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A Message From SUPERINTENDENT DR. BRENT YEAGER

Olathe Public Schools Community,

What a year! At the beginning of the 2023-24 school year, I shared with you all that our three focuses were academic achievement, inclusion and community engagement. Throughout the year, we focused on excellence in action — ensuring our students were being prepared academically for *their* individual future. As a district, we ramped up our inclusion efforts to ensure all members of Olathe Public Schools feel like they belong right here in Olathe. Finally, we as a community engaged in a process to face the challenges and opportunities of new graduation requirements, new open enrollment policies and the need to change our school start and end times to navigate the national and local transportation staffing issues. As we rapidly approach the end of the year, we can look back and say that we as a district truly moved #OPSForwardTogether.

In this issue of School News, you will read about several things to celebrate in Olathe Public Schools. Canyon Creek Elementary second-grade teacher Sara Hoffman was named an Emporia State University Master Teacher. This is such a high honor! Millbrooke Elementary is celebrating 10 incredible years. It seems like just yesterday we opened this building and we know it has continued to serve its community well all these years. On page 5, you will read about Olathe East High School's recent work with their interpersonal skills students — including a polar plunge and bocce tournament. In this issue, you will find a fun spotlight on students who are entering their next chapter whether that is elementary school, middle school, high school or the postsecondary world. Finally, there is information about our Spelling Bee winner as well as a 2022 Bond projects update (thanks to community members like you) and a transportation update.

I want to end with a big THANK YOU to our students and staff members for yet another year of putting excellence into action. Thank you to our families and community members for their support and cooperation throughout this year. Finally, we as a district staff want to send our best wishes and congratulations to the Class of 2024! Our job is to prepare you for your future and your future is awaiting you right beyond our walls. We are so excited to see what you do next!

Your very proud superintendent,

Dr. Brent Yeager Superintendent

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Olathe Public Schools

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Fourth Quarter Academics: Preparing Students for *Their* Future

The district's vision is to prepare students for their future. Although this vision does include postsecondary success, it also includes preparing our students for their next school year, their next curriculum unit and even their next day. We asked a preschooler, fifth grader, eighth grader and senior about how their time at their school prepared them for the next year. Meet these four future-ready students.



"I learned about everything at school. I learned about race cars, I learned about the alphabet, I looked at books and I loved to play outside. I think Kindergarten is going to be like school here and very fun because we get to play outside and read books."

— Crew Daniels, Harmony Early Childhood Center student, loves to play outside at recess and loves his teacher Ms. Ashley Franchett because she is "nice and funny." When he grows up, he wants to be a dentist just like his dad. Next year, he will attend Kindergarten at Woodland Elementary School and he is excited to learn how to read.



"In elementary school, I was able to make a lot of new amazing friendships and be a part of the Student Leadership Team. I was able to lead assemblies, make my writing stronger, get better at math, and be a leader at school. I know middle school will be fun and exciting because I will be one of the first sixth graders at Santa Fe Trail, be able to make even more new friends and continue to lead by example."

— Kinley Wenner is a fifth grader at Mahaffie Elementary School. Next year, she is excited to participate in swimming in P.E. and extracurriculars like volleyball and theater at Santa Fe Trail Middle School. She is a little nervous about having multiple classes, but she knows that the skills she learned in elementary school like "being organized, paying attention and keeping the first things first" will help her be successful.



"I love cars. That's kind of my thing. I'm looking forward to getting more opportunities in the field at the high school level. What I really want to do when I'm older is be a professional athlete. I love the sports I'm involved in at Indian Trail, and now I feel like I'm ready to get more opportunities on the field at the high school level."

— Santiago Mojica is in eighth grade at Indian Trail Middle School, where he is a proud three-sport student-athlete. Born and raised in Olathe, Santiago will be attending Olathe South High School next year. He has a deep passion for cars, and on the weekends, he helps his father at his wheel repair shop. He plans to get involved in the Olathe Advanced Technical Center and looks to find a career in the automotive industry or as a professional athlete.



"When I got to Olathe North, I knew I wanted to do something in the medical field or field of athletic training. Because once I got hands-on experience, I knew exactly what I wanted to do in the future. I was able to go into a career field, see how it works, and be able to decide if I want to do this. Being able to do that now instead of having to figure it out in college is a big advantage. The things I learned at Olathe North are going to help me so much once I get to college."

— Bailey Dillon, a senior at Olathe North High School, will be attending Missouri Southern State University to play softball. She has always had a passion for sports, but it was through the Sports Medicine and Exercise Science Academy at Olathe North that she found her future career. Dillon volunteers as a student athletic trainer at Olathe North sporting events, and at Missouri Southern State, she will be able to get the same experience at the college level while also earning a degree in athletic training.







Olathe East Embraces Spirit of Inclusion

This year, Olathe East High School participated in the "Spread the Word" campaign in a very special way. The campaign focuses not just on eliminating the "R" word but creating an environment of inclusion for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Students kicked off the Spread the Word campaign by welcoming Special Olympics Kansas for a schoolwide polar plunge to "Leap in For Leap Year!" Nearly 100 plungers registered and were split into teams, with each team raising money for the cause. Olathe East raised over \$7,500 for this event, surpassing their goal.

"Your contributions will change lives," Olathe East teacher Amy Hill said to students at the plunge. "You have worked hard at promoting this opportunity and promoting the importance of Special Olympics. You have created teams, inspired your friends and teachers, and you got a lot of donations!"

Olathe East continued their events by hosting a Unified Special Olympics Bocce Tournament, where they welcomed 15 schools, and each team competed in two games with medals being awarded throughout the day.

At the opening ceremony, Olathe East senior Merik Dismang received the Kansas State High School Activities Association Spirit of Sport Award. Dismang was selected "for his incredible courage and determination to thrive through adversity." Dismang is a four-sport Special Olympics Unified Sports athlete who recently battled cancer. Dismang later won the 2024 National High School Spirit of Sport Award. He is the first Unified student athlete in the nation to win the award. Olathe East Athletic Director Dr. Mike Wolgast noted that Merik "brightens the room when he walks in, he inspires those he encounters, and makes Olathe East a better place."

During Spread the Word Week, interpersonal skills (IPS) students and peer mentors created lessons for the freshmen advisory classrooms. The lessons brought awareness to Spread

the Word Week and allowed students to see what inclusion opportunities are available. Students dove into why this campaign is important and ways students can include others. Senior Cameron McCarthy ensured the freshmen understood because they are the future of the school.

"We really focused on the freshmen because we feel like we can make the most impact there," McCarthy said. "They're the ones who will be following inclusion practices for the next four years, so we tell them that this is how we're going to act, and this is how we're inclusive. We've seen it help the growth of inclusion at Olathe East a lot."

During lunch that week, over 700 students made a pledge for inclusion and they had the opportunity to submit the ways they plan to be inclusive. The idea was for students to make their pledge truly meaningful and more than just signing their name on paper.

"It was amazing to see that many students make their pledge," senior Katelyn Pedigo said. "Students got to come see our classroom and interact with us and it was great. It was also really cool to see the number of teachers in our school getting involved."

Olathe East's efforts around inclusivity happen all year long. The school is a Unified Champion school for its accomplishments implementing inclusive sports, inclusive youth leadership opportunities and whole school engagement. They have built a school climate where all students feel welcome and IPS students are included in, and feel a part of, all activities, opportunities and functions.

"Being selected as a Unified Champion School is an incredible honor that we take great pride in," Olathe East Principal Kerry Lane said. "What sets us apart is the absolute spirit of inclusion that our school embraces. Our student body works together and strives to make sure all students have a voice and can truly make a difference when they walk through our doors."



Canyon Creek Elementary Educator Named Kansas Master Teacher

This spring, Canyon Creek Elementary School second grade teacher Sara Hoffman learned that she was named a 2024 Kansas Master Teacher.

Emporia State University established the prestigious Kansas Master Teacher awards in 1954. The awards are presented annually to selected teachers who demonstrate the attributes of exemplary professional educators. The recipients were selected by a committee including representatives from the Kansas Association of Principals, Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas State Board of Education, Kansas Parent Teacher Organization, Kansas National Education Association, United School Administrators, ESU's Kappa Delta Pi student organization and representatives of the 2023 Kansas Master Teacher class.

Hoffman was surprised by a phone call in her classroom where Interim Dean of ESU Teacher's College Dr. Sara Schwerdtfeger told her the good news. Her colleagues, principal Christy James and district administrators were there to celebrate the announcement.

"We are so proud of Sara Hoffman for being named an ESU Master Teacher," Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager said. "She will represent our district well at the highest level. Congratulations to Sara! Thank you for all you do for our students, staff and families at Canyon Creek Elementary School."

This is her fifth year teaching in Olathe Public Schools out of 15 years overall. Hoffman is known for her project-based learning, where she teaches her curriculum through larger projects that connect her students to their community and provides "authentic learning experiences." For example, this past year her second graders learned to understand how the past impacts their life today by partnering with a local assisted living community for students to visit with and interview residents first-hand.

"I want my students to love coming to class every day," Hoffman said. "I set the groundwork on the first day and work to build a sense of belonging throughout the year. The projectbased learning method brings collaboration to the classroom and builds bonds. I have witnessed students work to their potential because I provided the time for them to connect with myself and their peers. By continuing these practices, I can bring out the best in every student who walks through my classroom door."

James is proud, but not surprised, that Hoffman received this award.

"When considering the ideal educator for an elementary school, the combination of traits like engaging, energetic, compassionate, driven, loving, patient, and witty come to mind," James said. "A successful educator can meet the diverse needs of all learners. Sara Hoffman is an educator who possesses all of these characteristics and abilities. It is a blessing for students at Canyon Creek Elementary School to be educated by her."

Former student Djenabou Diallo wrote a nomination letter on behalf of her "helpful, collaborative, dedicated" teacher.

"My favorite project in fourth grade was our debate unit, which was a part of our project-based learning. The debate was probably everyone's favorite, and we still talk about it. Mrs. Hoffman split us into groups and taught us the expectations and tactics of debating. Our topic was hydraulic fracking. With the debate, I have discovered that I enjoy debating and would love to become a lawyer."

Hoffman is excited to represent Canyon Creek Elementary and Olathe Public Schools at the highest level by being selected as one of seven master teachers this year.

"This is truly an amazing honor," Hoffman said. "I am so incredibly grateful for the support that I have in this building, on my team, with my administration and in our Canyon Creek community as a whole. This feels like an award that represents all of us as a group, not just me."

Through the support of the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Hoffman was presented with a check for \$1,000. The 2024 Master Teachers were honored at the Kansas state capitol in March and on Master Teacher Day at ESU in April.







Millbrooke Celebrates 10 Years

This year, Millbrooke Elementary School is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. Millbrooke Principal Stephanie Dancso, who is in her 39th year in the district, opened the school. She will be retiring in May but has left behind a legacy at Millbrooke that she hopes future generations will carry on.

"I had big dreams for the school we would become," Dancso said. "Our goal as a staff was to become the No. 1 school in Kansas. I don't know that we are No. 1, but we definitely aren't too far down the list."

During the 2014-2015 school year, Dancso began the process of implementing Stephen Covey's leadership model of the "seven habits of highly effective people," by studying his book, "The Leader in Me." After completing training, Millbrooke was named a Leader in Me Lighthouse School by Franklin Covey Co. and made the Franklin Covey list of Academic

Honor Roll schools. To be recognized for this honor, schools must meet the rigorous requirements to achieve and maintain Lighthouse School Certification and show exemplary academic growth or proficiency as measured by state accountability standards.

"Leader in Me is a big part of our legacy here. I have believed in it from the beginning," Dancso said. "I took a sixweek course on Saturdays twice, and I ended up becoming a trainer and working

many Saturdays to support other people who were getting their certification. It made an incredible impact on the district as a whole."

Even though she will miss Millbrooke, Dancso is confident she is leaving the school in good hands because of the principles in place and the amazing staff. When she was hired to run Millbrooke, she interviewed over 100 teachers and handpicked the staff herself.

"I put a lot of effort into not only choosing the right teachers, but making the right teams," Dancso said. "I feel so positive about the people here and who they are as a staff. I always tell them that I'm proud of them and I truly love this staff."

Dancso has built a very positive and welcoming environment for everyone at Millbrooke. Each adult in the building is paired with 10 kids, two from each grade level, in what they call a "den." The dens meet monthly and discuss ways they can better their school and community. According to Alicia Barnes, the school's counselor, Millbrooke staff members preach family, and the dens are a way to help build that family camaraderie.

"I am so lucky and thankful to be here at Millbrooke because of how welcoming everyone is," Barnes said. "We are one big happy family here and I feel like having that sense is unique."

Millbrooke takes great pride in their community service projects. Each month, every grade level chooses a service project such as making blankets for nursing homes or running a hat and glove drive in the winter. Annually, they host "Max Day." Named for their school mascot, dens are assigned to a specific service project they complete in one day. In the past, students have washed fire trucks, made cookies for the local sheriff's department and cleaned up parks in the neighborhood.

"It's really inspirational to see all the kids out there helping the community they live in," Dancso said. "Max Day is the best attended event for our parents because they love engaging in their community and with their kids."

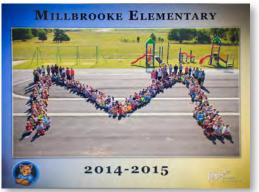
At Millbrooke, they have a Student Lighthouse Team, which is their student leadership team consisting of 12 students. They also have student greeters, a set-up crew and students who help with car riders. Fourth grader Elliot

Owen is in his second year at Millbrooke, but already feels like he has made himself at home.

"I only came here last year, so it was a big deal for me to be a part of this leadership team," Elliot said. "Coming to school here every day, I had to learn how to make friends. The people at the school are amazing. With the service projects, I just like helping the school."

Principal Dancso is proud of the last decade and is confident the school will continue to strive to be the number one school in Kansas.

"It was really exciting and maybe a tad overwhelming when I was chosen to open the school," Dancso said. "Now that I'm looking back 10 years later, I can say it's been a great career and the future is bright for the Millbrooke mountain lions."



Be Informed. Get Involved.

Ingram's Magazine Names Olathe Public Schools Third Best Public School District in KC Metro

Olathe Public Schools was recently named the third best public school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area according to Ingram's magazine!

Ingram's has been Kansas City's premier business publication for 50 years. Their rankings were compiled in Ingram's annual Power Book of Leads and Lists. The lists are derived from specific metrics including annual revenues, enrollments and employment levels.

We want to thank our students, staff, families and community for making Olathe Public Schools an amazing place to learn, work and grow.

Mission Trail Eighth Grader Wins Olathe Spelling Bee

Mission Trail Middle School eighth grader Emory Jobe won the Olathe Spelling Bee and will represent the district at the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The Olathe Public Schools and the Olathe Public Schools Foundation sponsor the Olathe Spelling Bee.

More than 45 students competed in the bee, with representatives from all Olathe Public Schools elementary and middle schools. The winning word was "incinerate."

Jobe will compete in the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in the Washington, D.C. area May 26-31.

Santa Fe Trail Building Update

The countdown to the grand opening of the new Santa Fe Trail Middle School is officially on! Work continues on the new building with drywall, painting, ceiling grid, flooring, auditorium seating installation, tiling, kitchen equipment installation and exterior west drive installation. Significant progress has been made, and the building remains on track for completion in the spring.

To our current and past Santa Fe Trail community — we would love to see any photos or memories you have from your time at Santa Fe Trail as we honor the history of our current Santa Fe Trail building and prepare to celebrate the opening of the new. If you have any photos or pieces of memorabilia from your time there and would like to share, you can email them to communications@olatheschools.org.

Update for Transportation

Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the district will reinstate payride services for students at the secondary level who live between 1.5-2.49 miles from their home school and will reinstate



Emory Jobe of Mission Trail Middle School, winner of the Olathe Spelling Bee



Santa Fe Trail Middle School, construction in progress

most transportation variances. Recently the district modified the 2023-24 intervention for students attending Olathe Advanced Technical Center, SOAR or a 21st Century Academy outside their home boundary, once again offering free transportation to those who reside over 2.5 miles away from their assigned school. The district plans to continue offering this accessibility as a part of our commitment to equal access to these innovative programs. The district's ability to reinstate secondary payride services is a direct result of the new start and end times for 2024-25 and we are proud to once again offer this service to families. All transportation updates will be available on our district website and bus registration opens in May.

With the change in school start and end times, families have had questions regarding the impact on the elementary school level. Elementary school doors will open at 8:35 a.m. Johnson County Parks and Recreation Department (JCPRD), the district's before and after school care provider, will still open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 6:00 p.m. JCPRD announced they will be increasing program sizes throughout the district to help more families with childcare needs. We encourage parents to begin planning now for the later elementary start time that will begin in August 2024.



Anyone who wants to make a difference in the lives of children should consider a rewarding career with Olathe Public Schools.

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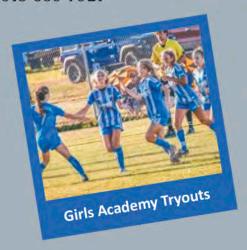
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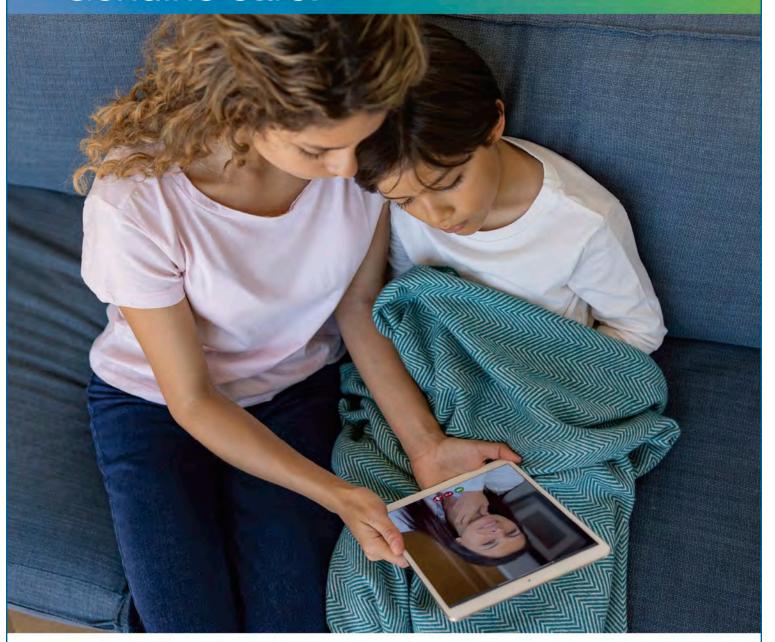
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