



Olathe
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School News

Fall 2024



New Santa Fe Trail Middle School Grand Opening

Inside Camp
Kindergarten

First Day of School

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

Olathe Public Schools Community,

We are all so excited to have our students back for the 2024-25 school year! This year, our theme is "#OPSMakeTodayCount," which is a powerful reminder of the impact we can have on our students' lives every single day. It is about embracing each day with intention and purpose to be present and engaged with our students. By prioritizing kindness, grace, and mutual support, we can work together as a community to ensure every student feels valued and inspired to succeed. Together, we can make this school year truly exceptional!

In this issue of School News, you will see photos of smiling faces from across our district on the first day of school. Speaking of smiling faces – in this issue, you will read a recap of both Camp Kindergarten and the Santa Fe Trail Middle School building grand opening ceremony. You will also read updates on the bond projects, rebrand process and exciting news about our latest district achievement.

Thank you for your continued support of the Olathe Public Schools and make sure to check out the list of ways to get involved on page 4!

Your very proud superintendent,

Dr. Brent Yeager
Superintendent

#OPSMAKE TODAYCOUNT

The district will use #OPSMakeTodayCount on social media to document our growth together. Follow along on social media by clicking the hashtag on Facebook, Twitter/X or Instagram, and be sure to tag #OPSMakeTodayCount in your social media posts!



Follow us for up-to-date information:



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Olathe Public Schools

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Be Informed.

Olathe Public Schools has a New Look

Over the past year, Olathe Public Schools has embarked on a journey to reimagine our district brand and visual identity to better reflect our values, goals, and the community we serve. At the June 6, 2024 Board of Education meeting, the board voted to approve the district's new brand and logo concept. The updated brand identity includes a new logo, color schemes and typography, and an enhanced vision statement to lead the district into the future.

In Olathe Public Schools, we have a common purpose – our students – and we recognize that **“Their Future is Our Future.”** This updated vision statement builds on our former statement, “Students Prepared for Their Future,” but widens the lens to place a greater emphasis on our collective responsibility as a community. It reminds us that when our students succeed, our community succeeds.

Questions? Visit www.olatheschools.org/rebrand.

Forbes Names Olathe Public Schools No. 7 Best Employer in Kansas

Olathe Public Schools was named the No. 7 “Best In-State Employer” in the state of Kansas by Forbes. Olathe Public Schools is the highest ranked K-12 school district on the list and the only school district in the top 10.

“We are so proud that Forbes once again recognizes what we already know – Olathe Public Schools is the best place to work,” Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager said. “We have the best team of staff members, and we are so thankful for our students, families and community for their support of our staff and our schools. Congratulations to the entire community for this honor!”

Olathe Public Schools’ vision is “Their Future is Our Future.” This vision is only accomplished through the commitment of the nearly 5,000 staff members and the families of more than 29,000 students.

Update on Bond Projects

With students and staff out of the buildings during the summer, crews made incredible progress on the 2022 Bond projects.

The new Operations Service Center & Career and Technical Education Center is making great progress. In the existing buildings, work was completed with the utility rough-ins, exterior wall construction, and roofing activities. For the new addition, exterior footing and foundation work is ongoing. All aging facilities projects and elementary school playgrounds were completed before the start of the school year. Work began on the necessary abatement in the old Santa Fe Trail Middle School facility. Both high school media centers and middle school auditorium renovations will begin this school year.

We’d like to thank the Olathe Public Schools community for their unwavering commitment to our schools and students. Your support makes this possible! Read monthly updates on the bond construction projects at www.olatheschools.org/bond2022.

Get Involved.



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about joining your school's
Site Council.



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in emails to families.



Inside Camp Kindergarten

Starting kindergarten is an exciting yet daunting milestone for children as they enter a world filled with new friends, supportive teachers, and the thrill of daily structured learning. To ease this transition, the first week of school, called “Camp Kindergarten,” is dedicated to helping students acclimate by engaging in interactive play with all their grade-level classmates and learning the basics of a school day.

Camp Kindergarten has offered exceptional experiences to Olathe Public Schools’ 5 and 6-year-olds for over 15 years. However, this school year is the first time all kindergartners participated in Camp Kindergarten. Early Childhood Instructional Coach (and “Kindergarten Expert”) Brandi Michaelis felt it was important to take this program districtwide.

“We have found this is the best way to create multiple opportunities that allow our teachers to get to know all of the students, while allowing students to get to know their school,” Michaelis said. “At the end of the week, kindergarten students are placed in their classrooms for the rest of the year. We want students to be excited about learning and feel comfortable in their classroom from day one!”

Tristan Castor, an enthusiastic Ridgeview Elementary School kindergartner, was one of 1,839 students who participated in

Camp Kindergarten. Many students in Tristan’s class agreed that recess, indoor centers, lunchtime and making new friends were their “favorites” so far, but Tristan summed it up well by saying, “I love it! There are just so many things to do here!”

Jennifer Caldwell, Scarborough Elementary School kindergarten teacher, emphasized the value of play and relationship-building activities in the early days of school.

“It’s a time where they can be themselves with their peers,” Caldwell said. “After observing how students interact while playing, teachers along with other school staff such as counselors, specialists, etc., can collaborate to create classes that have a good mix of personalities and levels of academic readiness so all students can thrive.”

Camp Kindergarten is cherished by students and teachers alike. Cedar Creek Elementary School kindergarten teacher Sara Williams appreciates the opportunity to “get to know all the kids—not just the ones in my classroom, but each kindergartner at my school as this relationship building lays the foundation for a successful school year.”

With friendships formed and a sense of belonging firmly established, our students move into their classrooms well-prepared to embark on their exciting K-12 journey ahead.



Celebrating a Legacy

The Grand Opening of the New Santa Fe Trail Middle School

For more than half a century, the halls of Santa Fe Trail Middle School have echoed with the footsteps of students, teachers, and staff members, each leaving their mark. It was the first building built in Olathe specifically to educate middle school students. The grand opening of the new building in August was more than a celebration of modern facilities; it was a tribute to the rich legacy that generations have shaped.

Melissa Erker, a former student and now dedicated SFT teacher, reflects on the school's significance, stating it "is more than halls, doors, and windows. It's our traditions, our stories, our hopes, and all our dreams."

Erker is one of 1,500-plus members of the Facebook group called SFT Legacy, who planned an event in spring 2023 to say goodbye to the old building. Now, when visitors, staff, and students walk into the new building, they will see memorabilia

from the past in the display cases honoring former students, athletes, coaches, and performers. SFT principal J.J. Libal, the only administrator to close a building and open a building in one calendar year, felt it was important to honor the legacy of SFT.

"The SFT Legacy group and the memories they shared helped us choose what physical items we wanted to preserve and transfer to the new building," Libal said. "We are proud to say that the gym flooring has been repurposed for the learning stairs, and the glass cyclone now hangs on the wall in the commons."

During the grand opening, the community was invited to a formal ceremony with words from Libal, Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager, former SFT principal and current president of the Board of Education Dr. Stacey Yurkovich, as well as eighth

grader Gabby Walker.

“SFT is and always has been such a special place,” Dr. Yeager said. “Walking around this incredible new facility fills me with such pride. SFT has such a rich tradition of excellence and doing what’s best for kids, and I am excited for this community to have a new building.”

Afterward, community members were invited to enjoy food trucks and student-led tours of the new building to see how the legacy was preserved and modernized to reflect students' needs. The SFT Cyclones closet received an upgrade in the new facility. The Cyclone Closet is a place where students and families can receive hygiene products and gently-used clothing, as well as utilize the washer and dryer if needed. Notable features of the new building are the grade-level classroom pods and the library's flexible learning spaces that can be rearranged for more collaborative learning experiences. All of this comes down to one thing – community.

“It's our **traditions,**
our **stories,** our
hopes, and all our
dreams.”

MELISSA ERKER
SANTA FE TRAIL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER,
FORMER STUDENT

“To me, SFT means community,” theater teacher Beth Dean said. “Throughout its past, one major thing SFT has always had is a solid community of students, parents, and faculty that are there for each other. We are ‘Proud to be SFT.’”

The 2022 Bond made the construction of this new building possible. Olathe Public Schools and its Board of Education extend their deepest gratitude to the patrons and community members who supported this project.

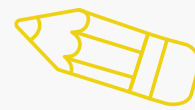
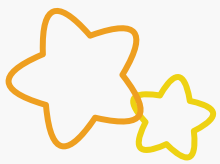
“We can’t thank the community enough for their continued support of the Olathe Public Schools,” Dr. Yurkovich said. “Because of that support through the approval of the 2022 Bond, we can celebrate the opening of this beautiful facility and the opportunities it will provide the SFT community.”

As SFT begins this new chapter, students, staff and families look forward with hope and pride, confident that the legacy of, “Proud to be SFT” will continue to inspire generations to come in this new building.



FIRST DAY — of — SCHOOL







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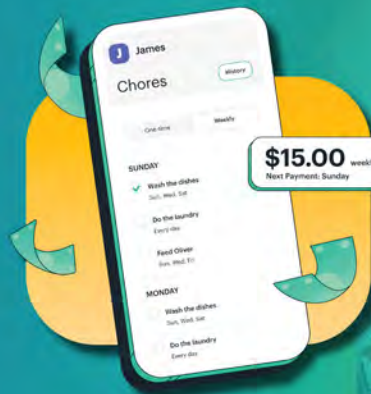
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