



OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

School News

Winter 2022



Family and
Community Engagement
Soars in Schools

Olathe Public Schools
Lists Points of Pride

21st Century
Academies
Celebrate 20 Years

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A Message From **SUPERINTENDENT DR. BRENT YEAGER**

As second semester comes to a close, I want you to know I am so grateful for this district and its community. Going into this school year, our goal was for the year to be normal, but better. So far, this year there have been a tremendous number of examples of joy from our educators and our students. Our kids are learning, our staff is engaged and our community continues to show up to support our district.

This issue of School News is filled to the brim with reasons to be excited about the future of Olathe Public Schools. From a new 3DE model for high school students at Olathe East High School on page 4 to the celebration of our 21st Century Academies with a featured alumni story on page 7, there is so much to be proud of. Speaking of pride, check out the Olathe Public Schools Points of Pride infographic on page 8, where you can read quick facts about our innovative district. Next, check out a brief recap of the family and community involvement events from the first semester on page 5. Finally, if you have ever wanted to know more about our efforts in Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, learn more on page 6.

As we prepare for second semester, I want to thank you for all of your support for the Olathe Public Schools. We have a wonderful school system with incredible support from you — our community. As always, I am proud to be your superintendent and look forward to another semester of preparing students for their future.

Dr. Brent Yeager,
Superintendent

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3DE Model Piloting at Olathe East High School



The 3DE model partners with local businesses to teach students through real-world experiential learning.

Olathe East High School is piloting 3DE, an instructional model that focuses on students gaining key competencies through real-world experiential learning. Students receive challenges from local and national companies, and they work with classmates in their dedicated 3DE core classes to find the best solution.

The 3DE model focuses on six competencies that align with the Olathe Public Schools' strategic plan: Creativity and Innovation, Effective Collaboration, Cultural Agility, Engaging Communication, Self-direction, and Critical and Analytical Thinking. By emphasizing these skills, teachers are allowing for a safe place for students to try new things, learn, fail, and try again to become a well-rounded person.

"The combination of interdisciplinary learning and business coaching allows students to develop important skills, or competencies, that are at the core of the 3DE model," 3DE Algebra teacher Katelyn Waldron said. "It is these competencies that will develop our students into successful young adults in future classrooms, jobs or other professional environments."

Waldron is just one of four core classroom teachers who teaches all 3DE students. When businesses send in their challenges, students apply what they are learning in their core classes of math, social studies, science, and English and solve the problem.

"One of the benefits of being in 3DE is the opportunity to work with local and national companies to come up with solutions for real-world problems," 3DE English teacher Hannah McCartney said. "For example, I can teach the English Language Arts standard of argumentative writing, but instead of an essay, students will demonstrate their mastery of this standard through a deliverable for the company we are working with — they will create and defend a solution to prove their claim is the best."

From an educator's perspective, this program is successful at engaging students in their learning, providing students with market value assets that will prepare them for the next step after graduation, and creating a community within their classes.

"3DE allows students to see diverse professionals and jobs that they can work toward having," 3DE Biology teacher Darian Ogden said. "It also allows professionals into our schools, building a united team with our community and education. We are sharing in the development of our kids and helping to make sure they have

access to supports, resources, and exposure to their potential future. Finally, as a team we really get the chance to get to know all sides of the kids and teach the full student."

Olathe Public Schools strives to provide innovative opportunities for our students to learn and be prepared for their future. 3DE is one way Olathe East will further that mission.

"In our society, there is always a conversation about how prepared students are for the post-secondary world," Waldron said. "Times are always changing and 3DE offers a fresh update that amplifies the connections students make to the real world. This interdisciplinary work, along with coaching from business experts, gives the students learning opportunities to gain the necessary skills to be successful members of society."



VMLY&R challenges Olathe East High School students to solve a real-world problem.

Family and Community Engagement Soars in Olathe Public Schools

One of Olathe Public Schools' priorities this year is for families and community members to engage in the schools whether that is through visiting, attending special events or volunteering.

"We are just getting started. If you are interested in seeing what is happening in your neighborhood school, I would encourage you to attend an event or sign up to volunteer — you will not regret it," Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager said.

From math teachers at Olathe East High School inviting parents into the classroom to experience a math lesson during the day to parents participating in a pep assembly at Frontier Trail Middle School, or Java with Jay at Olathe West High School — parent engagement is at an all-time high. Elementary schools are no different.

During the first semester, Harmony Early Childhood Center and Heartland Early Childhood Center had special guests at recess. Families were invited to join the preschool classrooms for a special recess time.

"We believe that parents and caregivers serve as the first and most important teachers for our students," Director of Early Childhood Dr. Kim Hawkins said. "We invited families to school to engage in our favorite activity — play! It was so great to watch children playing with their favorite adults and to watch caregivers make connections with school staff and each other."

Another event that helped families build relationships not only with their child, but with the other parents and caregivers was Ridgeview Elementary School's Fiesta Night. Principal Leslie Simons, along with her staff, hosted this cultural event for all during Hispanic Heritage Month. Families loved the food, the entertainers, and the ability to come together and celebrate.

"We want our community and families to know school is a safe place and all are welcome," Simons said. "We are an open door in everything we do. It truly takes a village. As a parent, I have to trust that great things that represent my children are taking place in the school. This is best done through full transparency, which includes having our families walking with us side by side."

Community involvement and engagement in our schools is of the utmost importance because students can see their surrounding



support system, staff can feel the encouragement of the community, and the community can see the inspiring things the students and educators are doing every single day. Follow our district social media pages to read more stories about engagement in our schools.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Programs Expand Across District

One of the goals of the district's strategic plan is that every student will benefit from an educational experience that fosters their behavioral, social and emotional development. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was put into motion in July 2020 as part of supporting that goal.

PBIS is an evidence-based framework for supporting all students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. It has four key components: teaching consistent schoolwide expectations to all students, acknowledging students for following the expectations, a consistent schoolwide approach to teaching missing skills when challenging behaviors occur, and using schoolwide data to adjust policies and practices to meet student needs.

In the district, PBIS is led by coordinator Dr. Scott Fluke. Out of the 57 buildings serving students, 31 have begun implementation with 11 more developing their framework this year. Chisholm Trail Middle School developed a token system where students can pay for things at the school store by following and exceeding school expectations. The store is often staffed by parent volunteers and has strengthened relationships within their community.

"PBIS has been a wonderful addition to our school and its culture," Chisholm Trail Principal Rick Sola said. "Our values can be consistently reinforced with students, and our token system promotes a culture of frequent recognition of expected behaviors. It helps promote positive behaviors in our building and positive conversations amongst staff and students. Now that PBIS has launched, it is hard to imagine the building without it."

Central Elementary School implemented PBIS several years ago, but recently was able to launch a book vending machine as a part of their schoolwide supports for students.

"Two different staff members, one certified and one classified, as well as myself will have a golden coin that we can give to a student who is being a leader for others in meeting our Cougar



expectations," Principal Brandi Leggett said. "When they receive that coin, they are able to pick a book from the vending machine — rewarding our students for their good choices and encouraging reading. A true win-win!"

Olathe Advanced Technical Center staff love that PBIS is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Every school creates a customized system to meet the needs of their community.

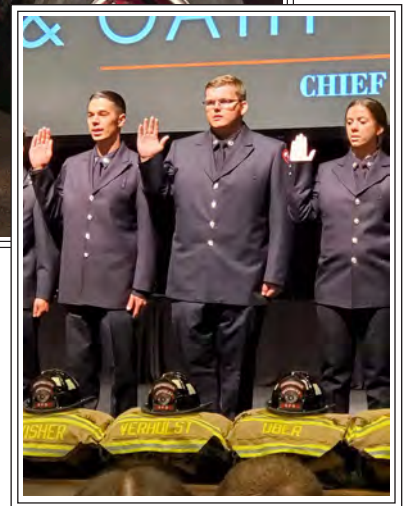
"I believe PBIS has changed our point of view to continually and intentionally looking for the good, the kind, and the thoughtful actions that have always been there with our students," OATC Assistant Administrator Jennifer Barnum said.

Four PBIS coaches provide guidance to the schools as they are developing their systems. With all Olathe schools beginning implementation within the next two years, Fluke looks forward to the positive impact it will have on the almost 30,000 students in our district.

"More than anything, PBIS is about creating a positive schoolwide culture that fosters healthy relationships, teaches students lifelong skills, and makes school a place where staff and students want to spend their time," Fluke said.



21st Century Academies Celebrate 20 Years of Student Success



Two decades ago, the Olathe Public Schools launched a bold and unique approach to high school education — 21st Century Academies. Those programs were the result of extensive surveys and focus groups asking businesses, parents, students and staff what 21st century high schools should look like prior to the turn of the century.

These academies allow each student to build upon their interests and learn specific knowledge and skills they can apply to post-secondary experiences and career fields. Students who enroll in an academy earn a market value asset by way of Work-Based Learning as an intern or doing a research/client project. Over the past two decades, thousands of students have been involved in the 21st Century Academies.

One of those students is Sam Verhulst, class of 2022 graduate. Verhulst is an “original Owl,” joining the Public Safety Academy his sophomore year when Olathe West High School opened in 2017. This fall, he graduated from the Olathe Fire Department Academy and joined the OFD team, fighting fires in the community that invested in him.

“In the Public Safety Academy, I had the privilege of working with multiple instructors who cultivated a fun learning atmosphere that made fire service a significantly brighter path for me to follow,” Verhulst said. “We as students would even stay after school to help build props for training, perform drills, and even wash and organize our new truck. The ability to go out and ride alongside the fire

department during our internships was one of the biggest factors in my decision to pursue the fire service.”

Public Safety Facilitator Jeff Van Dyke believes the 21st Century Academies are a great way for students to see if a profession is right for them.

“The academies allow students to explore what they want to do in life. They keep students engaged in school and give a purpose to their learning,” Van Dyke said. “Students who choose the academy route in OPS learn real-world, industry specific skills that could one day put them ahead of other applicants in a competitive job market. Sam is a great example of this.”

Having a former student from the Public Safety Academy in the Olathe Fire Department gives Olathe Fire Department mentor Chris Curtis “great pride” in both Verhulst and the program.

“When I pop into a station and see him in a regular OFD uniform doing the job or hear his truck on calls, or just knowing he’s fulfilling his dream is an awesome feeling as a former instructor, and now colleague,” Curtis said. “There will be others to come, but Sam paved the way and is proving that the Public Safety Academy is living up to the promises and goals we set even before Olathe West opened its doors.”



Points of Pride

District

18

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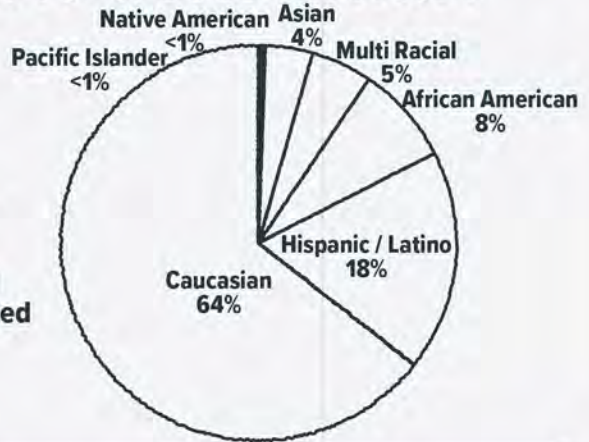
58

Schools and facilities serving almost 30,000 students

2nd

Largest District in Kansas

A Diverse District



90+

Languages spoken at home by our students



1st

District in the state of Kansas to adopt CrisisAlert safety system



85+

College level courses offered

Students



\$45.5 Million

in scholarships offered to 2022 graduates



60%+

of secondary students participate in extracurricular activities



18

National Merit Finalists in Spring 2022



SAT & ACT

Scores above state and national averages



2022

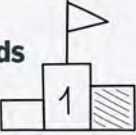
Presidential Scholar





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Staff

20 Teachers earned Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science 


18 National Board Certified teachers 

7 Kansas Teachers of the Year 

Proudly serving **5,985** Students with special education needs

15  21st Century Academies offering opportunities to earn Market Value Assets through work-based learning 

 **2** Kansas Superintendents of the Year 

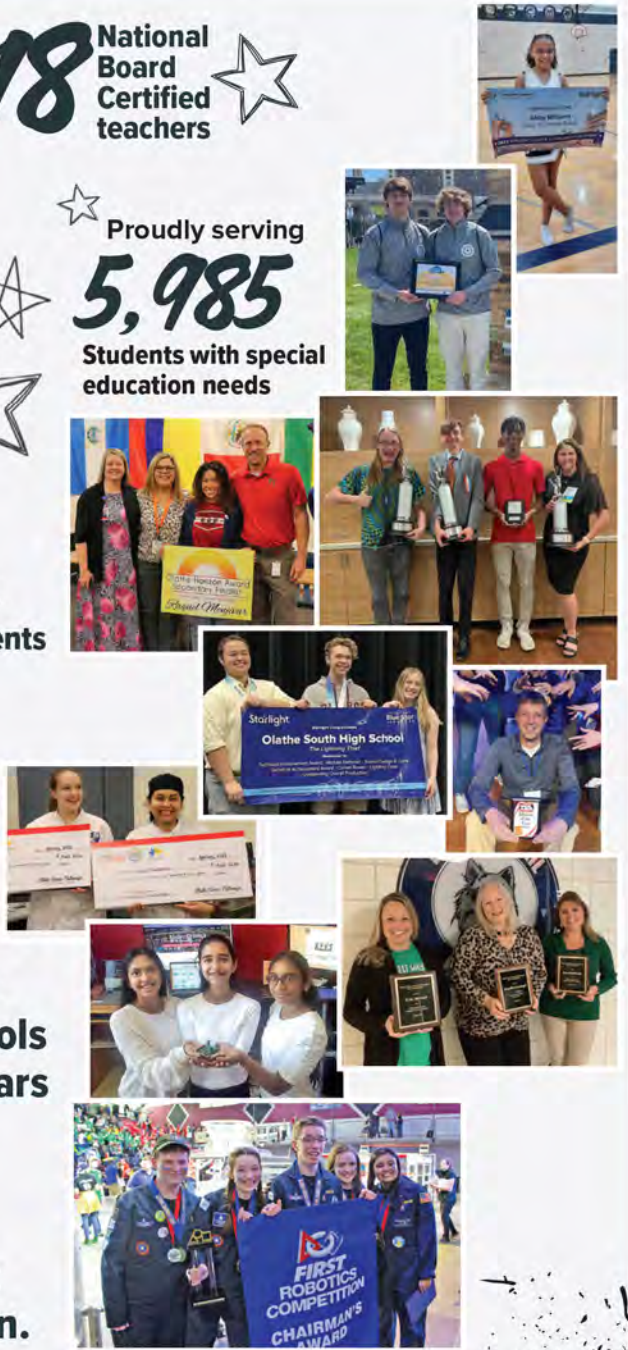
 **14** Average of 14 years experience of classroom teachers across the district

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




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