

School NEWS



SPRING 2020



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A Message From **SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON**



Keeping our parents and patrons informed and engaged in the Olathe Public Schools is vitally important. District staff are committed to using a variety of tools to reach as many stakeholders as possible.

One important partnership that the district is embarking on is with a company called ThoughtExchange that allows us the opportunity to survey our stakeholders in ways to better understand the needs and wants of our students, staff, families and community. We are looking forward to setting up these surveys to not only better communicate with our staff and parents, but also gain insight and feedback from our community. We will communicate more as we set up ThoughtExchange tools to engage and better connect our community to our schools.

Other ways you can stay connected to and informed about the Olathe Public Schools:

School News: The district's quarterly newsmagazine is an important tool for reaching all of our patrons. We are grateful to the advertising partners that help keep the costs low on this publication. Through this, we are able to keep our patrons informed about district programs, news and accomplishments.

Social Media: Follow the district on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Here you will find unique stories, accomplishments, news and reminders to stay engaged with what's happening in our schools. Find us on Facebook and Twitter as @olatheschools and on Instagram as @olatheschoolsks.

Website: The district website, www.olatheschools.org, is a one-stop shop of information about the Olathe Public Schools. Everything you need to know about the district, including links to school websites, lunch menus, the latest district news, and vital parent sites such as ParentVUE and fee payment sites can be found here.

Mobile App: The district's mobile app puts district information right in the hands of all parents and patrons.

District staff are always looking for the best way to share information with the community. Keeping our community informed and engaged will always be a priority.

Thank you for your support of the Olathe Public Schools.

**John Allison,
Superintendent**

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TEACHERS NAMED HORIZON AWARD WINNERS

Two district teachers were honored for their work as new educators with the Kansas Horizon Award.

Bennett Johnson, a music teacher from Heritage Elementary, and Samantha Collins, an English/Language Arts teacher at Chisholm Trail Middle School, each received the prestigious award.

The Kansas Horizon Awards, sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education, recognize the exemplary work of teachers during their first year in the classroom. Johnson and Collins were two of 32 teachers across the state honored with the award this year. They are both now in their second year of teaching in the district.

Johnson received a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Kansas.

"The thing that I love most about teaching in Olathe is all of the opportunities the district gives young educators like myself to learn from experienced educators during professional development events and otherwise. I would be nowhere near where I am today without the help of these awesome experienced colleagues," Johnson said. "I just feel so blessed to have received this award, but I feel even more blessed to be interacting with, learning from, and loving on all students at Heritage Elementary each and every day."

His principal, Tara Payton, commended his energy and enthusiasm for teaching.

"He quickly worked to establish meaningful relationships with students, staff, and families. Bennett immediately created a welcoming, all-inclusive environment in his music room that seemed to resonate with our students," Payton said. "This welcoming environment was established because Bennett found ways to connect all students to musical interests, he engaged students in cooperative learning, and he reached students who struggled."

Collins received her bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Kansas and initially worked in publishing before becoming a teacher. Now she teaches English/Language Arts, Yearbook and Newspaper.

"This award gives me validation that I made the right decision to go into teaching," Collins said. "Teaching is the hardest job I have ever had. However, it's also the most rewarding, fun, and fulfilling job that I've ever had. I honestly would not have received this award



if it weren't for my amazing colleagues and students. My colleagues gave me, and continue to give me, support and love for which I will be forever grateful. My students inspire, encourage and challenge me every single day to be a better educator. This award isn't only for me, but for everyone."

Collins' outstanding abilities in the classroom and her collaborative efforts to impact students were touted by Assistant Superintendent for Middle School Education Dr. Jessica Dain.

"Samantha is an outstanding educator," Dain said. "She balances multiple curricular areas and grade levels while meeting the educational needs of all her students. She works collaboratively with her colleagues and has developed an energy and creative approach to her lesson design. Chisholm Trail and the Olathe district are fortunate to have her impacting the lives of the young people she works with each and every day."



File photo from Beloit Daily News: Students in Janesville, Wisconsin, use the Anatomage Table to view human anatomy.



File photo from Anatomage: Students view the skeletal and nervous system.

OLATHE NORTH STUDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM DISTRICT'S FIRST VIRTUAL DISSECTION TABLE

Students at Olathe North High School will soon be beneficiaries of an Anatomage Table, a virtual dissection table. As part of a joint grant from the Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust and the Olathe Public Schools Foundation, students in the Medical Professions Academy and the Sports Medicine and Exercise Science Academy will see the \$90,000 virtual dissection table near the end of the 2019-20 school year.

Inspiration often comes from familiar places and L.B. Fogt and Sarah Hanson, facilitators of the 21st Century Medical Professions and Sports Medicine and Exercise Science academies, respectively, had witnessed the table in action at kinesiology labs and conferences across the country. They instantly realized their students and other students could benefit from the technology.

The Anatomage Table is a 3D anatomy visualization tool used for anatomy and physical education and currently is adopted by leading medical schools and institutions around the globe. The table allows



Olathe North students learn more about the Anatomage Table while at Baker University.

for exploration and learning of human anatomy and physiology beyond what any cadaver can offer.

“The ability for students to have hands-on virtual anatomy of systems and structures, diseases, injuries and surgeries is important and will be the closest we can get to having a cadaver lab,” said Hanson.

“Students will be able to look at pathological examples and visualize not only normal human anatomy, but also anatomic abnormalities,” Fogt said. “The ideas for project implementation are endless.”

The Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust donated \$49,462 and the Olathe Public Schools Foundation will cover the remaining \$40,000.

“The Olathe Public Schools Foundation continues to support cutting edge academic support for students,” Hanson said. “We’re so thankful for the OPSF and their depth of community partnerships.”

“The Olathe Public Schools Foundation always looks to find new equipment for students to gain hands-on, real-world experiences and now, we have world-renowned research equipment at the high school level,” said Fogt.

PANORAMA: TOOL HELPS EDUCATORS UNDERSTAND STUDENT SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL LEARNING NEEDS



Every educator knows that when a student's basic physical, social and emotional needs aren't met, it makes learning that much harder, if not impossible. One important way the Olathe Public Schools staff work to meet social and emotional needs is with the assistance of a tool called Panorama.

Panorama is a research-based, self-perception survey students take about their own social and emotional well-being. Panorama is taken nationwide and helps school and district staff monitor these skills in their students. Social-emotional learning skills are social skills that allow people to cope in society and self-regulate to manage emotions. They are the soft, non-academic skills that make them well-rounded students. In Olathe, the Panorama survey seeks perceptions about things with school such as school safety, sense of belonging, and student and teacher relationships. It also measures things about self, such as emotional regulation, social awareness, grit, and coping with anxiety. Students are surveyed at least twice per year in grades 3-12.

"Panorama provides the 'silent data' that for many students goes unmeasured and unsupported in the classroom and provides a voice for students who need to be heard," Assistant Superintendent for Middle School Education Dr. Jessica Dain said. "Our goal is to have data which allows us to be proactive and intervene with students who are struggling, provide coping skills and resources, and then measure their growth on a regular basis."

Panorama provides data to the district that helps drive decision-making around mental health and other programming which gives students the skills they need to be successful in school. The Olathe Public Schools have been a leader in the development of a comprehensive K-12 mental health and social-emotional learning program that works to develop important skills and identify

when students need additional interventions. Panorama works in partnership with staff and these programs and initiatives to provide data to make sure staff are directing help and resources in the best direction for student need.

“As a district we can monitor for trends in data,” said Director of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Services Angie Salava. “This is data that is difficult to mine while just looking at grades, attendance and behavior. It helps us take a look at our students to see where, as a whole, they might need more help.”

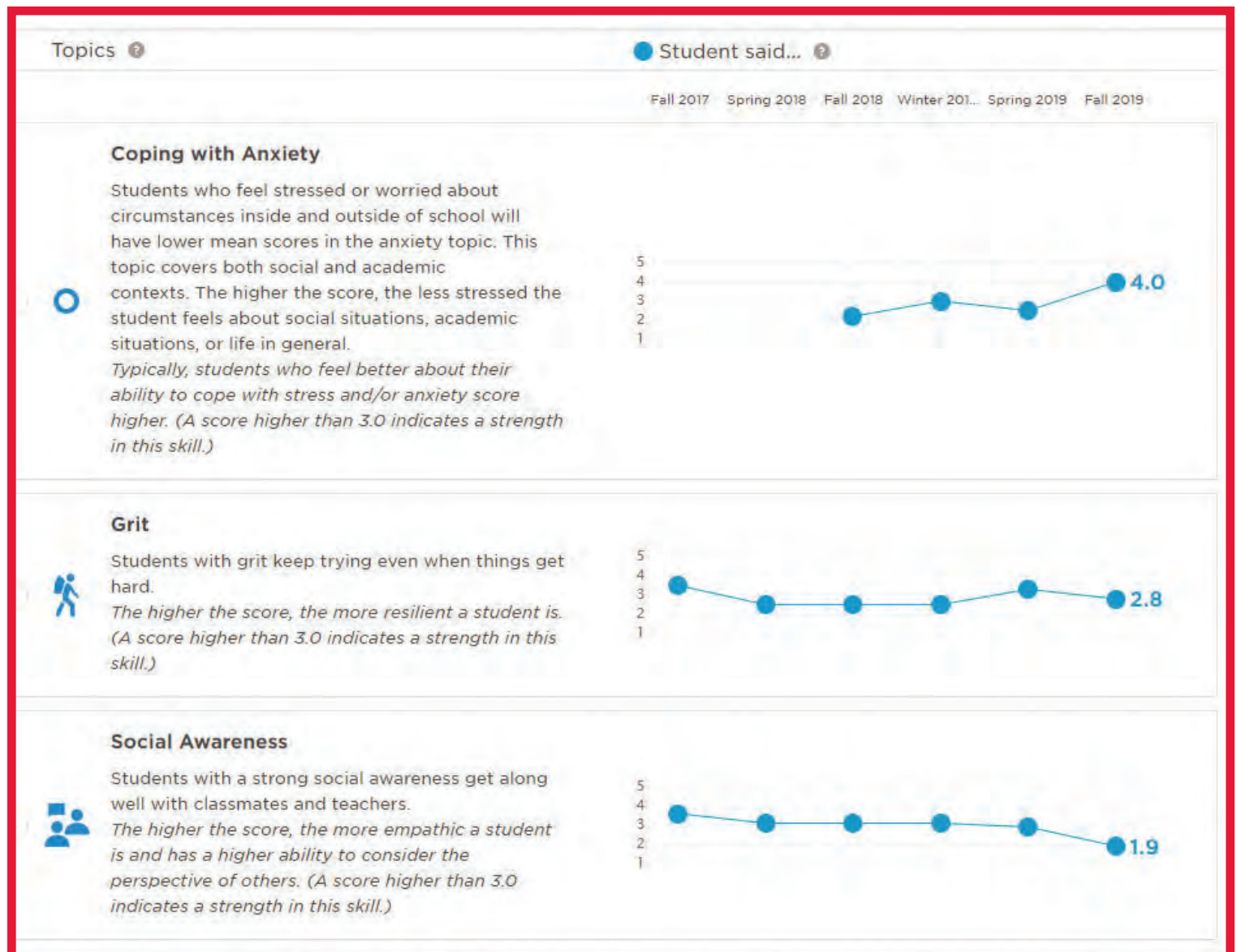
One trend that Salava said they have learned through Panorama surveys is that student anxiety increases as the year progresses and reaches a high point near the end of the year. Conversely, student grit is lower at the beginning of the year. Both of these trend findings have played an important role in how social-emotional learning programming is determined. Kids get the help they need, when they need it. One school noticed their overall school scores

on grit were very low. They spent an entire year focused on grit, incorporating talking about grit in lessons and talking about building up resilience in students. Within a few months, student results on the Panorama related to grit went up significantly at that school.

Panorama can also help identify when a student has an acute need that requires more individualized attention and assistance.

“This data helps us be preventative,” Dain said. “Our students and our schools have had some difficult mental health issues and we knew as a district we needed to do something. We needed information about how our students were feeling. Panorama helps get the information we need to help every one of our students.”

Parents also receive a report of their student’s results on the survey. Additionally parents are able to opt out of their child taking the Panorama survey if they choose.





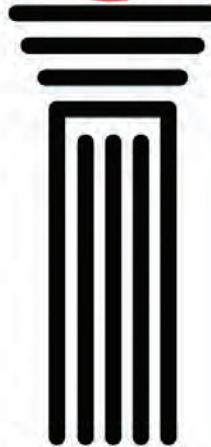
Portrait of a Graduate



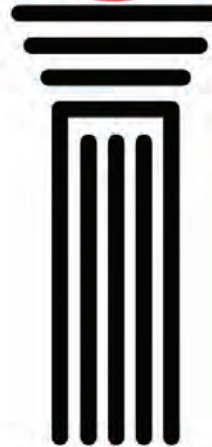
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DIVE INTO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1: High Academic Expectations for All



In October 2019, the Olathe Board of Education approved the 2019-24 Strategic Plan. In this issue and in subsequent issues of School News, we will highlight and explain individual aspects of the plan.

In this issue, we start with Goal 1 of the plan: High Academic Expectations for All.

To better explain this goal, we sat down with Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services Dr. Brent Yeager for a question and answer session.

Q: What is Goal 1 and what does it mean?

A: High Academic Expectations for All means that no matter who you are, when you come to us as a student, we are going to do whatever it takes to help you be successful in our school system. We will take you from where you are, challenge you to your highest potential, so you can reach high levels of learning.

Q: How does this goal impact the work in the district?

A: It should create an environment where educators and staff are wildly committed to all students learning at high levels. Our goal for our educators is to understand every student's current level of performance based on curriculum standards. We want educators and staff to work to either enrich or intervene to make sure all students are continuing to grow no matter where they are. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) help educators work together and rely on data and their colleagues' skills and knowledge to achieve what's best for students. It's a collective responsibility of all educators to make sure all students attain at least a year's worth of growth every year.

Q: How will we see this demonstrated in the classroom?

A: Learning should be more individualized at just the right level for students. One way we are individualizing for students is through a variety of engagement strategies. Engagement is a focus of our staff because we know students are learning best when they are engaged in the process. Staff are making a conscious effort to get students talking about what they are learning to better engage students in their own education. Learning is solidified when students explain their thinking.

Additionally, we need to look at curriculum resources and the way we teach students to make sure we are teaching from a variety of perspectives and offering culturally relevant teaching strategies. We also need to analyze the way we are doing professional development to find ways for staff to individualize it for themselves. Just as we work to give students some choice in how they learn, we want staff to be able to choose, to some degree, how they learn so they can be more connected to our district work. Engaged students and staff help our educators be the best they can be.

Q: What excites you the most about the work being done in the district?

A: Things are changing in education. The history in our district and the foundation we have built is vitally important because they have shaped who and where we are today. But we also need to look at how students are learning and make sure we are continually adjusting how we teach to meet these needs. We are trying new things to meet the needs of students, which is really exciting. We have a large group of amazing educators who are sharing their ideas and knowledge with each other and working to better the entire profession. There is so much excitement about teaching and learning in this district. It's energizing and I can't wait to see what our students and staff accomplish.



Count Me In JoCo

Everyone counts for the 2020 Census

CENSUS 2020 BEGINS APRIL 1

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.

The next U.S. Census launches April 1, 2020, and 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. 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.

Individual information collected from the census, by law, cannot be released for 72 years. The Census Bureau will not share a respondent's personal information with immigration or law enforcement agencies, or allow it to be used to determine someone's eligibility for government benefits.

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

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The Olathe Public Schools prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity in its programs, activities or employment, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups to its facilities as required by: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Access Act of 1984 and other relevant state and federal laws as amended. Inquiries regarding compliance with applicable civil rights statutes related to race, ethnicity, gender, age discrimination, sexual orientation, gender identity or equal access may be directed to Staff Counsel, 14160 S. Black Bob Road, Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone 913-780-7000. All inquiries regarding compliance with applicable statutes regarding Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act may be directed to the Assistant Superintendent of Support Services, 14160 S. Black Bob Rd. Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone 913-780-7000. Interested persons including those with impaired vision or hearing, can also obtain information as to the existence and location of services, activities and facilities that are accessible to and usable by disabled persons by calling the Assistant Superintendent of Support Services. (03/19)

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A young boy with light brown hair, wearing a red soccer jersey and shorts with green trim, is captured in the middle of kicking a soccer ball. He is looking down at the ball with a focused expression. The background is a chain-link fence and green foliage, suggesting an outdoor soccer field.

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