

## Community Update For Friday, December 8th, 2023

Panther Families,

Hello again! I just wanted to provide another community update as we head into the last full week before the holiday break.

### Kudos:

- On behalf of the District OR-1 Board of Education, our staff, and our students, I would like to personally thank all of you for your continued support of our schools. We greatly appreciate your flexibility, patience, and grace as we continue to deal with the challenges of efficiently and effectively conducting learning while construction is actively occurring on both campuses.
- During the winter break, we wish all of you a wonderful and safe holiday season and a very Happy New Year.

### 2023-2024 School Calendar Clarification:

- Just to clarify that **there is school for all students on Wednesday, December 20th** (weather permitting).
  - **Please note:** This is a 1:00 p.m. dismissal for all students K-12.
- All students return to school on **Thursday, January 4th, 2024.**

### Student Cell Phone Update at the High School:

- On behalf of the high school staff, I would also like to thank all of our high school families for your support of our cell phone policy adjustments that started at the beginning of this first semester.
- To this point, our students have handled the transition well, and they have done a good job of following the expectations that were set in place.
- Comments from staff indicate increased student engagement in classes, and an overall reduction in the amount of issues dealing with drama and misinformation that sometimes is spread through social media and excessive screen time.
- We will continue these cell phone procedures through the second semester, and we will inform parents if any changes occur before the end of the school year.
- Thanks again for helping us to support and maximize student learning.

### Parking at Traffic Flow at Bennet Elementary School:

- Special thanks to everyone for your flexibility this first semester related to the parking and traffic changes at Bennet.
- With all of the construction going on, combined with the increased amount of large trucks, constant presence of construction workers, equipment intermingling with student and parent foot traffic, limited parking, and cars constantly dropping off and picking up, your patience is greatly appreciated.
- Listed below is some important information regarding parking signs around the elementary school campus.
- There is also a graphic listed below that shows the designated direction of traffic on streets around the elementary school.

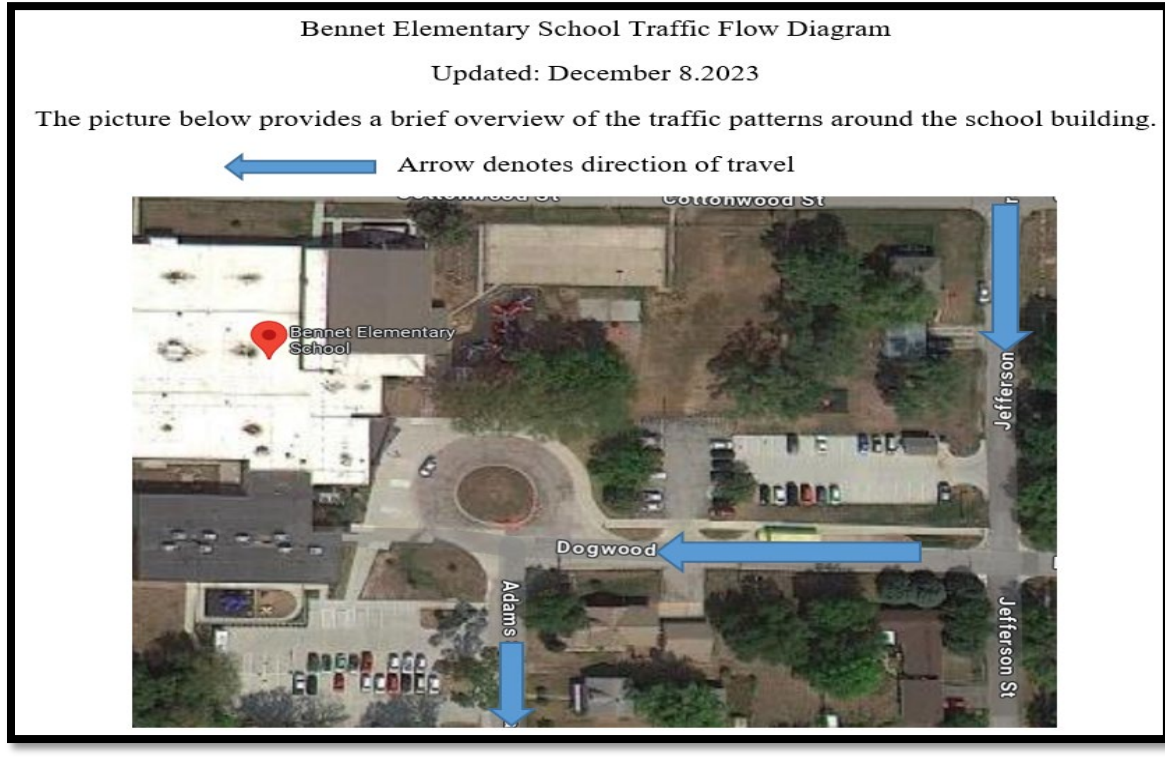
### Stop Sign:

- There is now a stop sign in place at the northeast corner of Dogwood Street and Jefferson Street.
  - Please make sure you are stopping at this intersection as it helps to slow down traffic coming into the immediate area of the school.

### “One Way” Signs:

- Jefferson Street is now “one way” heading south from Cottonwood Street to Dogwood Street (see diagram below).
- Dogwood Street is now “one way” heading west from Jefferson Street to Adams Street (see diagram below).
- Adams Street is now “one way” heading south from Dogwood(see diagram below).
- Our buses will continue to pick up and drop off students in the morning in the bus lane on the north side of Dogwood Street from **7:30–7:45 a.m.**

- If buses are in this area when you are coming to school, please be aware of these vehicles and slow down to no more than 15 mph or please use the east parking lot to park.
- We will continue to load the buses transporting students home after school in the bus lane on the north side of the building.
- Thank you in advance for making adjustments to these traffic patterns, as we are also trying to have all cars entering the east parking lot from the north on Jefferson Street and exiting south towards Dogwood Street upon leaving the lot.



**Severe Weather Protocols:**

- Although we have been very blessed with decent weather most of the first semester, the weather will eventually turn much colder, and we want to make sure we review our severe weather protocols to ensure that you stay as informed as possible.
- Information regarding school closings or late starts is broadcast regularly by KOLN/KGIN channel 10/11, KLKN channel 8, and KFOR 1240 AM. District OR-1 school closing information can also be found on our school website at [www.districtor1.org](http://www.districtor1.org).
- A decision to close school will be made in the best safety interest of our students, staff, and families when local weather forecasts indicate that it would be unwise for students to go to school.
- *If possible, a decision about school closures or late starts will be made by 9:00 p.m. the night before* for announcement during the 10:00 p.m. news.
- Although we do our best to make these weather related decisions as early as possible, the decisions are not always feasible because of constantly changing weather conditions.
- If we are unable to make a school closing decision the night before, we will conduct periodic assessments during the night and strive to make an announcement **no later than 6:00 a.m.**
- Parents may decide to keep their children at home in inclement weather because of personal circumstances. In this case, students absent because of severe weather when school is in session will be marked absent. The absence will be treated like any other absence for legitimate causes, provided parents properly notify the school of their decision.
- Every attempt will be made to avoid closing school once classes are in session. In some instances, closing school during the day may be inevitable if children are to safely return home before the brunt of a major storm. In these cases, we will provide as much advance notice to parents.
- Parents may pick up their children in inclement weather at any time during the school day. Students will not normally be dismissed from school during severe weather on the basis of a telephone request.

### **10:00 A.M. Late Starts and Bus Communication:**

- If the weather dictates the need for a “late start” to school, please note that **all schools will start at 10:00 a.m.** and buses will run accordingly.
- Cathy Fick will be the “point of contact” for families who have students riding our district buses.
- Cathy will also be in touch with families about specific times for bus pickup for late start dates.

### **Parent and Family Contact Information:**

- Keeping our families informed is a top priority. In order to make sure we are able to contact you as soon as possible regarding school information, please make sure your contact information has been updated in our **Powerschool** database.
- SchoolMessenger is our automated messenger system, which allows us to quickly send a telephone or e-mail message to you regarding important information about school events or emergencies.
- We will also utilize SchoolMessenger to notify parents of security situations, school delays, cancellations, or changes in schedules due to inclement weather.
- SchoolMessenger will also be used to remind families about various activities and events, including report card distribution, open house, field trips, and more.
- *If you are not currently receiving automated messages or using the Powerschool parent academic and attendance resources, please call our school office, and we will help you to update this contact information in our system. Keeping this information accurate and updated ensures everyone receives critical information as soon as possible.*

### **Upcoming Board Meeting:**

- District OR-1’s next board meeting is scheduled for **Monday, December 11th beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Palmyra High School in the media center.** The public is always welcome to attend these public meetings!
- The January regular board meeting will be moved to **Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.** to accommodate delays incurred with vendors and billing over the holiday break.

### **Football Classification Update**

- We recently distributed a survey to more closely gauge our projected participation numbers for boys football next school year.
- Based upon the recent survey results, we have submitted our proposal to NSAA for our district to move to 11-man participation beginning next year (this is at least a two-year commitment).
- Currently, we are waiting to hear back from NSAA about whether we might be classified in football as C-1 or C-2 (all recent indications point toward C-2). Those results will probably not be finalized until February 1.
- At that time, we would also find out about possible opponents, as the NSAA schedules all football contests.

### **Activities Update:**

- As a board and district, we continue to look at feasibility of adding district extracurricular activities. To help address this issue, we have organized a district activities committee consisting of school and community patrons to discuss staffing, facilities, student participation numbers, and interest in various future activities.
- When decisions are made considering the addition of future activities, we want to make sure we have considered all circumstances and analyzed logistics and overall costs so that we are making decisions that are best for our students and our district.
- Thank you for your input and interest in making sure that we offer the best educational and extracurricular experiences possible for our students.

## **Construction Progress Summary:**

- Listed below is a brief overview of the additions and renovations taking place at each building:

### **Bennet Elementary School:**

#### **Adding additional classrooms on the southwest side of the building.**

- This area is moving quickly as walls have been put up in this area and concrete is being poured in the northeast corner of this area. See pictures below:

**Bennet Elementary West side addition facing Southwest**



**Bennet Elementary West side addition facing Northwest**



#### **Expanding the current kitchen and student commons area to the east side of the building.**

- Work will begin in this area during the winter break as the small carpeted commons area just to the south of the old main entrance will be sealed off so that heating and ventilation projects can be completed before school gets out in the spring.
- The small commons will be essentially “walled off” to the rest of the school to allow contractors the opportunity to work ahead in getting the space prepped for the work that will continue below as soon as school is out in May. *See pictures below:*

**Artist Rendering of Bennet Student Commons Area**



**Bennet Elementary East addition facing North**





**Expanding the current office area to the east side of the building.**

- *Work is in progress in this area as walls are going up, infrastructure of the office area: Please see the pictures listed below:*

**Artist rendering of the Bennet main office area**



**Bennet Elementary East addition facing Northeast**



**Adding additional commons/multipurpose space near the southeast edge of the gym.**

- Work has begun with the installation of the east walls for the new office space.
  - No pictures of this space are available at this time.

**Enhancing the current gymnasium and repurposing the current stage area in the gym.**

- The bleachers in the Bennet gym and walls surrounding Mr. Wemhoff's office will be completely removed over the winter break. Work on the gym area will probably begin as soon as school is out in May.
  - Pictures will be updated after the winter break.

**Upgrading / renovating outdoor playground spaces and adding fencing to the southeast side of the playground.**

- The playground equipment has already been moved farther to the east to make way for a more efficient spot for our students to play football and soccer. This new green space is now located directly to the east of the building and the area will be reseeded sometime this spring with sod or grass to allow for a safer and more level playing surface.
- We are also in the process of replacing swings, a low level climbing structure, and some inclusive sensory panels on the playground and those items will continue through the winter and into the spring. See pictures below:

**New location of Playground Equipment at Bennet**



**Future location of Additional Swings at Bennet facing south)**



**Redesigning the east parking lot and pedestrian paths:**

- Most of this area is now complete. The rest of this area will be completed once the office space and kitchen space to the east have been completed. Please see pictures below:



**Additional Lighting Improvements at Bennet Elementary:**

- **East Parking Lot:**
  - We now have enhanced LED lighting in the east parking lot. This enhanced lighting helps with visibility and safety in this area.
- **Lighting on the north side of the building:**
  - New safety lights have also been installed above the gym doors on the north side of the building.
    - These new lights help increase visibility and safety for our community and district teams using the gym after school hours for practices and events.
  - Additionally, a new light pole (complete with LED lamp) has been installed at Bennet on the north side of the building in the north bus cut at the school.
    - This pole illuminates the buses and vehicles parked in that area, and this has greatly helped with safety concerns and visibility.
- Our employees and families at both buildings have shown great flexibility in handling these changes!

**Palmyra High School:**

Review of Expansion and Renovation at PHS:

Add additional classrooms on the northeast side of the building.

**Palmyra facing north**



**Palmyra East Addition: looking northeast**





**Palmyra looking northeast**



**Rendering of Palmyra Front of School North Entrance**



Expand the current “commons area” space near the main office, adding extra restrooms, and expanding the main office area.

**Rendering of Palmyra Student Commons Area**



**Rendering of Palmyra New East Addition**



Build and Expand the current Career Technical Education (CTE) areas to the southeast side of the building.

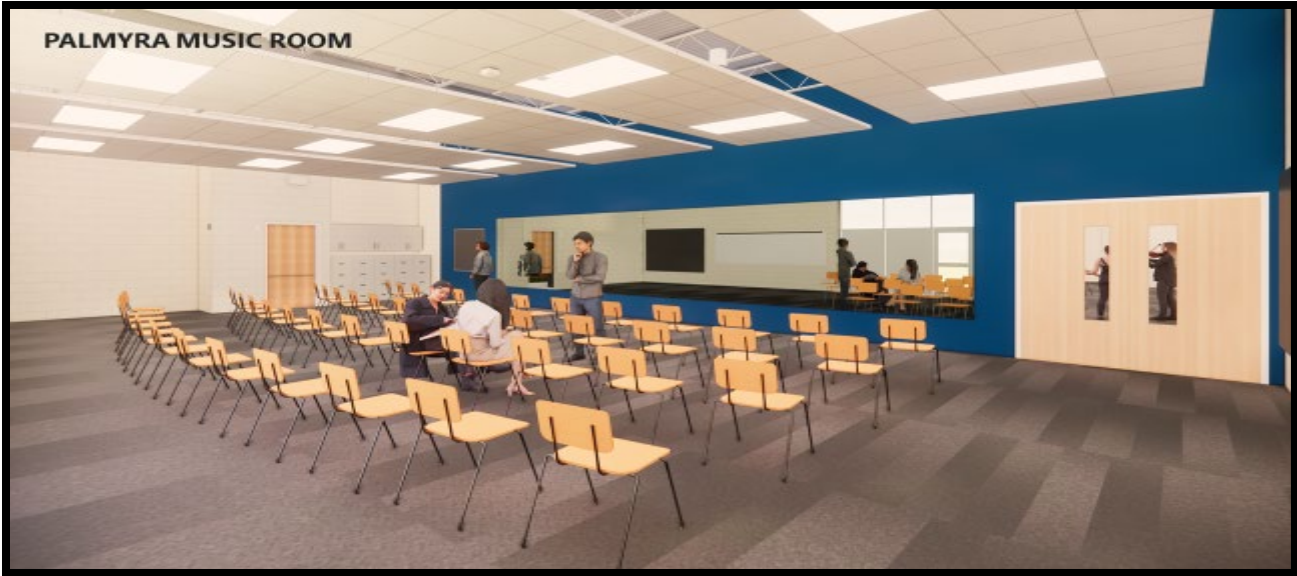
- See picture below:

**Rendering of Career Technical Education (CTE) Area (facing west)**



Relocate the current music area into the current shop area.

Artist rendering of PHS music room.



Relocate the current weight room /fitness center and add increased community access to this area.

Artist rendering of PHS Student / Community Fitness Area





**NSCAS Assessment Data:**

- As a district, we recently received updates on how our students scored on the state NSCAS assessments.
- The district's overall classification in the AQUESTT system received a "great" rating which shows the collective efforts of our staff in pursuit of academic excellence.
- More information regarding our district's information can be found at the following link:
- Nebraska Education Profile: <https://nep.education.ne.gov/>.

| <u>Math Proficiency %</u>  | <u>Language Arts Proficiency %</u>   | <u>Science Proficiency %</u>   | <u>ACT Proficiency %</u>  |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b><u>District % of Students Proficient</u></b></p> <p>65%</p> <p>4% above the state average</p> <p><b>Bennet Elementary: 67%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 % above the state average</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>District % of Students Proficient</u></b></p> <p>65%</p> <p>7% above the state average</p> <p><b>Bennet Elementary: 70%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12% above the state average</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>District % of Students Proficient</u></b></p> <p>79%</p> <p>9% above the state average</p> <p><b>Bennet Elementary: 94%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24% above the state average</li> </ul> <p>WOW !!</p> | <p><b><u>District % of Students Proficient</u></b></p> <p>Math: 54%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12% above the state average</li> </ul> <p>English: 68%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 % above the state average</li> </ul> <p>Science: 76%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27 % above the state average</li> </ul> |

Thank you again for your support of our district!

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Mr. Hart

“SNEAK PEAK”: Below are Branding Shields of the NEW District OR1/PHS



# Get Connected!

### TEXT MESSAGES:

If you currently receive our Emergency and Weather notifications, you will definitely want to **opt-in** to the text messages that go along with the notifications. Moreover, District OR1 plans to send “text only” messages to further support notices that do not require a fully-launched voice message.

On your phone, send **Y** or **yes** to our short code number 67587



### VOICE, E-Mail, & Text:

If you currently do not receive our Emergency and Weather notifications, please call your school secretary and let them know the below information prior to opting-in to text message:

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Primary Phone 1   | <input type="text"/> |
| Primary Phone 2   | <input type="text"/> |
| Primary Phone 3   | <input type="text"/> |
| Emergency Phone 1 | <input type="text"/> |
| Emergency Phone 2 | <input type="text"/> |
| Emergency Phone 3 | <input type="text"/> |
| Primary Email 1   | <input type="text"/> |
| Primary Email 2   | <input type="text"/> |
| Emergency Email 1 | <input type="text"/> |
| Emergency Email 2 | <input type="text"/> |



### POWERSCHOOL:

If you currently cannot check your students’ grades on PowerSchool, please call your school secretary and let them know the email address you want to use to log into our PowerSchool Portal. Once you are linked, you can also sign up to pay your students’ food services online.



### REVTRAK:

If you currently are linked to your student’ grades on PowerSchool, you can create a RevTrak account by going to the following link:

<https://districtor1.revtrak.net/>

This RevTrak link can also be found on [districtor1.org](http://districtor1.org) (in the list on the right side of the page).



### Phone Numbers:

Bennet--402-782-3535 x1

Palmyra—402-780-5327 x2