

BLACK RIVER HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

BLACK RIVER HAPPENINGS

***DEDICATED TO CREATING A POSITIVE AND SAFE
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT***

February 2010

Principal's Message

The school budget is the translation of educational needs identified by the instructional and non-instructional staff into a financial plan that, when approved by the taxpayers, expresses the kind of educational program the community is willing to support for the budget period. Preparing a budget requires the administration, staff, and school board members to plan together what needs to be done, how it will be done, and by whom it will be done.

The school budget has three major components: personnel, fixed costs, and other costs. The portion of the budget allocated to personnel (all employees of the school) is approximately 82-85 percent of the total budget. Fixed costs such as utilities and insurances make up 8 to 9 percent of the total budget with supplies, books, materials, equipment, and facility maintenance accounting for the remaining 6 to 7 percent of the budget. As you can see, there are limits to the amount of discretionary money to manage.

Our School Board has reviewed the 2010-2011 school budget and was pleased that it showed cost containment without seriously hurting academic and co-curricular programs. Last year the voters approved a school budget with an increase of 0.71% and the proposed budget for next year is set at -0.32%. The annual report will be arriving in your household soon. This report explains in detail the proposed school budget and the many accomplishments and initiatives of this school year. A budget flyer will also be mailed to your home that briefly explains our budget and provides you with dates for our Budget Information Meeting, Voting Day, and the Annual School District Meeting. Please take the time to read this report and do not hesitate to call my office if you have questions.

I would also like to take this moment to encourage you to make your voice heard in Montpelier. The present thinking on taxation and school governance is concerning as well as suggesting that irresponsible school spending is a driving force behind our present financial problems. It is a fact that school budgets have steadily declined in the last five years and that 90% of the school districts last year had level or negative budget numbers. It appears the state's fiscal crisis will be managed by shifting state costs to hidden property tax increases.

The funding of our public schools during these difficult economic times will be a challenge for all Vermont schools. In order to present a school budget that can be supported by our taxpayers, we have again made sacrifices in a majority of our instructional programs. School officials have been very prudent and conservative in the preparation of this budget. Please vote and support our school budget!

SCHOOL CLOSINGS:

Please remember that there may be times when the system is not working correctly. Alert Now is only a replacement for a local call list. The local TV and radio stations are still notified of school cancellations or delayed openings. I have included the list of media places to obtain information about school closings.

Partial List of Media for School Closing – RWSU

Radio Stations

WEXP	101.5	773-9264	www.101THEFOX.com
WKVT-FM	92.7	254-2343	www.WKVT.com
WOKO	98.9	658-1230	www.WOKO.com
WEZF	92.9	655-0093	www.STAR929.com
WXXK	100.5	603-448-1400	www.kixx.come
WEQX	102.7	362-4800	www.WEQX.com
WZRT	97.1	775-7500	www.z971.com
WJJR	98.1	775-7500	www.wjrr.net
WCFR	106.5	885-4555	www.wcfram

Television

WCAX-TV	www.wcax.com
WFFF-TV	660-9333
WVNY-TV	www.abc22.com
WNNE-TV	www.wnne.com
WPTZ-TV	655-0027

Websites:

Superintendent	www.rwsu.org	click on school closing (link to sovernet)
Sovernet	https://corp.sover.net/site/	

EDLINE:

EdLine is up and running. As with any new software program, it will still take a little while to get all the glitches out and everyone on board. Please remember that this program will be used to post bi-weekly progress reports.

EdLine is an electronic software program that parents and students can use to look up grades, progress reports, and other important information about a class. Please call the Guidance Office if you have questions about using the program or understanding the information.

ELECTRONIC COMMITTEE:

This committee will look at our policies and procedures around the use of electronics during the school day. This includes cell phones, music, games, computers, and any other type of electronic devices. The committee consists of students, parents, and school staff. Please call the school principal if you wish to join the committee – 228-7930.

ATHLETIC/CO-CURRICULUM COMMITTEE:

During this school year, there have been several meetings here at Black River to discuss substance use at school and in the surrounding communities. One of the goals established at these meetings we for the school to revisit the athletic/co-curricular policy as it relates to tobacco, alcohol, and drug violations. The committee will consist of school officials, parents, coaches, students, teachers, and various members of our community. We will have our first meeting on Wednesday, February 24 at 2:45 in the school's library. Please call the school principal if you wish to join this committee – 228-7930.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:

The school's Technology Committee recently came together to look at the technology plans and needs of the school. One of the changes the school is planning is to redesign the library by creating a section for professional meetings, presentations, and an alternative place for a class. This part of the library will have a projector and smart board and be a place for long distance learning and virtual classrooms. The committee also is looking at purchasing 10 laptops and creating a mobile lab for all teachers to use. The committee expressed its gratitude to school board member, Dan Buckley, for connecting the school with Hewitt Packet's Gift in Kind Program. Black River, at no cost, was able to obtain monitors, calculators and scanners.

THE ALWAYS-ON GENERATION:

It's hardly news that young people are fascinated with social media, video games, TV, and iPods. But a new study finds that the grip of digital diversions is now complete: The average young person from 8 to 18 now spends literally every waking moment outside of school on the Internet, watching TV, listening to music on MP3 players, texting, or using some other electronic device. The study of 2,000 kids by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that Americans between ages 8 and 18 now spend an average of seven and a half hours daily consuming media in some form, and that because of multitasking, actually consume close to 11 hours worth of content in that time. The number of hours spent connected to devices jumped more than an hour and a half since 2005, when the study was first conducted. "This is a stunner," communications researcher and study co-author Donald Roberts tells The New York Times. Roughly half the kids surveyed say they use media "some" or "most of the time" that they're doing homework. Those who spent the most time consuming media had markedly poorer grades and more behavioral problems. Yet only 30 percent of parents set limits on the use of electronics devices, the study found. "Parents never knew as much as they thought they did about what their kids are doing," Roberts says. "But now we've created a world where they're removed from us that much more."

This article appeared in the magazine, The Week, dated February 5, 2010.

YEARBOOK:

The Yearbook is putting out a call to parents to help us gather photos from school events to put in the yearbook. If you have any photos you would like to share from sports games, school concerts, or any other school events, please email them to Janet Pipkin, the yearbook advisor, at PipkinJ@brhsm.org. We appreciate your help!

Also, if you would like to place an ad to acknowledge your senior's achievement or just to help support our yearbook, please let us know by February 23. You can design your own ad or the yearbook staff can design it for you. Contact the yearbook advisor for more information by email or calling the school's main office at 22-4721.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Armory Informational Meeting – February 23 at 6:00p.m.at the Ludlow Town Hall

Budget Informational Meeting – February 23 at 7:00p.m.at the Ludlow Town Hall

Voting Day – March 2, 10a.m. to 7p.m. at Town Offices in Ludlow and Mount Holly

Annual School District Meeting – March 2 at 7:30 at the Black River Gymnasium

**BLACK RIVER SCHOOL
NECAP RESULTS
FALL 2009**

Levels:

Level 1 = Below Proficient
 Level 2 = Partially Proficient
 Level 3 = Proficient
 Level 4 = Distinction

7TH GRADE

Reading:

	BRMS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	5%	9%
Level 2	19%	18%
Level 3	67%	57%
Level 4	10%	15%
Level 3 & 4	77%	72%

Math:

	BRMS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	19%	19%
Level 2	19%	18%
Level 3	48%	41%
Level 4	14%	21%
Level 3 & 4	62%	62%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 since each percent is rounded to the nearest whole number.

8TH GRADE

Reading:

	BRMS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	6%	8%
Level 2	19%	18%
Level 3	63%	48%
Level 4	13%	26%
Level 3 & 4	76%	74%

Math:

	BRMS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	22%	18%
Level 2	22%	18%
Level 3	41%	41%
Level 4	16%	24%
Level 3 & 4	57%	65%

Note:

Percentages may not total 100 since each percent is rounded to the nearest whole number.

Writing being piloted – not administered to 8th grade students

11th GRADE

Reading

	BRHS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	18%	12%
Level 2	24%	19%
Level 3	39%	45%
Level 4	18%	24%
Level 3 and 4	57%	69%

Math

	BRHS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	53%	37%
Level 2	32%	28%
Level 3	16%	32%
Level 4	0%	3%
Level 3 and 4	16%	35%

Writing

	BRHS 2009	STATE 2009
Level 1	8%	8%
Level 2	50%	42%
Level 3	39%	51%
Level 4	3%	7%
Level 3 and 4	42%	58%

The tests results have just arrived and the faculty are in the process of analyzing the results. We continue to be concerned with the high school math results both as a school and as a state.

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Homework questions

If your middle schooler is stuck on a homework assignment, you can help her by asking questions. For instance, “Where could you look for more information?” or “What have you already tried?” Your prompting may be just what she needs to get back on track.

Taming paperwork

Field trip forms, sign-ups for extracurricular activities, picture orders... middle school parents sign a lot of papers. To keep paperwork moving, get two file folders or paper trays. Have your child put everything that needs your signature in one (the “inbox”). Check it daily, and move signed papers to the other (the “outbox”).

Vocabulary booster

Your middle grader can learn new words just by having casual conversations with you. When you talk, agree to try to trade everyday words for more interesting ones. *Examples: mediocre instead of so-so, hysterical instead of funny.* You can both use a thesaurus to help you find words.

Worth quoting

“The secret of joy in work is contained in one word—excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.” *Pearl Buck*

Just for fun

Q: How does a farmer know when it’s cold?

A: When he milks a cow and gets ice cream!



Making wise decisions

Your child is deciding whether to stay in band or to play lacrosse. It’s a tough choice—but it’s also a good opportunity for him to practice making decisions. Considering different possibilities and picking the best one is a skill he’ll need for middle school and beyond.



Gather information. To make an informed decision, your middle grader needs all the facts. What is the time commitment for each activity? How would he get home from after-school practices? Will there be travel to band competitions or to lacrosse tournaments? Suggest that he speak to the band director and the lacrosse coach to get answers to all his questions.

Consider pros and cons. Have your youngster list the benefits and drawbacks of each choice. For example, lacrosse would be a great way to exercise

and meet new friends, but it might take time away from homework and other activities. If he stays in the band, he could become a better trombone player and be in performances, but he’d need to find a way to work out.

Rate options. Which choice has more pros? How important are the cons? Suggest that your middle grader rate each pro or con with one to five stars. The more stars he awards, the more important a pro or con is to him. Looking at how the stars add up will help make the right decision clearer. 👍

Joy in poetry

Silly or serious, poetry can motivate your child to read. Here are ideas the whole family will enjoy:

■ Read poems by candlelight or flashlight. Try a volume for middle graders, like *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems* by Kristine O’Connell George or *The Dog Ate My Homework* by Sara Holbrook.

■ Surprise each other with poems. Find ones you like in a book or on a Web site, and write down a favorite verse. Tuck it into your youngster’s lunch, or she might tape one to your bathroom mirror.

■ Hold a poetry scavenger hunt. Take turns naming a household object (quilt, plant) or favorite animal (panda bear, leopard). Each of you can search online or in the library for a related poem and read it aloud. 👍

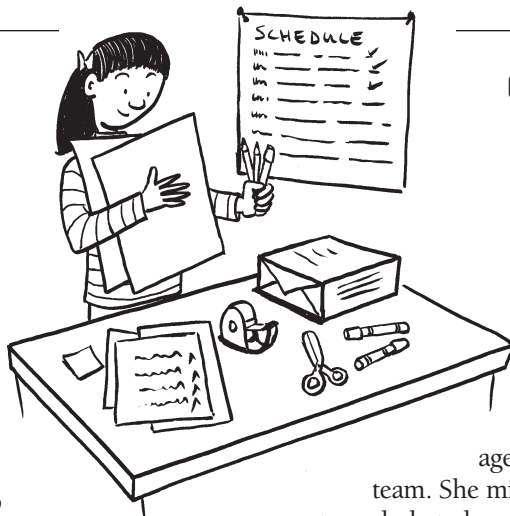


Project primer

Successful school projects start with organization and time management. Your middle grader can get off on the right foot with these tips.

Make a schedule

A project will seem more manageable if it's divided into steps. Whether your middle grader is working alone or in a group, she will need to understand what her tasks are (doing research, writing an outline) and to remember the due date for each one.



Collect supplies

Your child's work will go more smoothly when she has supplies on hand. Before she begins, she can write down everything she'll need (printer paper, poster board). She can find items around the house and ask you to help her get the rest.

Practice teamwork

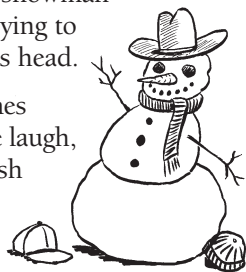
If your middle schooler is involved in a group project, encourage her to be a valuable member of the team. She might start by suggesting that the members meet regularly to bounce ideas off one another. They can also agree to touch base frequently by phone or e-mail. 👍



Laugh out loud

Laughing together can help parents and children get along better. Try these ideas:

- When you hear a funny joke, write it down. Cut out cartoons from newspapers and magazines, too. Post them on the refrigerator, and share them at dinner or in the car for a good laugh.
- Have fun in the snow together. You could play a game of catch with snowballs. Or build a snowman and take turns trying to throw a hat on its head.
- Play board games that make people laugh, such as Balderdash or Pictionary. Or get moving with a few rounds of Twister or charades. *Idea:* Try a version of charades in which you act out scenes from funny movies.



- Make up stories. One person starts with a silly sentence ("I was traveling to the jungle when..."). The next person adds a line ("...I saw an ape dressed in a tuxedo"). Continue until the story is complete. 👍

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Parent to Parent

Talking about tolerance

The other day I overheard my daughter and her friends imitating their new classmate's accent. When they left, I reminded Alexis how she felt when kids made fun of her glasses. She said this was different, because the girl didn't hear them. But I explained that their attitude would affect how they treated her.

Alexis admitted that she felt bad, but she didn't want to go against her friends. So we talked about ways she could react next time, like speaking up or changing the subject.

A few days later, Alexis told me she had tried one of our ideas. When her friends started to make comments, she changed the subject and asked them if they were going to the game that night. Then, later in the day, she saw her new classmate and introduced herself.

I'm proud of my daughter—and she's happy to have made a new friend. 👍



Q & A How much freedom?

Q My son wants me to drop him off at the movies. What should a seventh grader be allowed to do?

A There's no "magic age" for giving a child more independence. You might judge what he's ready for by gradually giving him more freedom. For example, you could start by taking him and a couple of his friends to the movies and sitting in a different row. Once you're both comfortable, you

might drop him off with friends at the community center or skating rink and plan to pick them up in an hour.

You can also satisfy your son's need for freedom—and help him feel independent—by giving him other privileges. Although some issues aren't negotiable (curfews, smoking), a middle grader might decide how to cut his hair or how to spend his allowance. 👍



High School YEARS

Working together for lifelong success

Short Clips



Conferences count

Meeting with your child's teachers lets you know how he's doing and shows that you take his schooling seriously. Beforehand, write down questions to ask. ("How can we get a peer tutor?" or "Does he participate in class?") Keep your teen in the loop by discussing the conference when you get home.

Volunteer together

Volunteer as a family, and you'll help those in need—and bond with your teenager. Browse community bulletin boards and local volunteer Web sites for opportunities. You might serve meals at a soup kitchen, work at an animal adoption fair, or help with activities in a nursing home.

Word problems

Drawing pictures can help your child visualize word problems. For instance, he could sketch two cars that are 200 miles apart and traveling toward each other. He can label each with its speed (40 mph, 60 mph) and write an equation for how long it will take them to meet: $200 \div (60 + 40) = 2$ hours.

Worth quoting

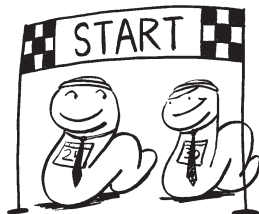
"You must look into people as well as at them."

Lord Chesterfield

Just for fun

Q: What do you get when two silkworms are in a race?

A: A tie!



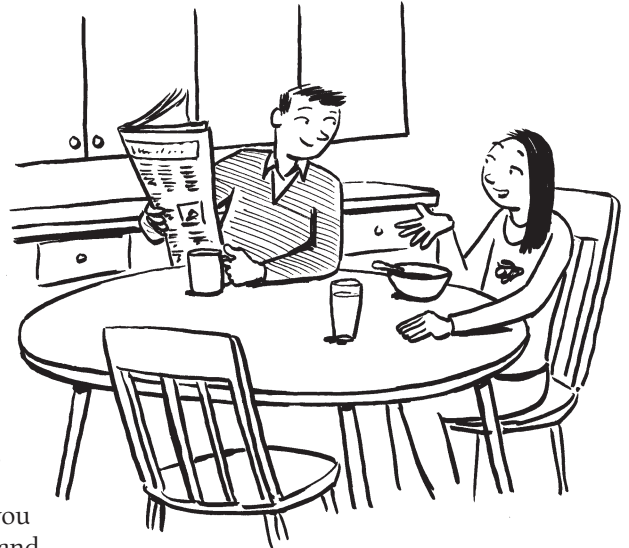
Respecting each other

As your teenager grows older and becomes more independent, her opinions may be different from yours. But the need for respect remains the same. Try to teach her to talk and act respectfully with these suggestions.

State expectations.

One way to show respect is to treat others considerately. Tell your child which behaviors are rude (sarcasm, eye rolling). Then, explain how you'd like her to treat you ("Please use a normal voice and tell me how you feel"). For example, she can say, "I disagree with you" or "I'm upset."

Return the respect. Your teen will respect you more if *she* feels respected. Talking to her as you would another adult is one way you can show respect for her. Ask her opinion about issues (politics, grocery purchases), and let her make decisions when possible. Also, address her directly when she breaks a



rule or does poorly on a test, rather than complaining about her to others.

Start over. When your high schooler is disrespectful, give her a chance to rewind. For example, if she shouts at you, ask her to repeat herself politely. If she continues yelling, let her know you'll talk when she's ready to speak nicely. *Tip:* If she is frequently rude, you might take away privileges such as the use of your car or her cell phone. 👍

Choosing classes

The right class schedule can help your teen have a successful, enjoyable school year. Here are some ideas for him to consider as he picks next year's courses:

- Mapping out the remainder of his high school career will help your child take courses geared toward his future. He'll need to pay special attention to those that have prerequisites (Pre-Calculus before Calculus, Painting I before Painting II).

- When choosing among regular, honors, and AP classes, your teen should consider how he's doing right now. If he's doing well in regular English, for example, he may want to try honors English. Encourage him to balance the load by taking a few harder courses along with an easier elective or two. 👍



Homework time

What is your teen's homework ritual like? Perhaps he works at the kitchen table right after school or studies on his bed at night. No matter where or when he does homework, these tips can make things easier.

Set priorities. Each evening, your child will need to decide which homework to tackle first. He might go subject by subject, reading textbooks and going over his notes and then doing written assignments. When tomorrow's assignments are complete, he can work on long-term projects.

Get focused. Taking out books and supplies for one subject at a time will help your high schooler concentrate



on the assignment at hand. Setting a deadline for completing each task can also help him stay focused ("I'll finish my history questions by 7:30").

Look it over. Your teenager should always review his homework before putting

it into his backpack. For instance, he should proofread journal entries and chapter summaries and double-check algebra problems and chemistry equations. This is especially important if it's getting late and he's tired. 👍

Prescription for danger

Prescription drugs are abused by children more often than any other drug except marijuana. They can be easier for teenagers to find, and teens might see them as safer since they're prescribed by doctors.

Explain to your child that any drug can be dangerous if it's prescribed for someone else, she takes too much, or she combines it with another drug.

Commonly abused prescriptions include stimulants like ADHD medication and cough syrup, painkillers such as codeine or oxycodone, and depressants like sleeping pills and tranquilizers.



Be sure to store these and other drugs in a locked cabinet. Also, know which ones you have and how much of each is left. You might ask her friends' parents to do the same, since teens sometimes share medicines they find at home. 👍

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Q & A

Facebook or face-to-face?

Q My son chats with friends using instant messaging, texting, and Facebook. Should I worry that he does so little talking in person?

A Teens love to conduct their social lives electronically. They use computers and cell phones to make plans, gossip, and even break up! And while these communication methods are efficient, they also have drawbacks.

For one thing, typed words can be misinterpreted. In person, you can often tell that someone is kidding by his tone of voice and body language. Also, teens may type hurtful things without thinking. It's easier to be harsh when the person isn't standing in front of you.

Encourage your child to have some conversations in person, especially when he needs to discuss something serious. He'll keep his social skills sharp and his relationships strong. 👍



Parent to Parent Family chores

My daughter always dragged her feet when it was time to take out the trash or unload the dishwasher.

Then, one day a friend mentioned that she had come up with a good way to get her teenager to help around the house. She said she had discovered that doing chores as a family kept everyone motivated. They started working together for

15 minutes every evening after dinner, and the house got cleaned up.

I decided to try it. The next night after dinner, I set the stove timer for 15 minutes, and everyone worked to clear the table, do the dishes, and take out the trash. We were all surprised by how easy it was. Now it's a nightly ritual, and no one has to do chores alone. 👍

