

School NEWS



FALL 2019



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A Message From **SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON**



The 2019-20 school year is off to a tremendous start as our students have come back ready to learn and our teachers and staff ready to teach and support. One exciting change for the school year that has impacted all of our teaching staff is the addition of a tool, Mastery Connect, to help teachers assess where students are and what skills and assistance they need to master content.

Mastery Connect is a tool to help our students learn and grow and experience success in the district and beyond. Read more about Mastery Connect in this issue of School News.

In other news, our Board of Education will see some new faces this year. August brought a new Board of Education member to the district. Kristin Schultz was appointed to fill the seat of former

board member Amy Martin, who moved out of state. Ms. Schultz will finish the remaining two years of the term. You can read more about our Board of Education at www.olatheschools.org/boe.

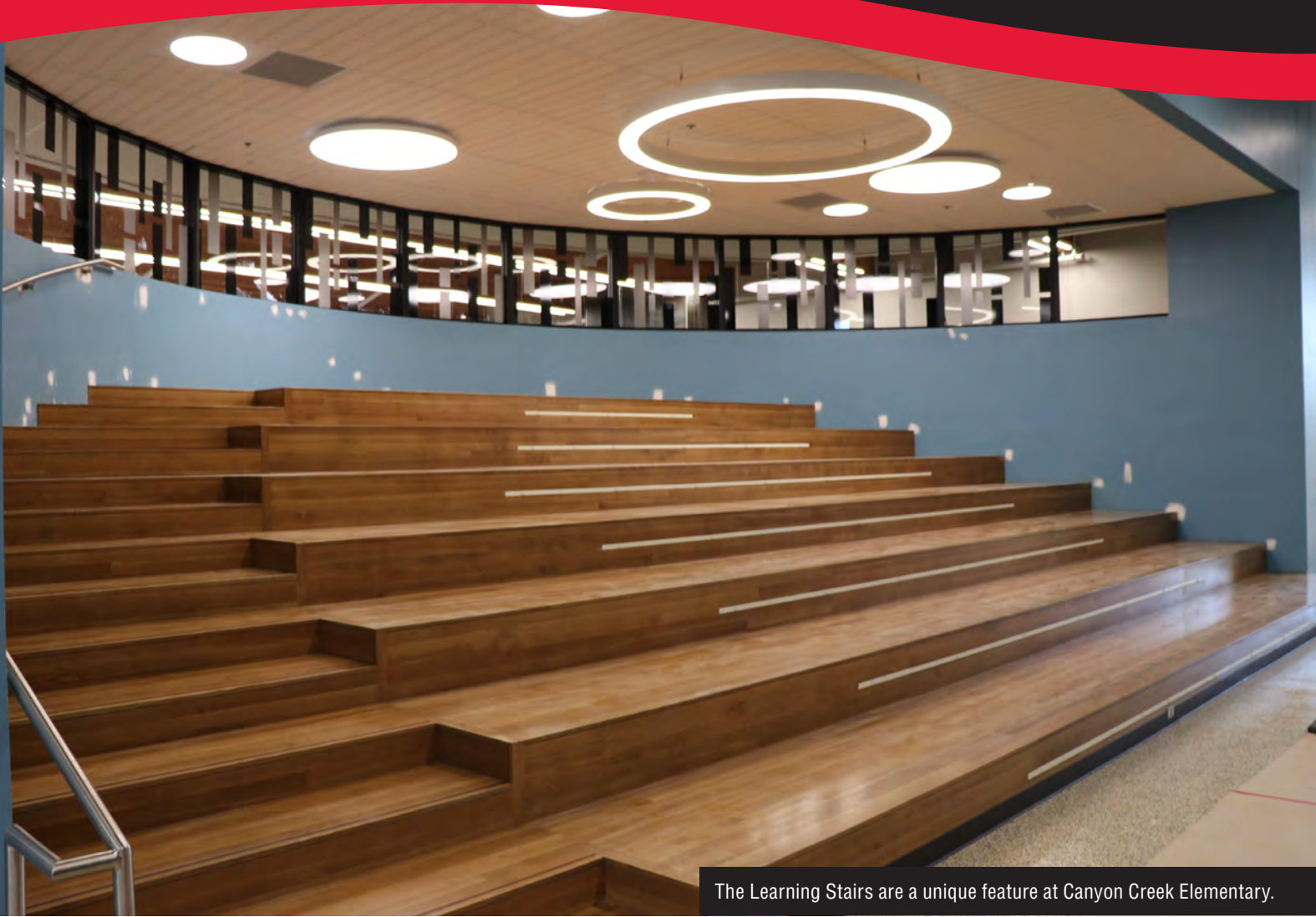
Additionally, board elections are coming up Nov. 5. Three board members, Joe Beveridge, LeEtta Felter and Shannon Wickliffe, are running for reelection unopposed. Two community members are running for a seat that is being vacated by Rick Schier, who has decided not to run again. I encourage you to visit www.jocoelection.org for information about the general election and how to register to vote.

**John Allison,
Superintendent**

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The Learning Stairs are a unique feature at Canyon Creek Elementary.

WELCOME TO CANYON CREEK ELEMENTARY

In the fall of 2017 it was announced that Olathe Public Schools would open the 36th elementary school in the district. Canyon Creek Elementary opened its doors in August to alleviate enrollment at Cedar Creek Elementary, the largest elementary in the Olathe School District, and help maintain the neighborhood school concept.

Christy James was named principal in December 2018. James was previously principal at Olathe's Tomahawk Elementary and knew that opening a brand-new school would require collaboration.

"The amount of teamwork needed to happen was expected but eye opening," said James. "Each group of employees had different areas of focus and had to rely on each other to make sure everything went smoothly."

As education evolves and best practices shift, district leadership understood the importance of a building's educational impact and longevity.

"With every new school, we have the opportunity to develop and construct buildings that are designed specifically for the current instructional practices and technology integration that's being used as best practice," said Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Tim Reves. "Canyon Creek opens with a dedicated makerspace designed to support problem-based learning and discovery learning."

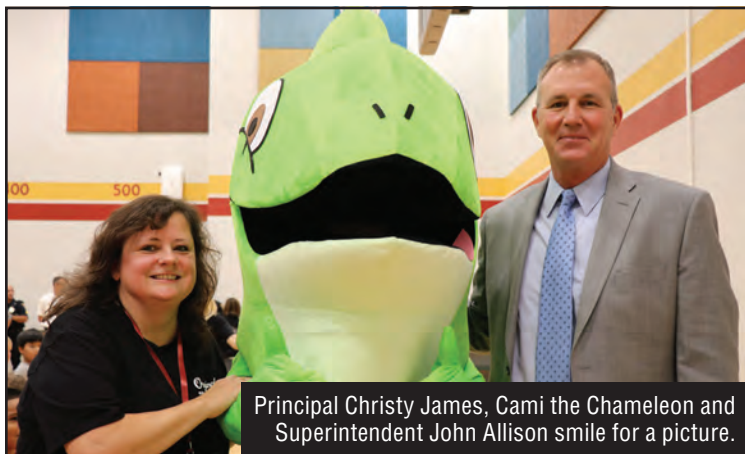
Over the summer, staff members worked with various district departments building furniture, organizing resources and stocking supplies to prepare for the school year.



Movable furniture is in every classroom.



Students can work on large-scale projects in the state-of-the-art makerspace.



Principal Christy James, Cami the Chameleon and Superintendent John Allison smile for a picture.



Students and staff members participate in the morning walk and talk.

Canyon Creek serves as Olathe’s first elementary built with a makerspace in the original plans. Makerspaces are large areas with moveable furniture that can allow for large-scale collaboration and experiential learning.

Other features of the building include learning stairs, similar to recent district buildings Olathe West High School and Summit Trail Middle School. A learning commons doubles as a library and classroom space. For James, it’s her favorite area of the building.

“The space is so warm and inviting,” said James. “I would bet that parents and students will all truly enjoy all the unique features of our building.”

Building a school culture doesn’t happen without dedicated educators. As the staff was carefully selected, each new staff

member embraced building something new. Each morning as students arrive, student leaders direct all students to the gym where they participate in a walk and talk. Students talk with one another, walk laps, meet new students and burn some pre-school energy. At 8:15 a.m., students sit with their classmates and hear words of encouragement and the morning announcements before heading to class.

“My hope is to work collaboratively with the Canyon Creek community to build a family atmosphere that provides a safe place for students that inspires them to do their best,” said James. “Our staff is determined to make Canyon Creek as dynamic as the world around us.”



MASTERY CONNECT GUIDES TEACHING

Finding ways to better meet student need and promote student achievement is always a focus in the Olathe Public Schools. The 2019-20 school year has brought a tool to all educators to help better target immediate student need today, so that strategies can be put into place to help students either get back on track or enrich their learning right away.

Mastery Connect is a tool that gives teachers the chance to quickly assess student understanding of important learning standards. This tool gives teachers common data to make decisions about what students need in the classroom. Have they mastered the concept?

“Mastery Connect allows teachers to isolate parts of learning

that students may not be mastering and help them understand the concepts,” Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services Brent Yeager said. “Previously, a teacher might have found out at the end of the unit that a student didn’t master part of the concepts. Now we can tell through short evaluations conducted right in the classroom, what they mastered and what standards need more work. It’s a game-changer for our students and staff.”

This fall, before the start of school, more than 2,500 district teaching staff came together for training around Mastery Connect, followed by additional, in-depth, school-specific trainings in each building. Principals and the district’s instructional leaders provided much of the training. Teachers began the year ready to implement the tool into their classrooms.



Mastery Connect offers great clarity about what we want our students to learn and provides the opportunity to know quickly whether or not they're learning the information.

- Dr. Brent Yeager
*Assistant Superintendent
for Learning Services*

Mastery Connect is tied to all subject area standards and curriculum that have been approved by the Board of Education. It standardizes the learning across the entire Olathe Public Schools system to help all students succeed. Mastery Connect supports the district's three focus areas or Big 3: standards-based learning, professional learning communities and student engagement.

"Mastery Connect offers great clarity about what we want our students to learn and provides the opportunity to know quickly whether or not they're learning the information," Yeager said. "What's very exciting is that this is applicable across all content areas including math, reading, science, social studies, fine arts, career technical education and more."

Green Springs Elementary Principal Todd Wheat appreciates

Mastery Connect because it "provides us a mechanism to continuously monitor student understanding and then collaboratively determine what instructional adjustments need to be made to ensure student success."

"I see Mastery Connect as a tool we consistently reference at our weekly Professional Learning Community meetings to discuss what's working well, what's not, and what adjustments we're going to make," Wheat said. "The data we'll be able to pull from Mastery Connect will drive many of our discussions about student learning and how to best meet the needs of each individual student. Having access to a resource like Mastery Connect will provide our teachers real-time data, giving us valuable insights into what instructional adjustments need to be considered to ensure student success."



OLATHE HEALTH PROVIDES CPR TRAINING TO COACHES AND SPONSORS

In April 2019, the Kansas State High School Activities Association adopted a rule requiring any head or assistant coach or sponsor for any KSHSAA-sanctioned activity to be certified and trained in CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) administration. This rule went into effect for the 2019-20 school year.

Olathe Public Schools is committed not only to excellence in education; safety and well-being of students, parents, volunteers and the community is the district's top priority. The KSHSAA rule significantly expanded the number of coaches and sponsors needing to take CPR/AED training.

As a premier partner and a cornerstone to community health and wellness, Olathe Health funded a grant which enabled the purchase of 10 CPR in-school kits to assist district nurses and CPR-certified staff to provide a number of trainings to staff and students before activity seasons begin.

Each year, Olathe Health provides an annual contribution for student health and wellness initiatives. The Olathe Public Schools Foundation connected Olathe Health with Olathe Public Schools Athletic Director Tim Brady to put the wheels in motion.

"Our community cares about our students' health and wellness," Olathe Public Schools Foundation Executive Director Cindy

VonFeldt said. "The Olathe Public Schools Foundation serves to connect our caring community to our schools."

Before the start of school in the fall, coaches and sponsors were able to participate in CPR/AED training opportunities utilizing the life-saving training kits. On Wednesday, Aug. 7, a session trained over 80 middle school coaches and sponsors.

The deadline for all fall activity coaches and sponsors to be trained was Sept. 19. Additional trainings will be held throughout the year to meet the requirement.

"Olathe Health has been proactive in their support for student wellness and mental health initiatives," said Brady. "Without their support and partnership, many of these initiatives would not be possible."

More than 350,000 cardiac arrests occur outside of a hospital each year. According to the American Heart Association, CPR, if administered immediately, can double or triple a person's chance of survival.

"We have proudly supported Olathe Public Schools for decades," Olathe Health Chief Strategy Officer Mike Jensen said. "We are especially pleased when those contributions go directly to support health, wellness and life-saving equipment and activities for the students and their families."



COMMUNITY GATHERS TO HELP STUDENTS WITH ANXIETY

Before the start of the 2019-20 school year, a special five-week course was announced to help parents of children struggling with anxiety in the Olathe Public Schools. As the physical and mental well-being of students is a top priority of the district and community, sponsors such as the Olathe Public Schools Foundation, First National Bank, the Two Tents IOP and the Anxiety Center at Renew Counseling rallied to make this course available free of cost.

Every Thursday beginning Sept. 12, parents filled Summit Trail Middle School to learn parenting strategies and gain practical tools around student anxiety, both typical anxieties such as going back to school or anxiety felt before a big milestone and anxieties that just don't leave the student and cause a disruption to typical behavior.

The weekly sessions detailed core concepts for parents with a struggling child, understanding your child's inner voice, creating a pause between thought and action and finding new ways to interact with the world.

"Each of us has a filter that we interpret the world through," said Anxiety Center Clinical Director Jason Bohn. "Best case scenario, your filter makes you feel better about yourself. The filter in young people who are struggling distorts their view of the world and themselves and the goal of these courses was to create a more accurate filter in any child and reverse the cycle in youth who are struggling."

A focus on the whole student better prepares students for life after high school. After receiving data from students, it was revealed that 52 percent of elementary students and 68 percent

of middle and high school students dealt with varying levels of anxiety.

"This program developed out of data we received from our Panorama survey showing that our students are struggling to cope with anxiety," said Olathe Public Schools Director of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Services Angie Salava. "In addition to doing things directly with our students in order to help them with this issue, we want to equip our parents with tools to help their students. Parents are eager to help; however, they may not know the best way to do so."

To further support students and their families, this school year Olathe Public Schools added student wellness advocates at each high school.

"I am pleased that the Olathe Public Schools and the Olathe community understand and support the need for mental health programming within our schools," said Salava. "By doing this parent series, by adding student wellness advocate positions, and by expanding the number of contract therapists within secondary schools, the Olathe Public Schools is modeling how mental health providers can integrate within the school system in order to create a system of mental wellness."

If your student struggles from anxiety, please reach out to your school's counselor or Olathe Public Schools Director of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Services Angie Salava, anssalava@olatheschools.org.

To access resources from the courses, email Renew Counseling Clinical Director Jason Bohn, jason@anxietycenterkc.com.

OLATHE WEST HARNESSSES THE SUN

Olathe West High School leads the way toward renewable energy sources and sustainability. Students in the Green Tech Academy prepare each day to pursue careers in the green technology field and this year, the space adjacent to their academy classrooms will have a new look.

MC Power Companies, Green Tech Academy partner, provided two new tables for students to use. These innovative tables have eight USB chargers powered by a large solar panel. "This will provide an awesome learning opportunity for our Green Tech Academy to study harnessing solar power," Olathe West Principal Jay Novacek said. "A big special thanks goes to our partner MC Power Companies for making the tables a reality."



U.S. CENSUS COMING UP IN 2020

As required by the U.S. Constitution, every 10 years the U.S. Census Bureau counts each resident in the United States, regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The census is strictly confidential and it is illegal for information collected to be shared with any other agency or government employee. Approximately \$800 billion in federal funding is distributed to communities across the nation each year based on the population totals collected by the census. The Olathe School District benefits from numerous funds that are dependent upon census data.

In 2020, for the first time, the census will be available to take completely online in addition to the traditional methods of phone, mail and home visits. The next U.S. Census launches April 1, 2020. Respond to the 2020 Census to shape the future. Responding to the census helps communities get the funding they need and helps businesses make data-driven decisions that grow the economy. Watch for more information in the coming months about the U.S. Census.

To learn more about Census efforts in Johnson County, visit www.countmeinjoco.org.



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