



OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

# School News

Summer 2022



#OPSMYFuture Series  
Highlights Students  
Prepared for Their Future

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

As the 2021-22 school year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the #OPSMomentsThatMatter that helped create a memorable school year and an unforgettable first year as your superintendent. At the beginning of the year, I challenged our staff, students and families to share the moments that made an impact on their schools and community. I have loved seeing those moments shared on social media and witnessing them firsthand in my visits to buildings throughout this year.

Earlier this spring, our entire community celebrated a milestone moment with the passage of the largest bond referendum in our school district's history. I want to thank all of our patrons who voted in the election and showed their support for the Olathe Public Schools. With this \$298.3 million bond, we will be able to continue providing high quality learning environments for our students for years to come. Read more about the bond on page 4.

In addition to major milestone celebrations, we know that everyday moments can have the biggest impact. In this issue, you can read about the literacy work happening from the moment students step foot in Olathe Public Schools to help prepare them for their futures (page 8). In addition, see how our students are jumpstarting their future in the #OPSMMyFuture series, featured on page 6. We are proud to provide students a variety of opportunities that open doors to new possibilities. On page 9, I invite you to learn about a new grant for students at Pioneer Trail Middle School that will provide a classroom set of bicycles to promote lifelong fitness and overall mental wellness.

Finally, I want to thank our entire Olathe community for the support they have shown all year, but especially following the event at Olathe East this spring. In my 21 years as an educator, I have never experienced a community wrap its arms around one another in the way that we saw with the support for our Olathe family (read more on page 5). This place holds a special place in my heart and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for our #OneOlatheFamily.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Brent Yeager,**  
*Superintendent*

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### Olathe Public Schools

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# Voters Approve 2022 Bond

*Thank you, Olathe!*

Olathe Public Schools voters endorsed the 2022 Bond election by nearly 70 percent. The \$298.3 million no tax-rate increase bond will positively impact all Olathe students and their future for years to come.

“I am grateful for our Olathe Public Schools community for the opportunity to positively impact our students and their future,” said Superintendent Brent Yeager. “We have a long-standing history of support within our community and success with previous bond elections, and we thank you for continuing to invest in high quality schools and education right here in Olathe through this bond.”

Projects within the 2022 Bond will touch every school and building in Olathe Public Schools and will help the district

address its needs in the areas of Growth and Reinvestment, Technology and Innovation, Student Experience and Safety.

Top items on the list include a new building for Santa Fe Trail Middle School, ADA-compliant playgrounds, new technology to replace end-of-life devices, and upgrades to districtwide safety systems, among several other projects. After the Board of Education approves the first bond sale associated with the voter-approved referendum, projects will be designed, bid and constructed throughout the five-year schedule of the overall bond issue.

To learn more about the projects included in the 2022 Bond, visit [www.olatheschools.org/Bond2022](http://www.olatheschools.org/Bond2022).



# Blue and Orange Day Unites Olathe Community

The Olathe Public Schools held a “Blue and Orange Day” to unite the Olathe community in support of Olathe East High School, following a shooting incident there March 4.

Students, staff, and families from the 36 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 5 high schools, and all district buildings wore the Olathe East colors to represent Hawk Nation. Support came from every corner of the Kansas City metro area, across the state of Kansas, and throughout the nation. Whether it was a neighboring school district, professional sports teams, news anchors, medical professionals, and more, the support of the Olathe East family was on full display for “Blue and Orange Day.”

“The tremendous outpouring of community support cannot be summed up in words. We are so grateful for their love and support,” Olathe East High School Principal Kerry Lane said. “Our whole school community would like to thank you all for everything you’ve done for us to make us feel safe, loved, and valued.”



The Olathe East spirit was felt statewide. The KC Current, local professional women’s soccer team, were decked out in Hawk gear. Kansas Association for School Boards staff made sure to wear their blue and orange during their staff meeting. AE Dairy dropped off milk for the district, beginning their shift at midnight while donning orange in front of Olathe East. Several local businesses, healthcare offices, and supporters joined in. To see all the stories, search the hashtag #OneOlatheFamily on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Dr. Brent Yeager, superintendent, was proud of the community for surrounding Olathe East High School by crafting banners and cards, holding spirit days, making donations, and sending their well wishes.

“While we cannot take away the hurt and fear from the event, I know that as a community we can wrap our arms around one another and heal together,” Yeager said. “I am so grateful for our community and know that we can overcome anything together, stronger, as one Olathe family.”



OATC ORCA members pose next to the remote-controlled cars they built.

# #OPSMYFuture Series Highlights Students Prepared for Their Future

#OPSMYFuture is a series featuring Olathe middle and high school students who are using what they have learned in our schools to make a positive impact on their future.

Our mission is to prepare every student for their future through our focus on the Portrait of a Graduate. The Portrait of a Graduate encapsulates what we want our students to know and be able to do before they leave our school district including Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Initiative and Self Direction, Resilience and Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Communication, and Social and Cross-Cultural Skills.

## Olathe Race Car Association Makes Career Connections

Senior Zander Taylor has wanted to work on cars ever since he was a young boy, helping his grandfather. Now, he is graduating from Olathe Advanced Technical Center in the Automotive Technology program. In his free time, he is employed at Olathe Toyota as a tech and works on his own car. But on Tuesday afternoons, he is racing the radio-controlled (RC) cars that he and other club members have built.

The Olathe Race Car Association

(ORCA) is a student-run RC car racing club that OATC students formed this year with the hopes of expanding districtwide. Students build their own car, find business sponsors, and continue to maintain their cars in between races. Taylor has found this club to be a great addition to what he is learning in class.

“One thing that I think we all learned was how to go talk to businesses about sponsoring our cars,” Taylor said. “This not only helps us with our cars now, but can help us get our name out to businesses that we may be interested in working for.”

Taylor’s car is sponsored by Olathe Toyota, where he hopes to continue working past high school. Taylor believes his enrollment in the Automotive Tech program at OATC helped him get to where he is today and is preparing him for his future when he applies for Toyota’s Master Tech program.

“I love being in the Automotive Tech program. When it’s something you enjoy doing like all of us do, we all want to be here and to learn,” Taylor said. “It’s helped develop my passion for cars and I know I am going to use everything I’m learning after I graduate.”

Racing RC cars to some may seem like a fun club, but it is so much more. Students are able to learn how to build cars with less expense, as well as develop their art, geometry, physics, reading, entrepreneurship, self-regulation, and sportsmanship skills. Automotive Tech students, like Taylor, leave high school with the knowledge and experience to enter the workforce immediately if they want to, or to never have to take their car into the shop again.

## Olathe Northwest Students’ Drawings Brought 3D by Peers

When Olathe Northwest High School students drew their very own wild things after reading Maurice Sendak’s “Where the Wild Things Are,” they did not know their peers would be making them into their very own stuffed animals.

Lisa Hirsch, Olathe Northwest art teacher, has always wanted to do a project like this.

“After all of the separation we have experienced during the pandemic I really wanted to find a way to help bring our students together. This idea had always lingered in my mind,” Hirsch said. “Once I showed the sculpture students the fabric and the drawings — there was no stopping them.”

The sculpture students learned about Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, the creators of the shuttlecock sculptures at Nelson-Atkins Museum, and the idea of designing soft sculptures. When their soft sculptures were complete, they revealed them to their peers who had drawn them.

ONWHS teacher Domonique Fluis watched as her students lit up at the sight of their creations in 3D.

“This project meant so much to my students, our staff, and parents, because feeling included is important for all students,” Fluis said.

Although the students learning how to sew and draw are important — the creativity, communication, and social skills within the project are exactly what OPS is aiming for in our Portrait of a Graduate, the focus of our strategic plan.

### **Olathe East Student’s Passion Leads to Founding Non-Profit**

Komalpreet Kaur, Olathe East High School senior, found her passion at Olathe Public Schools. From her participation in the Civic Leadership Academy that has led to several opportunities at the City of Olathe and starting her own non-profit, Kaur has found a direction she wants for her #OPSMYFuture.

Kaur moved to Olathe in eighth grade, previously living in New York City.

“There are so many more opportunities here that I didn’t have access to in New York. There is something for literally everyone and you don’t have to be the top of your class or have a ton of money to succeed,” Kaur said. “The class options, extracurriculars, and how much people are always willing to listen and help is what makes this district top tier. It is little things like that that students and parents could take for granted, but I don’t.”

When her family landed in Olathe, they wanted to find a community. Her parents emigrated from Punjab, India, giving up everything to build a life here in the states for their children. In 2019, after working with the city, Kaur received a proclamation establishing April as Sikh Awareness and Appreciation month with the goal of uniting local Sikhs. This

has inspired other cities like Lenexa, Shawnee, and Kansas City, Kansas to establish a chapter with the Sikhs of America. Her parents’ immigration story led her to co-found the organization Eye of an Immigrant with her friend Jasneet Kaur.

“Eye of an Immigrant began as a storytelling campaign to break the stigma that immigration can have,” Kaur said. “Now we have three goals – to act as a resource hub, continue telling the stories of immigrants to combat hate, and help provide resources for legal applications and filings that immigrants need. We aim to help immigrant families overcome cultural barriers to achieve their American dream.”

Eye of an Immigrant has been featured on Café Corazon, local PBS station, numerous podcasts, and Kaur has been making the rounds at Rotary clubs to bring awareness.

Kaur is a part of the Civic Leadership Academy where she studies Public Administration. During the second half of her day, Kaur interns at the City of Olathe City Manager’s office. She facilitates Olathe Teen Council, helps with city events and various responsibilities, and researches about surrounding cities to see potential points of collaboration. She is passionate about serving as the voice of the Olathe Public Schools students to the City Council.

“I love serving as a voice of the youth of Olathe to the council, working on service and policy projects with other students, and learning more in

my internship about the real world of public administration,” Kaur said. “I was able to learn early on what I am passionate about and how I can turn that passion into a reality. I now know what I want for my future before I graduate because of my time in the Civic Leadership Academy.”

Kaur plans on majoring in Global Studies or Political Science with a double minor in Business and Spanish. She plans to go to law school after college and get a master’s degree in Public Administration in a joint MPA and JD program. She will continue to run her organization and is now undergoing the process to receive 501(c)(3) certification from the IRS to become a tax-exempt entity.



Olathe East senior Komal Kaur interns at the City of Olathe as part of the Civic Leadership Academy.



Olathe Northwest students collaborated to make stuffed animal creations.

# How We Support Lifelong Reading



The Olathe Public Schools’ strategic plan challenges the community to embrace bold goals for every child in Olathe. It is driven by our deep belief in our students’ abilities and by their own aspirations for their future. Among topics like social-emotional learning, mental health, equity, and market value assets, there is a clear goal to have all third grade students reading on grade level.

“Research and best practice show us that if students have a strong foundation of phonics, they can master higher-level reading skills easier,” English language arts coordinator Kim Dahl said.

Reading is the foundation on which the success of students is built. The district has implemented a focus on structured literacy, which is an explicit and systematic approach to teaching reading from kindergarten through fifth grade. With any instructional approach, early intervention is key to ensuring all students are successful.

Using our district’s multi-tiered system of supports, educators use universal screeners like Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Amira to help identify students who need extra support. After that, the district takes it one step further by conducting a diagnostic screener that identifies an area of need and better informs educators in their decision-making process regarding which intervention is best for that specific child.

“We want our kids to be lifelong readers. We know that reading is used in all subject areas, so we want them to be able to master it,” English language arts coordinator Maggie Richardson said. “This comprehensive approach helps our students early on and can change the trajectory of their life.”

One part of the district’s comprehensive approach to literacy includes using an elementary grade-level resource from 95% Group. The 95% Group program is an evidence-based

resource that teachers use to teach phonics to their students: phonological awareness, multi-syllable words, and morphology. This program allows access to word understanding and decoding for all students.

“With this focus on reading, we are finding over and over again that literacy opens the doors to all content areas. It is offering instruction that all our students need to be successful,” Dahl said. “Making sure our students are fluent readers levels the playing field for all.”

A key element of structured literacy is making sure that educators feel well equipped to teach students how to read. All certified teaching staff have participated in hours of training related to the science of reading.

“We want our kids to accomplish their hopes and dreams. The love of reading and love of learning will help them get there. These research-based tools and programs catch the students who may be on a different path and move them to a zone where they can be more successful,” Richardson said.







# Pioneer Trail Middle School Selected as Grant Recipient for 30 Brand New Bikes

Students at Pioneer Trail Middle School are rolling in style thanks to a Riding for Focus grant from Outride, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of youth through cycling.

Pioneer Trail is one of 53 recipients of this year's school-based cycling program and the only school in the Kansas City metro area selected to receive the grant, which provides funding for 30 brand new bikes, helmets and curriculum for bike riding.

Adaptive Physical Education teacher Brandon Simpson helped write the grant to give students who may not have access or the ability to ride to learn while they are at school.

"I am so excited that more kids will be on bikes. Research shows that the social, emotional, physical and mental well-being of students going through this curriculum increases drastically," Simpson said.

Riding for Focus (R4F) is Outride's middle school-based PE program that promotes cycling as an outlet for students. Pioneer Trail joins nearly 200 schools who have received the Riding for Focus grant since 2012.

"We are so excited to be receiving this grant and what it will mean for our students here at Pioneer Trail," said Dr. Julie Veatch, principal. "This program will provide an opportunity to instill confidence in our students while learning

a new skill and create a platform to build a sense of community among our new cyclists."

During a pep assembly, students heard the news that their school would be receiving bikes from Specialized, a bicycling company that makes bikes for riders, by riders. Physical Education teacher Rey Vidaurri hopes to spark lifelong habits.

"This program really focuses on getting kids of all backgrounds on bikes," Vidaurri said. "One day these kids will grow up to be adults and they can always ride their bike. It will hopefully establish lifelong habits they can lean on later in life."

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Comcast Expands Digital Equity Efforts

Comcast has expanded its Internet Essentials program, which since 2011 has helped connect more than 20,000 people throughout the Olathe and Kansas City areas to the Internet.

Internet Essentials Plus is a new tier of Comcast service, offers twice the download speed — up to 100 Mbps — of the traditional Internet Essentials service. Internet Essentials Plus is available for \$29.95/month to new customers who qualify.

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