

The Scratching Post

February, 2025

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL TAKES OVER THE COURT!

The high school basketball season has come to an end. The teams have worked hard throughout the season. Although their teams are small, that doesn't stop them! Despite their small size, they have both learned to overcome the challenges that came their way.

Lady's Basketball

This team wasn't the biggest, but due to injuries and limitations to available players, it was decided that the girls would not finish the season. The girls had rough patches throughout the season, but with some communication, they were able to have some perfect memories and games with their team. Coach Avila said, "My favorite memory would have to be the Potter Dix game, even though it ended in a loss. It showed us a lot about how the girls responded to the feeling of losing. That game had keyed into our wins against Guernsey and Creek Valley." Even though our Lady Wildcats couldn't finish their season, we saw them grow as a team from the beginning to the end. We hope our players heal up and can return to play next season.



Men's Basketball

The men's team consisted of seven players, with seniors Isaac Olsen, Kristian Clure, and Brentsen McGowan leading the team. Even though they were a young team, they were adaptable. This adaptability helped them overcome the many challenges throughout the season. The team never let the challenges stop them from playing. From the beginning of the season to the end, the men's team has had tremendous growth in skills and confidence. We wish the boys the best of luck as they prepare for their subdistrict competition at the end of the month. Check out the school's Facebook page to see how their final game turned out.

Overall, these teams were striving for excellence. They maintained a good attitude, which helped them be successful in their games. Even though some of our athletes ended the season injured, we hope they heal up and come back even stronger for next season. Mark your calendars because the Banner County Wildcats will come back stronger and better next season! – By Kyrie

Roldan and Ms. Bohac



BANNER COUNTY SCHOOL

PREPARING THE STUDENTS OF TODAY FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW!

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT & WELDING RESULTS

On January 8th, there were two FFA competitions at WNCC. Banner County FFA competed in the Career Development Event (CDE), where several competitions took place simultaneously. One of the competitions was Livestock Management. Banner County FFA sent

Isaac Olsen, Micah Dittbenner, Logan Mason, Wilbur Reichenberg, Kambree Hottell, and Abby Jones to the competition. One thing to know about livestock management is that students work within teams to rank breeding and market classes of beef, sheep, and swine, and participants must defend their reasoning. Banner County placed first in Livestock Management, which means they are on their way to State FFA! According to Gifford, "The preparation for livestock management will largely fall on the shoulders of the members. They will have to continue to study the materials provided to them for the contest, and I will help them in any areas they have questions about."

The other competition was welding at WNCC's shop. The participants took a written test and then had to perform a welding task based on one of four types of welds: shielded metal arc welding, gas metal arc welding, gas tungsten arc welding, and oxyacetylene. Gifford stated, "The welding team will need to work on consistency, pay attention to detail, and study their craft. They need to learn it, study it, and ask questions. But, most importantly, they must weld, weld, weld." Even though the welding team didn't qualify for state, they had a strong showing individually with Jayden Marx and Leeigh McGowan tying for 7th place.

Congratulations to our FFA participants, who continue to represent our school with pride. We can't wait to see how our teams grow throughout their competitions and prepare for their state competitions. If



Banner County FFA Silent Auction
 They would like to invite you to our silent /live auction on March 7, 2025, at 5:30 pm at Banner County High School. There will be a meal, games, plenty of silent auction items, and even a few live auction items.

If any questions contact Bill Gifford at 308-631-1031 or bill.gifford@bcswildcats.org



you wish to congratulate these students, save the date for March 7th, Banner County FFA's Silent Auction. There will be many donations to bid on and a delicious meal to enjoy, all of which will help support our FFA members. Banner County School and our students appreciate the community's support. - By Jayden Marx & Ms. Bohac

Pin it to Win it

The Banner County wrestling team had another successful season this year, with Wilbur Reichenberg stepping into the spotlight. Wilbur ended the season with a winning record. This is also Coach Bill Gifford’s last season. Gifford has been coaching High School wrestling for about 25 years. Assistant coach Ryan Olsen has been a huge help to Wilbur, from teaching him different techniques to wrestling him in practice when he has nobody to spar with. Wilbur stated he has great coaches and is glad they are here to help him improve.



Wilbur and Mr. Gifford have different goals that they planned on achieving this year. According to Wilbur, “I want to get first or second at districts and win a state title.” Wilbur also believes his best meet so far was Garden County due to his successful rounds and capability to control his emotions. Learning to control his temper when he loses was another goal Wilbur set for himself. This is thanks to Coach Gifford’s guidance. Coach Gifford wants to help Wilbur understand how to reach his maximum potential and improve as much as possible this year. With districts in mid-February, Wilbur has achieved another goal by taking 2nd place at districts and he qualified for the state competition. Check out the school’s Facebook page to see how he performed at this competition.

With wrestling season coming to a close, the school and students are beginning to accept that this is Coach Gifford’s last year. “Everything about coaching wrestling was great, but the thing I will miss the most is the relationships I formed and being a part of seeing somebody reach their potential,” stated Gifford. Thanks to his hard work and dedication, Coach Gifford was recognized as D4 Coach of the Year and Sportsmanship Coach of the Year!

Congratulations, Wilbur and Mr. Gifford, on these accomplishments this season! We look forward to watching Wilbur’s wrestling career throughout high school and can’t wait to see what Coach Ryan has in store for our wrestling team. Lastly, we would like to recognize how much of an impact Coach Gifford has had on our school’s wrestling team and especially thank him for his time and dedication to this program and Banner County School. - by Kesmera Palu and Ms. Bohac

Spelling Bee Results

The 2025 Spelling Bee was held on January 30, 2025 at 12:30. There were 70 participants from K-8th grade. Mrs. Kari Gifford was the reader and judge. Sharon Lease was also a judge. They did a superb job!



Congratulations to **Luke Olsen** on becoming this year’s champion! We wish you the best of luck at the State competition .

Class results located on page 4.

Overall Results	
Place	Name
Champion	Luke Olsen
2nd	George Teeple
3rd	Trenton Knaub
4th	Knox Hottell
5th	Gabe Olsen
6th	Joshua McGowan
7th	Bronson Smith
8th	Railin Mesteth

Save the Date For Upcoming Banner County Events!

Thrifty to Nifty Event

Bring an item worth \$10 or less to the Shelter. Swap it out for a random item and give it an upgrade in this new competition. Check in your "new" entry from 8:30-9:30 am on June 14th for a chance to win at Historical Days.

Swap Meeting

May 22nd at 7:30 pm
Banner County Museum
Cash Prize for 1st and 2nd Place

Homemade Apron Contest

Time to show your style!

Make an apron and check in between 8:30 – 9:30 am on June 14th at the shelter.

Cash Prize for 1st and 2nd Place

Contact Linda Barrett at (308) 241-2163 with questions and details about the Thrifty to Nifty and Homemade Apron competition events.

Banner County Historical Days

June 14, 2025

Schedule TBA

Harrisburg, NE

Email bchistsoc@yahoo.com for details.

Senior Spotlight — Tobey May

This month's senior spotlight features Tobey May. Tobey is described as crafty, caring, and confident. We asked Tobey about his high school years and what his plans are for after graduation.



Q: What extracurricular activities have you participated in?

A: My main activity was FFA.

Q: What are your goals for this year?

A: Graduate and then move on from high school.

Q: What are your plans for after high school?

A: I own a contracting business and a guidance business with my brother so we will run those accordingly.

Q: What is one of your favorite classes and why?

A: Shop because it's a hands-on class and it covers a lot of things I do in my life.

Q: What is one piece of advice you would give to younger students?

A: "Stay on top of your work and just get it done and over with."

Class Spelling Bee Results			
	1st Place	Second Place	3rd place
K	Emersynn Stauffer	Tatum Revelle	Upton Faden
1st	Paycen West	Raelyn Peterson	Corielle Martinez
2nd	Harlie Revelle	Amiah Cooper	Izaveaha Chairez
3rd	Saryah Mason	Riata Peterson	Colbie Knaub
4th	Ezekiel Flowers	Dalton Gilbert	Gannon Scheer
5th	Gabe Olsen	Trenton Knaub	Weston Scott
6th	Railin Mesteth	Bronson Smith	Roger McGowan
7th	Knox Hottell	Joshua McGowan	Kambrie Loutzenhiser
8th	Luke Olsen	George Teeple	Braedyn Bojorquez

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

BANNER COUNTY SCHOOL, Harrisburg, NE

“Preparing the students of today for the world of tomorrow!”

Administration

Dr. Evelyn Browne, *Superintendent*
Troy Holmberg, *Principal*
Wittni Boettcher, *Activities Director*
Christopher Cooper, *Guidance*

I invite you to celebrate with me the accomplishments of our district through the efforts of our students, our staff, our Board, and our community. It is an honor to share our “state of the district” in this beautiful valley between the Wildcats Hills at the western edge of our state. I came to Harrisburg seven years ago ready for adventure and the opportunity to get to know a segment of American culture very different from the Northeast. I will take with me the lasting impression of people who value grit, independent thinking, and commitment to family and community; values shared by our academic, athletic, and activities teachers and sponsors. Our **vision** to “Prepare the students of the day for the world of tomorrow” can only be realized by nurturing and developing these values in our students so they are ready to navigate the rapidly changing landscape of work and the world when they leave us.

Our PK program is available to 4-year-olds (and almost 4-year-olds!) four days a week, helping them to prepare socially and academically for Kindergarten. Making good choices and learning to work together are skills that develop alongside rigorous academic programs as students progress through our elementary grades. Our new Social Studies program, “My World Interactive,” is research-based and student centered. We continue to implement Reading Mastery Transformations as our core language and literacy program, along with “walk to read,” and the AR Road reading incentive program. Strong community support for the AR Road has resulted in 3,264 books read so far this year!

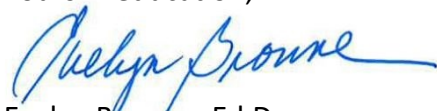
As our Wildcats progress through middle and high school, they have access to a wide range of courses. Some new courses this year are “Introduction to Engineering & Design,” “Teaching as a Profession,” “Intro to Aircraft & Rocketry,” “Music Composition & Songwriting,” and “NMRP Dual Credit Math.” Students continue to have access to Dual Credit (DC) classes in cooperation with WNCC, earning college credit and potential certification. This year, five students qualified as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). Our curricula for all courses are now “live” on our web-site. We will update these “living” documents as standards, materials, or programs change.

Students earn opportunities to lead through FFA, STUCO, Cats Committed, NHS, and Jobs for American Graduates (JAG), now in its second year. We continue to provide enrichment opportunities to our Wildcats through OEF on two to three Fridays each month. OEF provides extra time for team or club practices and programs that cannot fit into the 4-day school week. Drivers Education and Hunter Safety were not offered this year due to scheduling conflicts, but are planned for next year.

It is impossible to list every example of the tremendous energy, time, and commitment that our staff contribute to making Banner County School a truly unique learning environment. I do not suggest that we are perfect, but based on my experiences of 30 years in education, we are, I believe, “the best kept secret” in Nebraska. We are challenged by low enrollment, high mobility, lack of available workforce, and cash flow (please read my letter in this month’s Scratching Post). We are NOT challenged by a lack of creativity, flexibility, capacity, or effort.

When I leave BCS at the end of this year, I am confident that with the vision of our Board of Education, the involvement of our community, and the dedication and talent of our staff, BCS will continue to be a wonderful place to learn, work, and play!

Yours in education,



Evelyn Browne, Ed.D.

Board of Education

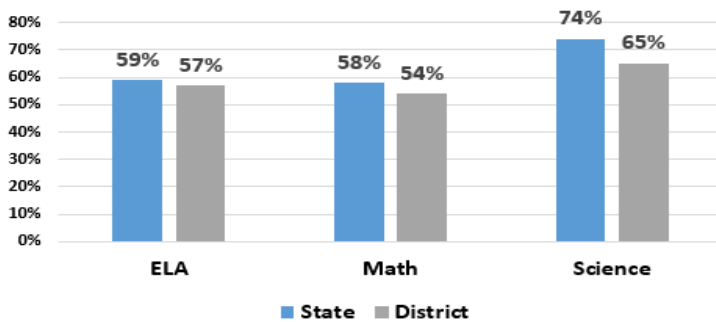
Douglas Olsen, <i>President</i>	Laura Baker
Dr. Ronald E. Johnson, <i>Vice-President</i>	John-Robert Faden
Jake Knaub, <i>Treasurer</i>	Ryan Olsen

STUDENT ASSESSMENTS—K-8

Nebraska Dept. of Education uses NSCAS Growth, an adaptive, assessment of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3-8 and Science in grades 5 & 8. NSCAS Growth assesses the progression and growth of students based on the year end standards for their grade level, reported as Developing, On Track, and Advanced.

Assessment data inform our decision-making process when making adjustments to instruction, program materials, and allocation of teaching and support staff. Our data indicate BCS students are headed in the right direction!

23-24 NSCAS Proficiency



OUR STUDENTS

Resident Students	90
Option Students	37
Total	127
Attendance Rate	92%
Chronically Absent**	24%
Special Education	20%
English Learners (ELLs)	1%
Student Mobility	3%
Graduation Rate	91%
Hispanic/Latino	14%
African Am./Am. Indian	1%
High Ability Learners	17%
Per pupil cost ***	\$31,665

Class	Size
PK	8
K	7
1	10
2	10
3	15
4	8
5	7
6	6
7	9
8	9
9	15
10	6
11	7
12	8
AP*	2

*Alternate Programs

**Absent more than 10% of total pupil days

***Based on 2023-2024 costs

STAFF

Administrators—2 Office Support—2
 Teachers—22 Guidance— 1
 Library Aide—1 Maintenance—2.75 (FTE)
 Health Para —1 Paraprofessionals—5
 Kitchen Staff—2 Bus drivers—8
 Teachers with Master’s Degrees—9
 Teachers with 5+ years’ experience— 19
 Student-Teacher Ratio— 6:1 State Ave—14:1

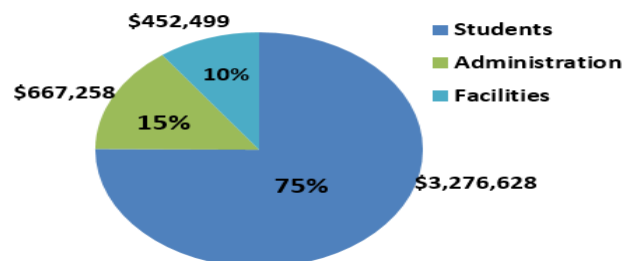
SCHOOL FINANCE

Some Quick Budget Facts

- The GF budget is UNDERSPENT by 17-20% each year
- The current 24-25 Budget is 5% less than the 23-24 Budget
- Our property tax levy is the lowest among adjoining districts
- 1% of the Property Tax Request goes to County Treasurer
- 53% of the budget pays salaries and benefits to BC residents
- 53% of the budget comes directly from Property Taxes
- The USDA funds 71% of the Nutrition Services budget

	24-25	23-24
General Fund Budget	\$4,792,791	\$5,050,684
Property Valuation	\$352,273,014	\$330,722,063
Property Tax (GF)	\$2,571,540	\$2,614,736
Building Fund Tax	\$246,044	\$143,182
Total Tax Levy (per \$100)	.7998	0.8339

Distribution of GF Expenditure



TRANSPORTATION

BCS operates 8 bus routes with door-to-school service in the county and stops in Gering and Kimball. The annual pupil transportation budget of \$201,137 supports both route and activity trips for students. At the mid-year point, our drivers have travelled 97,449 miles safely. The district is an approved FMSCA training site and Tod Wenger, our Driver Education instructor, can test drivers for the ELDT Behind the Wheel certification.



Board Briefs

February 10, 2025

President Douglas Olsen commended the following students, staff, and community members:

Awards and Recognitions

President Douglas Olsen commended the following students, staff, and patrons:

-Spelling Bee Winners: Congratulations to all the students who participated in the Annual Spelling Bee on January 30th. (See page 4).

Winners: 1st place: Luke Olsen (8th grade), 2nd place: George Teeple (8th grade), and 3rd place: Trenton Knaub (5th grade).

-AD Wittni Boettcher for her role in the successful MAC BB Tournament hosted at Bridgeport on January 23rd & 25th. A letter of commendation received from Bridgeport Principal Simmons was submitted to the Board.

-District CDE at Gordon on Wed. Feb. 5th

Ag Mechanics - Team placed 3rd /19 teams and qualified for state competition in April! Blake Green - Hydraulics 4th white; Micah Dittbenner - electricity 2nd blue; Tobey May - engines 2nd Blue; Brentsen McGowan - machines 8th

Vet Science - Team placed 14th/21 teams. Karlye Dittbenner-15thred; Abigayle Jones-42nd; Kambree Hottell -54th; Leeigh McGowan 76th

Farm & Ranch Management: Isaac Olsen - 1st overall individual; Logan Mason -37th

-At the Gordon Speech Meet on February 8th, Lydia Wenger and Keira Bolander earned a 4th place medal in Duet. Kesmera Palu earned a 4th place medal in Poetry and 6th place in Serious. Riley Allen earned a 6th place medal in Serious.

- Isaac Olsen participated in the High Plains Honor Band at Chadron State on February 3rd & 4th

-Students K-6 sold strawberries for an AR Fundraiser. Their goal was 108 flats. They sold 239 flats!! That's a \$3000 profit!!

-Olivia Terrones & Kaitlin Knaub for coaching little girls Bball.

-Josh Loutzenhiser & Jordan Knaub for coaching little boys Bball.

Accept certified staff resignation due to retirement.

Accept Bill Gifford's resignation due to his retirement. Bill's 15 years as Ag Educator and 25 years as wrestling coach is appreciated.

Passed with a motion by Jake Knaub and a second by Laura Baker.

Approve Purchase of K-8 Math Program and Materials

Approve purchase of K-8 Math Program, "Math & You" materials and 6-year digital licensing from Cengage for \$21,947.20. Passed with a motion by Laura Baker and a second by Jake Knaub.

Approve Certified Personnel Contract

Approve a teaching contract for Mai Lee Thi Olsen for the 2025-2026 school year MA + 18, STEP 5. Passed with a motion by Jake Knaub and a second by Ryan Olsen.

For the complete Board Minutes, visit: www.bcswildcats.org

Financial Health of the District

Over the past months, there have been discussions, speculations, and rumors about the financial health of our school district among members of the community. Information provided during public Board meetings regarding the budget has been misinterpreted or ignored. Consider the following facts:

1. The school budget has decreased by over 6% over the last four years.
2. Each year, the budget is UNDERSPENT by 17-20%.
3. Property taxes make up 50-54% of the resources needed to fund the school budget.
3. Property tax authority limits the amount a school district can request to fund the annual budget.
4. COVID, drought, & agriculture costs have negatively affected the ability of many property owners to pay taxes.
5. LB 34 gives property taxpayers a CREDIT for school taxes paid in the current year.
6. LB 34 de-incentivizes property owners to pay taxes owed during the tax year.
7. Federal and some state aid does not come to districts until the end of 2nd quarter of our fiscal year.
7. Cash flow - not the budget - has required us to secure a line of credit to meet monthly claims & payroll.

If you have questions, please ask me. I'd prefer to answer questions rather than deal with rumors. There has been NO discussion of a reduction in force (RIF) or over-spending. The BOARD approves the annual school budget. An independent auditor completes an annual audit which is approved by the NDE and the Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts.

Dr. Evelyn Browne

HARRISBURG, NE 69345
CURRENT RESIDENT or PO BOX

Banner County School
P.O. Box 5
Harrisburg, NE 69345



Friday, April 11th, 2025

9:00am-10:30am

PK - 4 yrs. old by Oct 31st 2025

K - 5 yrs. old by July 31st 2025

4 Day Program

7:45am-3:45pm

Breakfast, Lunch, & Bus Provided

Monthly tuition based on income:

\$0, \$100, \$200

For more information on registering your
child for BCS PK, call
Mrs. Olsen at 308-436-5262

Full-Time Custodian

Full-time opportunity at Banner County School. Hours can be flexible to work with your schedule. General cleaning (hallways, classrooms, bathrooms); other cleaning as needed following activities.

Option to work 12-months or 9-months (school year only). Health insurance provided at 100%. Salary based on experience. **Two-bedroom onsite apartment available for \$270/month + utilities.**

We are an equal opportunity and veterans' preference employer. Application on the BCS Website:

www.bcswildcats.org OR stop by the Main Office!

Submit application to:

Dr. Evelyn Browne, Superintendent
Banner County School
P.O. Box 5, 200 School St.
Harrisburg, NE 69345

