

BLAIR OAKS R-II SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Blair Oaks Families,

We are writing to make you aware that Blair Oaks R-II was randomly selected by the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS) to participate in the state's Wastewater Testing for School Safety program during the 2026–27 school year. Our selection was random and is not the result of a drug-related concern, incident or allegation involving Blair Oaks students or staff. Blair Oaks is one of approximately 164 schools selected statewide, with schools chosen from each of the nine Missouri State Highway Patrol regions.

WHAT IS WASTEWATER TESTING?

Wastewater testing samples sewage leaving a building and checks it for traces of drugs people have used. Public health agencies have used the same method to track community trends, such as COVID-19 or opioid use, without testing any individual. The state's program is intended to serve as an early-warning system for fentanyl and other dangerous synthetic opioids.

HOW DID THIS PROGRAM COME ABOUT?

The state's wastewater testing initiative began during the 2025–26 school year and expanded for the current school year:

- **December 2025:** DPS ran a voluntary pilot program with more than 40 Missouri school districts participating.
- **January 2026:** Hallsville detected nitazenes through its wastewater testing.
- **June 30, 2026:** Gov. Mike Kehoe signed HB 2002 and HB 2008, the state budget bills that fund the program.
- **July 22, 2026:** The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) announced the program.
- **August 18, 2026:** DPS notified superintendents of selected districts. Its vendor, Stercus Bioanalytics, then followed up to schedule site assessments.
- **September 24, 2026:** DPS sent districts the list of participating schools and the testing schedule.

Approximately 164 schools statewide are participating this year. DPS randomly selected schools across the nine Missouri State Highway Patrol troops to provide representation from every region of the state. Again, Blair Oaks was not selected because of a specific incident, allegation or finding involving our students or staff.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BLAIR OAKS?

The state and its vendor will conduct the testing at no cost to Blair Oaks R-II and with minimal involvement from district staff.

What is sampled?

Wastewater is collected from the building's outside sewer pipe. This is not our drinking water, which is not affected in any way.

When will testing occur?

Samples are collected during school hours only, in several rounds throughout the school year.

What does the testing screen for?

The program screens for dangerous synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, nitazenes and carfentanil, as well as other substances.

Who conducts the testing?

The state's vendor, Stercus Bioanalytics, handles the site assessment, equipment, sample collection and laboratory analysis.

What is the district's role?

Our involvement is minimal. We are sharing school calendars, closures and major events with the vendor so samples are collected during normal school operations and accurately reflect typical school days.

Does this identify individual students or staff?

No. Wastewater testing looks at wastewater leaving the building and does not test or identify individual students or staff members. A result cannot tell us who used a substance, how many people used it or how much was used. It also cannot tell us whether the substance was used on school property or during the school day, or where in the building it entered the wastewater. A single result is one piece of information. It does not show widespread use among students, and it is not a reflection of our school or student body.

What does a positive result mean?

A positive result means someone who contributed to the wastewater during sampling hours used a tested substance within the previous 24 to 72 hours. That person could be a student, staff member or visitor. Because wastewater testing cannot identify an individual, a positive result will not lead to student investigations, searches or discipline. DPS has indicated that it carries no such expectation for participating schools.

What will Blair Oaks do if we receive a positive result?

We will share the result with our community promptly and in plain language through our district website. Naloxone (Narcan) is available in our buildings, and staff are trained to use it. Students and families who need help can also reach out to a school counselor or school nurse. We will work with our partners to provide appropriate education and resources for students and families.

Will the results be public?

Yes. DPS reports results publicly by Missouri State Highway Patrol troop rather than by individual school. However, school-level results are public records that can be requested under Missouri's Sunshine Law. Because a records request could reveal whether a specific school received a positive or negative result, we believe it is important for our community to hear that information directly from us. We plan to share our results promptly rather than have families learn about them through another source.

How does this fit with our existing school safety efforts?

Our participation in the state's program supports what we already do every day: work to keep students safe and healthy. Blair Oaks already provides substance-use prevention and education through our health curriculum, DARE and our School Resource Officer partnership. Regardless of a testing result, our response will remain focused on facts, student safety and the wellbeing of our school community.

We wanted to provide this information to families so you understand why testing is taking place, how Blair Oaks was selected, what the testing can and cannot tell us, and how we will respond to the results.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Blair Oaks schools.

Superintendent Ben Meldrum

Blair Oaks R-II School District