](#)

## LAURA MORRIS

### BUSINESS OFFICE

The payroll department was busy this year tracking staff absences due to COVID and making sure all employees were paid in full for absences that were COVID related, up to the allowable 10 days through March 31, 2021. This includes paying all staff for the 2 half days we were closed for the employee COVID vaccine clinic. We also hired many new staff members throughout the year in all areas.

We increased our substitute teacher pay rate significantly and after spring break we started using permanent daily substitute teachers in each building. These "perm" subs reported to their assigned building every day and filled in where most needed. On days when there were no absences, our perm subs helped out in other areas or went to another building that needed additional subs. Our permanent building subs have built relationships with the students and staff and become reliable team members.

## MARK KURLAND

### CURRICULUM

**K-4: Update** The 2020-21 school year has seen Ottawa (K-1) and Moccasin (2-4) continue to work with the HIL Project in the area of ELA. HIL stands for High Impact Leadership. This year is year two of the project. Both buildings continue with ongoing Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings where they use data: (summative and common formative) assessments along with using Evidenced Based Instructional Strategies to improve instruction.

Both buildings have or are updating their pacing guides specifying the Know and Shows in the area of K-4 Literacy Standards. This also includes looking at various instructional strategies and their positive effect size on student learning. Teachers and staff also looked into specific curriculum tools being used for instruction as well as piloting and completing a book study on "The Writing Revolution". Outside consultants, Mark Tompkins and Kerry Mindeman offer support and expertise while our Literacy Coaches, Wendy Murphy (Ottawa) and Kasey McBeth (Moccasin) support teacher's efforts by modeling lessons and leading PLC meetings.

The HIL Project will continue into the 2021-22 school year.

**5-7: Update** The 2020-21 goal for Buchanan Middle School in the area of ELA was to review Current Essential (Power) Standards making sure that there was an appropriate amount (40-50%) in each domain. The ELA group with the support of our consultant, Chris Martin, looked very closely at vertical alignment across grade levels and aligned standards with the Common Core Instructional Shifts/Student Data.

Specifically, the 5-7 grades looked at pacing guides, common academic vocabulary, vertical alignment with grades 8-12 and a Balanced Assessment System. The 5-7 group concluded with building Standards Based Units in ELA along with a Single-Point Rubric for Writing.

**8-12: Update** The 2020-21 work at Buchanan High School, also with the support of consultant Chris Martin, started out with looking at PSAT/SAT Data looking for strengths and areas of growth. They also looked at Common Core Instructional Shifts with a goal of building standard units of instruction.

A common thread with the high school was to also look at vertical alignment in relation to what the middle school was doing, reviewing pacing guides as well as building common assessments and discussing common academic vocabulary.

Since the high school is more into Standards Based Grading time was spent on a Standards Unwrapping Process along with Standards Assessed across various units that include the Know and Shows.

## ALAN BERGET

### OPERATIONS

Over the past year, there have been significant changes in the operations department including a change in leadership. BCS has also brought custodial services back in house after being outsourced for a number of years.

With COVID occurring last March, we were forced to take special cleaning

and sanitizing measures for the district per state regulations. This includes having sanitizing wipes for all classrooms, automatic hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the buildings and special misters that are used daily in all rooms, in all buildings. We also have installed touchless water bottle fillers.

A major investment we made was the purchase of the Tool Cat. This has been a huge asset in assisting with the removal of snow using the rotating sweeper that came with it. We also purchased a dump bucket, which has been used many times already to move dirt for baseball and softball. The set of forks included has been very useful for moving skids for athletics down to the field house.

In addition, the Operations Department has been doing its very best to keep up with the demand of work orders to better our facilities and keep everyone safe.

## REBECCA KALTENBACH

### FOOD SERVICE

Adapting to new regulations from the health department due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our department saw significant changes in how we operated. Our self-serve fruit and vegetable bars were no longer permitted, so we switched to pre-packaging all of our fresh produce or having them served by one of our employees. These rules caused increased prep time for our staff, as well as increased staff serving time. On the upside, we quickly realized that our

cleaning time in the serving areas was greatly reduced, as there was far less produce wasted.

Social distancing restrictions also led to extra lunch periods at most of our buildings. While it increased our serving times, it also made each lunch quieter, calmer and generally more relaxed.

Through a USDA waiver, we were able to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students for the entire school year. This was a huge benefit to our community, and greatly simplified our record keeping.

We purchased new equipment including a new stove, commercial electric can openers and upgraded breakfast and ala carte display carts. This summer we are planning to buy a larger three compartment sink and a quarry tile floor for Moccasin.

Working with the IT department, we are moving toward electronic menu boards in each cafeteria. When completed these will be eye-catching displays showing the day's menu as well as other information such as weather, school news, or fun facts during non-meal times.



## MAHLON WILLIAMS

### TRANSPORTATION

As with every school Transportation Department, the 2020-2021 school year has been one for the record books. We had to learn how to social distance on crowded buses, transport students with less drivers, keep everyone safe, and keep driver morale high. These were serious challenges that had to be faced when I came on board as the new Transportation Supervisor in December.

We currently have three new drivers in a time where driver shortages are at an all time high. We were able to bring back a route that was lost due to driver shortages and ease stress on half the routes. We are working on new technology along with policies and procedures that will set Buchanan apart from other districts in Berrien County. We have upgraded 5 buses with advanced features and technology to ensure the safety of all occupants. Our routing system has been upgraded from Poly Plot to EZ Routing. With this change we have moved from an analog system to a digital one. One of the greatest advantages of this move is that selected administrators can see bus information in real time. We have also added a new student scan system to the buses that will allow real time student count and faster contact tracing. Drivers will know who is on the bus, their stop, and knowledge of students who get on a bus who are not supposed to be on that route. Over the summer, GPS/Navigation systems will be installed on each bus. This will allow sub drivers to drive any route with ease. This will also help reduce late pick up and drop offs. We are also installing new power gates for the bus and maintenance yard to allow easier access and produce a more controllable environment.

While all these things have happened this year, we are not finished yet. It is my hope that the Buchanan Community Schools Transportation Department will continue to make improvements going forward.

## PHILLIP PLACE

### TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technologies Department at Buchanan Community Schools is responsible for the maintenance of all technologies used in the education of students and the support of that education. This includes obvious things such as teacher and student computers, projectors, Chromebooks, wifi, etc., but also includes the network infrastructure connecting our buildings together. Today, our modern phone systems, PA systems, fire and security alarm systems and even our HVAC systems are all connected. This year brought with it several initiatives and also lessons learned from last year's long periods of remote learning that are helping to put Buchanan at the forefront of student achievement.

**WiFi Hotspots for Families Without Access** Recognizing the need for families to have Internet access, Buchanan applied for and received a grant from T-Mobile which provided wifi hotspots at zero cost. While the grant covers the expense of the device, the District has allocated funds to pay for the Internet access delivered through these devices up through the end of the 2021 school year. There are currently 40 families benefiting from this program.

**District-Wide WiFi Upgrade** All benchmark testing and state required assessments are done online. Additionally, classrooms have had to pivot from being solely in-person to a more flexible model to accommodate students that may go out on quarantine, so more lessons are done through online resources such as Google Classroom even when students are in class. This increased online usage means better, faster and more robust building wireless solutions are needed. Over spring break, we successfully completed a massive wifi upgrade across the entire District. Every classroom and office has new wifi access with the latest standards and technology.

**1:1 Chromebook Initiative Realized** Buchanan High School and Middle School have been fortunate to enjoy one device for every student. We are excited to now have enough Chromebooks to push out 1:1 across all grades 1 through 12 beginning in the fall. Every student will have a device individually assigned to them. Teachers will no longer have to schedule learning around when a mobile cart of computers is available. There are, of course, many things we've accomplished over this past year. Besides the major projects mentioned above, here are just a few highlights of other IT projects:

#### Highlights

- BMS teacher laptops were replaced.
- District Social Media relaunched. All building Facebook pages are now directly linked to the District's website.
- The outdoor athletic complex at BHS now has wireless internet (wifi).
- The Device Protection Plan (DPP) was expanded to grades 5 through 8. This is a low cost insurance solution for accidental damage done to our Chromebooks.
- Over 100 End of Life (EoL) Chromebooks were delivered to Moccasin and Ottawa to be used at home for remote learning with students that do not have access to a device. These devices have reached their effective end in school, but remain a viable option for home use.