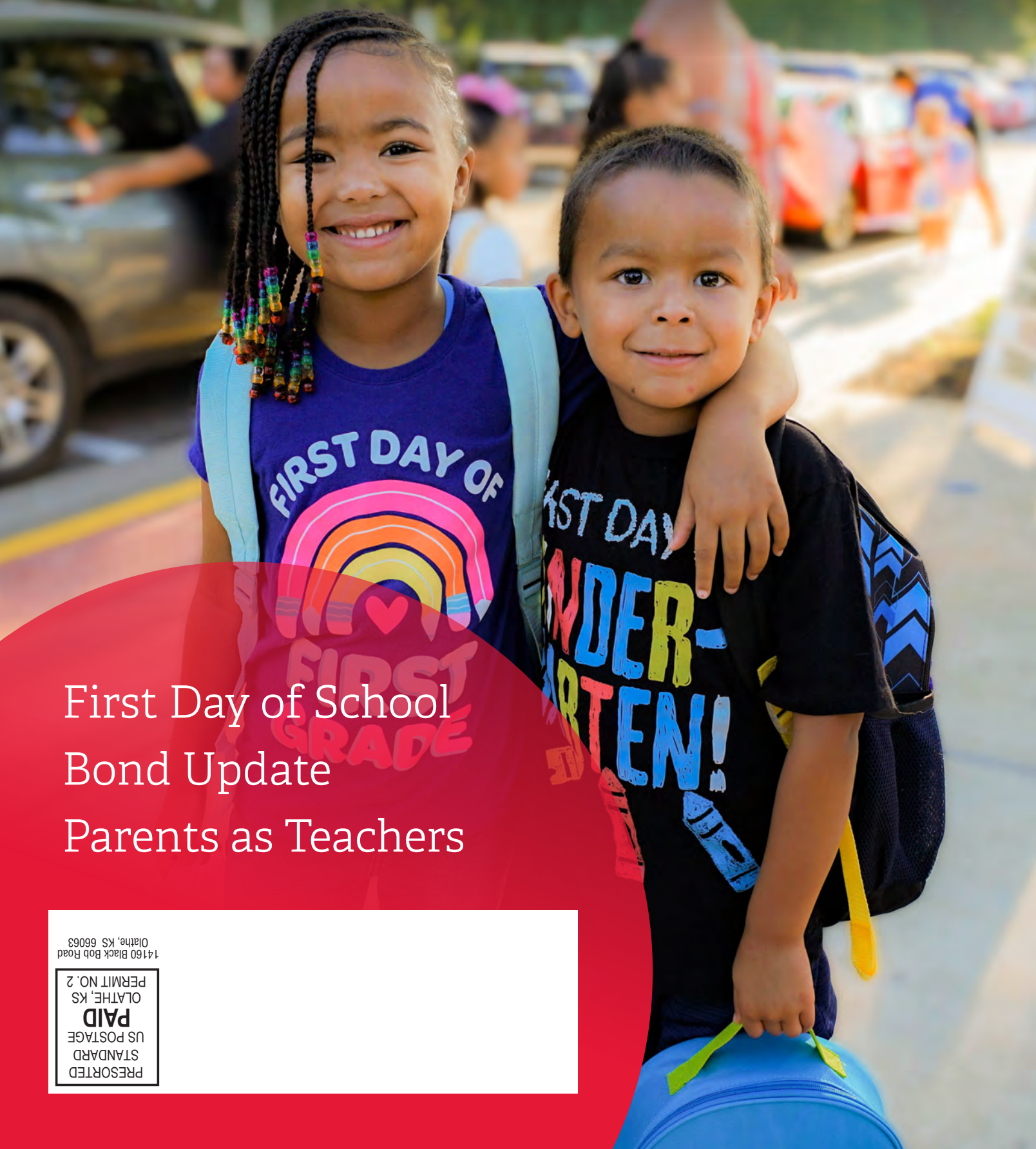




OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

School News

Fall 2022



First Day of School
Bond Update
Parents as Teachers

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

The 2022-2023 school year is well underway. As your proud superintendent, it has been so exciting to have our students back in our halls, classrooms, gymnasiums, auditoriums and on the field. I am proud of the work our staff is doing every single day to help prepare our students for their future and I want you to see it firsthand. This year, one of our main focuses is community engagement. We want our families and community members to find opportunities to be present for our students and staff, whether that is by attending a school event or volunteering in a classroom. When we all support our students and staff, we thrive.

Inside this issue, you will get a peek into Parents as Teachers and Impact Olathe – two programs that facilitate growth in our youngest students and our students in need. Look for a bond progress update on page 10 as well as one of our new Safety Services initiatives for the 2022-2023 school year. Finally, on pages 8-9, take a look at the collage of photos from the first day of school back in August.

So far this year, I have been all across our district and I am blown away by the positive energy and commitment I have seen. Our educators have started the school year focused on our students and their academic achievement, as well as the wellbeing and growth of all students. The collective impact of their efforts is easy to see, and I am very excited to watch our students grow this year.

Thank you for your continued support of the Olathe Public Schools. Whether that is being present in a school or following along from a distance on our social media platforms – I am grateful that you are a part of our community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brent Yeager
Superintendent

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In Case You Missed It - Northwest Grad has Eye for Design

Olathe Northwest High School 2022 graduate Janine Fuhrman first discovered her passion for art in the hallways of Woodland Elementary School and Santa Fe Trail Middle School. She went on to be a part of the e-Communication Academy (or “family” in Fuhrman’s words), specializing in Graphic Design.

However, Fuhrman found out she could do what she loved for a living when Graphic Design facilitator Jennifer Zimmerli encouraged her to intern with the Olathe Public Schools Graphics Communications department under the leadership of manager Erica Derrington.

“I had no idea what I wanted to do after high school and I didn’t think I wanted to do more school but doing the graphic design classes and internship completely changed my mind,” Fuhrman said.

Fuhrman worked closely with graphic designers Curt Fehr and Melissa Beaudoin and impressed them with an eye for design and market value skills.

“Janine has been such a delight to work with this semester. She’s really become part of our design team and has experienced great growth in her office and design skills,” Derrington said. “We’ve given her opportunities to work directly with customers on projects and watch the print process to complete their requests. She is insightful, observant and will be missed. We wish her the best of luck!”

Fuhrman loved her mornings in the Graphics department, where learning came to life. Her favorite projects included elementary musical programs, yard signs, district program planning guides, district calendar designs, and banners that hung in elementary school hallways welcoming new kindergartners.

“In class and my internship, I got so much more hands-on learning that actually affects real-life clients,” Fuhrman said. “I was working directly with clients on their vision and on their deadline. It must be perfect and to their liking. I loved the challenge of that, and it was the first time I looked up and realized I could really do this.”



In May, her hard work paid off when she was named a CTE Scholar, awarding her a full-ride scholarship to Johnson County Community College for two years, which covers tuition and books. Fuhrman was encouraged by Zimmerli to apply.

“Ms. Zimmerli has impacted my life so much. You can talk to her like she’s a mom and she’ll help you and encourage you not to give up,” Fuhrman said. “Erica was looking out for me too. She also told me about a \$1,000 scholarship at the Olathe Optimist’s Club and I ended up winning that too. I’ll be able to attend junior college for free because of these two women who believed in me.”

Since she could pick up a crayon, Fuhrman has loved the opportunity to be creative. Now, because of her talent and support from Olathe Public Schools staff members, Fuhrman is more confident in her #OPSMYFuture.

For more stories about the awesome things OPS students and staff do every day, follow our social media platforms.





Parents as Teachers Encourages Parents to be First and Best Teacher

A group of parents and caregivers gather on the circle rug to sing interactive songs with smiling babies and giggling toddlers in their laps after an hour of play time.

Weekly playgroups are just one of many services the Olathe Public Schools Parents as Teachers program offers any family within school district boundaries with children ages birth to three years old — at no cost. PAT also provides playgroups and other services such as home-based or personal visits, center-based groups, developmental screenings and a robust referral network of resources.

“We all know that parents and caregivers are a child’s first and most important teacher,” Director of Early Childhood Development Kim Hawkins said. “Olathe PAT partners with caregivers with a focus on healthy early development. Through home visits and group connections, this program engages families and sets the stage for a lifetime of playing and learning together.”

After receiving advice to enroll from a fellow PAT parent, Emily Sapenoff signed up for home visits while she was still pregnant with her daughter.

“Our PAT educator is an expert in her craft,” Sapenoff said. “You can tell just how deeply she cares for her families, which makes all the difference in the world. We are able to ask questions and problem solve any issues like sleeping, feeding, etc. It’s nice to be able to talk through parenthood to a ‘neutral’ person on a regular basis who can give us suggestions that are so helpful in day-to-day life.”

Over 90% of a child’s brain development happens in the first five years, and the vision of PAT is to support that development so all children will learn, grow and develop to their full potential.

“Our job is to come alongside families in the first years, giving them confidence and encouragement,” said Olathe Parents as Teachers Program Coordinator Angie Mendez. “We share invaluable information about what is typical and what to expect next, which helps decrease the stress in parenting. Developmental screenings aid in ensuring everything is on track for the child and resources are offered in the event extra help is needed. Parents can reflect on their parenting and set goals for now, and in the future. These strong families build strong, connected communities.”

Last school year, Olathe Public Schools PAT served 338 families with over 420 children who had access to 75 playgroup times and social activities.

“My advice for any family is to enroll in PAT. Enroll even when you’re expecting or if it’s your fourth child,” Sapenoff said. “Even if you feel like you know it all when it comes to parenthood, it just makes such a difference for your kiddos. And the relationship you’ll form with your parent educator is one that will make such a huge difference and impact you for a lifetime.”

PAT is currently accepting applications for open spots. Apply today at www.olatheschools.org/PAT.



Olathe Public Schools Implements CrisisAlert for All Staff

All staff members in the Olathe Public Schools can now call for help with the push of a button on their badge with CrisisAlert, a safety solution by CENTEGIX, a company that creates safer spaces by innovating to empower and protect people.

“The safety of our students and staff is our top priority and we believe this will add to the variety of tools that we use on a daily basis,” Executive Director of Safety Services Brent Kiger said. “We believe that this simple tool can have a huge impact on our educators’ and our students’ physical and mental health. Regardless of what is happening and wherever they are, we can respond quickly.”

The CrisisAlert platform is an incident alerting solution that empowers teachers and staff to call for help with the push of a button on a badge they wear in addition to the ID badge they wear daily. This simple push of a button provides school and district administration, school resource officers, and other first responders with precise location information of the impacted staff member, enabling them to respond quickly in any situation. With the CrisisAlert badge, staff members can alert administration for everyday student and staff events such as medical emergencies, or in a crisis situation, staff are able to initiate campus-wide lockdowns at the touch of a button.

“We know that building trusted relationships with our students is the best way for our educators to create a safe space

for students to learn,” Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager said. “However, we also recognize that emergency situations can occur at any moment, and it is best to have resources in place to support our students and staff in times of crisis. Our goal is to give our educators peace of mind that they can call for help at anytime, anywhere on school grounds, and they will be heard.”

The badge provides 100% campus coverage without depending on Wi-Fi, cellular signal, or opening an app on a cell phone. Staff members can also utilize the badge to activate an emergency lockdown, which triggers audio and visual notifications. Strobe lights flash and beep in every room and

hallway, and instructional messages are displayed on computers connected to the network. The intercom plays a message with instructions corresponding to the alert type.

“We trust our educators have the best interests of our students in mind,” Kiger said. “If they feel they are in danger, we want them to be able to alert our building responders and go into lockdown with a click of a button.”

Training for all staff members took place before the start of school. All school staff members received their badges by the first day of school, while support buildings received their badges by early September. Thanks to the passage of the 2022 bond as well as a grant by the Kansas Department of Education, Olathe Public Schools was able to implement this program districtwide.



We trust our educators have the best interests of our students in mind.

Brent Kiger

Executive Director of Safety Services

Impact Olathe Brings Local Organizations Together for Families in Need

When students are in need, families often reach out to the school district for assistance. School staff work with partners like Impact Olathe to help alleviate the burden that may prohibit their child from being ready to learn.

Impact Olathe is a bi-weekly event during the school year where Olathe Public Schools gathers 14 consistent collaborative care partners in one location to connect referred families in need to community resources such as government social service agencies or non-profit organizations.

“Schools are typically the first point of contact for our families. Our staff’s job is to educate students, so they refer the families to us and that’s where our team and its partners come in,” Olathe Public Schools Community Liaison Heather Schoonover said. “We come alongside these families and get them to Impact Olathe in order to help parents and caregivers provide a more stable environment – whether that is access to food, secure housing, affordable healthcare options, utility assistance, etc. – where students are more likely to thrive.”

Ivonne Montanez serves as the health navigator at El Centro, a non-profit organization whose role at Impact Olathe is to help individuals navigate documents and applications for healthcare programs, financial assistance, housing, utilities, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) renewal applications or the citizenship application.

“It has been wonderful to see how many families we have reached, especially in these last two years of chaos and uncertainty,” Montanez said. “This is the place where people do not have to be afraid or embarrassed to ask a question. Each family, case or need is different. At this event, there is someone who can

guide them or just listen to them to see if we can help or refer them to someone else in the room who can.”

Due to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Olathe Public Schools provides enrollment and educational rights to families experiencing homelessness in our district. By organizing Impact Olathe, the district goes above and beyond to connect important community partners to fill the needs of our families facing residential challenges or those needing connected to safety net resources. Last school year, Impact Olathe events served 156 families with a total of 271 students. This event is not funded by the district – instead, the organizations and agencies donate their time, with over 37 hours of volunteering during the 2021-2022 school year alone.

Catholic Charities case management specialist Sarah Scott believes Impact Olathe is a team effort that is an invaluable resource for the community and for the organizations themselves. Catholic Charities provides resources such as a food pantry, clothing closet, Harvester’s mass food distribution, as well as providing rental, utility, and mortgage assistance by appointment.

“The partnerships and relationships that have developed between every agency at Impact Olathe have been the biggest blessing to be a part of,” Scott said. “We all truly love what we do. We will continue to work together toward helping the community find the best resources that we can for the family’s specific need.”

The district’s vision to prepare students for their future often comes in the form of fulfilling academic needs, but with Impact Olathe, the Olathe staff and community have come together to support our students’ most essential needs to help them thrive.



Six families were permanently housed

65

families avoided losing housing



Five families were sheltered or connected with transitional housing



infants were served

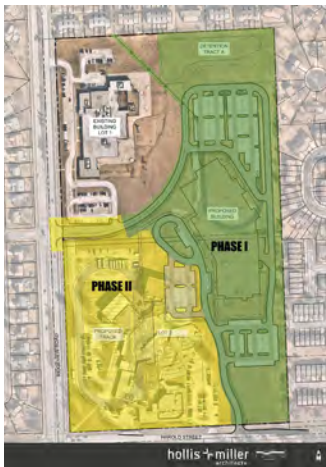
with
46

children being referred to early childcare or Parents as Teachers

* first day of school *







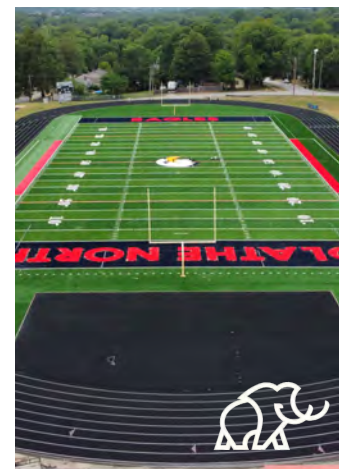
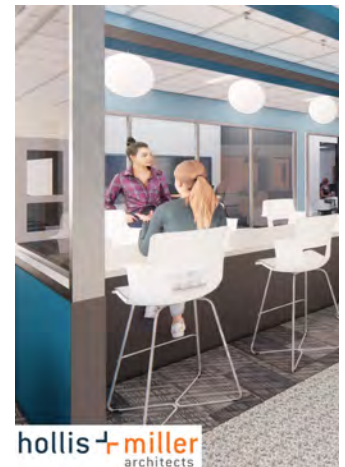
Bond 2022

Thanks to the generous support of the Olathe community, the Olathe Public Schools voters endorsed the 2022 Bond Election on March 1, 2022. Projects within the \$298.3 million no tax-rate increase bond will touch every student in the district and will help address needs in the areas of Growth and Reinvestment, Technology and Innovation, Student Experience and Safety.

In the surrounding photos, you will find renderings of the new Santa Fe Trail Middle School building as well as photos of turf replacements that have been completed at our high schools.

“This is such an exciting time for our district,” executive director of facilities and operations Travis Palangi said. “We are excited about the renderings for the new Santa Fe Trail Middle School building, which will better meet the needs of students and staff. Thank you to the patrons who helped pass this bond so that we can continue to prepare all students for their future.”

For more detailed and regular updates of the 2022 bond projects, please visit www.olatheschools.org/Bond2022. From there, community members can read about the improvements already made with major safety upgrades as well as work on both Santa Fe Trail Middle School plans and high school field turf replacement.





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