

New to River Bend 2025-2026

Each year, I like to provide a quick summary of the new items that River Bend has added since the previous year. In this summary, I include building and ground additions, staffing, curriculum, and other items that might be of interest. This year is not different from the past; the teachers, administrators, and the Board have been working hard, planning, and doing our best to help our schools and community improve. This year's update will be a bit smaller than previous years, as we did not have any large construction projects; however, the District has worked to improve and update many other items.

New items for the District:

Major construction updates are being planned for RBMS, FHS and FES- Your input is very valuable to us and embedded in this letter is a survey about the expansion projects throughout the district. The District will be adding a referendum to the March 2026 ballot seeking voter approval to finance the projects.

- a. RBMS fieldhouse and classrooms- To offer PE everyday, the District is seeking to build a fieldhouse which will include additional classrooms at the middle school, The middle school gym is undersized and as our enrollment and the goal to have PE everyday the District desires to build a space suitable for PE K-8th grade everyday. Approximate cost 13 million.
- b. Additional locker rooms, and shared athletic spaces are needed at FHS. The District can better serve our wrestling teams, golf, and baseball teams by creating a space that can be used by each team. We will also add locker rooms for both home teams, away teams and the referee that need a place to change and shower. Approximate cost 5 million.
- c. Our performing arts programs have never had a dedicated space that reflects the high quality programming River Bend offers. The district would like to convert the old gym at the high school into a performing arts theater and performance center. If the performing arts center is added a new gym at the high school would also be added to the multi-purpass space proposed in (b). The cost for the performing arts and new gym would be approximately 12 million.
- d. The elementary school has quickly filled the spaces that were added on to last year. We added a homeroom section for our first grade students. FES will benefit from an additional classroom costing about \$900,000.
- e. Parking is a premium around the District and the Board is considering a parking expansion around RBMS to accumulate those who use the new gym. Additional parking costs are estimated at 1.1 million dollars.

The Board has proposals for all the construction projects and is seeking input on which if not all the projects the Board should consider. The following link will take you to a Q and A document that also includes a survey seeking input from our community. Please consider reading and completing the survey.

<https://www.riverbendschools.org/vimages/shared/vnews/stories/687e6b40b2140/RBMS%20and%20FHS%20expansion%20Q%20and%20A>

Administration changes- Dr. Hogue will retire at the end of the 25-26 school year and Mrs. Parsons will replace him starting in the 26-27 school year. Mrs. Parsons has been promoted to the assistant superintendent and will focus on teaching and learning, developing a strong system of assessments and supporting the needs of the special education students. She will also get to work closely with Dr. Hogue as she transitions into her new role.

Two new administrators- Aimee Marten, a former PK special education, general special education, and a classroom (Kindergarten & 5th grade) teacher has been promoted to the FES assistant principal position. We are excited to have Mrs. Marten's expertise as an elementary teacher as she assists Mr. Hoese. Also new to Fulton High School is assistant principal Nicole Bowers. Nicole started her math teaching career at Fulton High School and then moved to Riverdale in Port Byron for the past ten years. She has advanced degrees in curriculum/instruction as well as educational administration. We are excited to have the two new principals joining the administrative team.

New Building and Grounds- Mick Ryan, replaced Gary Wolfe in March of 2025. Prior to coming to River Bend Mick worked maintenance positions in Iowa and served in the Iowa National Guard and Army after high school. He has been working hard to understand the needs of our school buildings.

New District PA systems in all the schools- River Bend schools all had their original public addresses and bell systems. Each school's PA and bells operated differently and did not always carry sound to all the rooms. The District upgraded all four buildings with new programmable PA and bell systems. Each of the classrooms are also equipped with an emergency call button as well. The new system will allow the staff to program the different bell needs as well as talk into each room and play music throughout the buildings. The system also allows for instant emergency messaging for students to read and follow.

Strategic Plan work to guide future planning- A group of about 20 members of the community, staff, board members, and administrators worked along with those who answered survey questions to create Steamer Success Indicators. The five success indicators will be used as the base for new teaching and learning work in the upcoming years. The idea behind the Success Indicators provides a target for each student as he or she completes school in the River Bend system.



New to Fulton Elementary School

- Staff- Without amazing teachers and support staff our schools would not function as well as they do. This year the following teachers are being added to an already great group of teachers at FES. Aimee Marten has taken the role of assistant principal and brings a wealth of elementary and PK experience to her new seat. FES also welcomes back Kayla Kampe as the 2nd and 3rd Grade Special Education Teacher. Christy Hanson is moving to Preschool Special Education Teacher, Elizabeth Roos to FES Interventionist, Tiffany Smith to 4th Grade Teacher, Kearston Norman to 2nd Grade Teacher, Kayleigh Bonheur to Library Paraprofessional, and Corrine Leonhardt is moving from RBMS Paraprofessional to Library Paraprofessional. New hires include Josephine Helm, Sydney Manon, and Lindsey Mitchell as 1st Grade Teachers, Natalie Orwitz as 3rd Grade Teacher, Riley Davidson as 5th Grade Teacher, and Deborah Damhoff as Library Manager for FES and RBMS. FES & FBP have also added Justine Dann, Abbey Binkley, Grace Heyvaert, and Tracy Stanley as paraprofessionals. Due to staff movements in the custodial staff, Jon Dail replaced Pat Foster and FES added Sean VanKampen to the night custodial crew.
- Four new basketball hoops have been added at the elementary school playground. These were funded in thanks to the FES PTO and school district.
- A new K-5 Illustrative science curriculum was purchased at FES. The new program is designed to provide more hands on science and STEM activities for students.

- Fulton Blended PK will have new countertops and a sink added to the space. Grant funds were used to purchase a new sink and countertops to replace the outused and outdated sink and countertop.

New to River Bend Middle School

- River Bend Middle School is only adding one new staff member, Deborah Damhoff has joined the library staff at RBMS and FES as the library manager. Deborah comes to us from the Schmaling Library in Fulton.
- Seal coating in Parking lots- Each summer district parking lots are provided with a new seal coating. This year the parking lot behind RBMS received a new coating.
- Fire Control Alarms- The fire control alarms at RBMS were replaced. The previous alarm system was original to the building. The new alarm system monitors for fires and heating/cold changes in the rooms. The new alarm system at RBMS means each of the buildings have updated alarm systems.
- New Gym Windows- New windows were placed in the gym. The old windows are original to the gym and will allow for better air flow in the gym.

New to Fulton High School

- Fulton High School will be welcoming new assistant principal Nicole Bowers. Mrs. Bowers started her career as a math teacher at FHS. She is excited to be moving her family to Fulton and joining our high school and community. Prior to joining FHS as our AP, she was a math teacher at Riverdale. Chris Marten will be joining the FHS staff as the construction agriculture instructor. Mr. Marten served in a similar role at Unity Christian School. He will also join Mrs. Meurs as an FFA advisor. Kraig Schipper joins FHS in the role of paraprofessional. Amanda Champion will also be joining FHS as a paraprofessional. Congratulations to Allison Grant for moving from part-time to full time custodian at FHS and to Pat Foster who is taking over as the head custodian at FHS.
- New HS curriculums - Sports Marketing and Social Media Marketing, Accounting and Business Finance, Creative Tech, AI Machine Learning and Robotics, Networking and Cyber Security, Ag Business Management, Ag Sales and Marketing, SWiM revamped into 3 sections.

- Storage space added - FHS has needed to clear space an existing storage room to make room for a second wrestling space. The wrestling program has added a girl's program and has almost 30 wrestlers in total. They have outgrown their current room and need additional space. Temporary storage units will be placed on the property so that athletic program equipment not being used for their season can be placed in the offsite storage.
- Crow's Nest upgrade - The FHS football stadium crow's nest was remodeled to make it safer and user friendly. New flooring and doors have been installed to reinforce safety within the structure.
- FHS Gym Sound Improvements - A new sound system was installed in the main gym 5 years ago. Unfortunately, the sound baffles had to be removed because they did not meet fire code requirements. A new set of baffles have been added this year to improve the sound quality within the gym.
- Fire and Safety door upgrades - Every ten years the district is required to have all its buildings assessed for safety and fire code compliance. At last year's Health Life Safety survey, all the FHS doors did not meet code for fire alarm releases. New door releases have been placed on one-third of the doors. A three year plan to upgrade all the doors is being completed over a three year period.
- Band Room Update - New flooring in the band and choir room will brighten the space as well as provide improved sound quality.
- Golf and Wrestling add female teams- Girl's wrestling has been growing over the past few years as an IHSA sport and two years ago created a female state series. Fulton High school has also seen a growth in the female wrestling community. A full time coach was added to support our lady wrestlers. Golf has seen growth in female participation and this year Fulton High School hopes to have a full female only team. An additional coach was added to support the golf team growth as well as support the lady's golf team.