

School NEWS



SUMMER 2020



CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAN HELPS BRIDGE GAP



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A Message From **SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON**



For 55 years the Olathe Public Schools has welcomed more students each year than were enrolled the previous year. In August, we'll welcome nearly 2,000 kindergarten students. This school year will arguably be one of the most unique school years in history. With the COVID-19 pandemic providing months of uncertainty, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank our families and school communities for their patience and understanding as we've navigated uncharted territories together.

As always, our top priority is to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff members. This year is no exception. As information and trust are at a premium, we look forward to earning your trust each day through transparent communication and relationships built in our buildings.

To help streamline methods of communication, please take a moment to ensure that your contact information on

file is correct in our system. This can be done during online registration or by contacting your school.

Consider following your school or the district on social media platforms (@OlatheSchools on Facebook and Twitter and @OlatheSchoolsKS on Instagram) and downloading the district mobile app on your phone. Staying engaged and informed helps build relationships and creates a connection with our families.

Thank you for being a member of this community. We appreciate your voice and your influence. Together we will make the 2020-21 school year one for the ages.

Sincerely,

**John Allison,
Superintendent**

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FOOD SERVICES SHINES DURING PANDEMIC

The final quarter of the 2019-20 school year was arguably the most unique quarter in district history. One constant during months of uncertainty was the Food Services division of the Olathe Public Schools. In a matter of days, the Food Services division established personal safety protocols in order to develop production for the emergency meal program. In late March and early April, as public health guidelines were established and were constantly changing, operational agility was key in order to meet the needs of families in the Olathe Public Schools.

“Our district is fortunate to have not only a Food Production Center but facilities at each of the buildings,” Olathe Public Schools Director of Food Services Scott Kingery said. “Producing meals from the buildings allowed our operation and staff members to observe proper safety measures.”

Challenges were inevitable, but solutions were always reached, keeping staff and family safety at the forefront of every decision. With many districts in the nation suddenly needing similar items,

supply chains were stressed and at times exhausted. Menu changes occurred on a weekly basis to meet production needs. As no historical data existed for emergency meal service, forecasting the number of daily meals at each site was also challenging.

From March 23 through May 21, the Food Services team served 123,834 meals to families.

“It was humbling to see so many members of our Food Services team willingly step out of their typical role and into the frontlines serving the community in a vital way during what were often uncertain and scary times,” Kingery said. “I think I speak for the entire team when I say that serving in our roles during this time was exhausting and uniquely stressful, but it was certainly a privilege.”

Following Memorial Day, the Food Services team was back at work providing meals for the summer months ending July 29. “I’m proud of our team,” Kingery said. “Regardless of what lies ahead, our staff has shown resilience in the face of change.”



CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAN HELPS BRIDGE GAP OF 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR

When the 2019-20 in-person school year came to an abrupt end in March 2020, Olathe Public Schools educators, principals and administrations came together to find a solution. In 10 days' time, more than 1,200 educators worked together to create content for the district's Continuous Learning Plan (CLP).

With the goal of creating an equitable experience for families and students, the CLP launched online on March 30. Through the model of Explain, Explore, Apply and Create, teachers posted videos and supplementary assignments and activities with the goal of providing opportunities for students to continue to learn and master identified priority standards and skills to complete the year. Additionally, packets were printed each week and available for families without internet or computer access. More than 36,000 packets were distributed over the course of eight weeks.

"The engagement in the Continuous Learning Plan was tremendous," Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services Dr. Brent Yeager said. "We had more than 1.2 million views on the website with more than 100,000 unique visitors. It was incredibly gratifying to see so many of our families engaged so deeply with the Continuous Learning Plan."

Additionally, more than 1,200 Individualized Education Program plans (IEPs) for students with special needs were completed during this time.

"It was a great success of the district to have so many educators come together in a short period of time, during an unprecedented

experience for students to have continued learning opportunities," Yeager said. "I am proud of our staff for all that they did for students."

Additionally, district staff were able to respond and pivot with feedback from families who wanted more rigorous options. Beginning in April, Challenge Boards were added to the CLP site, providing families with additional learning opportunities.

Beyond the classroom learning, students were supported in other ways. Students in need of mental health supports were also able to access sessions with counselors. Educators regularly reached out to students to check in and make sure they were getting assistance they needed for their classroom work or for their social-emotional needs.

Looking forward to the 2020-21 school year, staff are now focused on creating plans to make sure students are successful in the classroom through in-person learning or through remote learning.

"We learned a lot during the first Continuous Learning Plan," Yeager said. "We also surveyed our students, staff and families to find out what they need to be successful in the coming school year. We know that should we be forced to have remote learning again for all of our students, it will look different than it did last spring. Remote learning of the future will involve more direct instruction, more accountability, grades and attendance."

For more information about what the 2020-21 school year will look like, visit www.olatheschools.org.



From left to right: Drew Levinson, 2020 Blue Valley North graduate; Ethan Jagoda, 2020 Blue Valley North graduate; Aaditya Pore, 2020 Olathe East graduate; Aarushi Pore, Olathe North freshman; and Austin Tseng, 2020 Blue Valley North graduate.

OLATHE EAST GRADUATE JOINS THE COVID-19 FRONT LINES

As the COVID-19 pandemic affected normalcy and every-day life in the Kansas City metro area, two students knew they could help their community and medical professionals brace for potential impact.

Aaditya Pore, 2020 Olathe East High School graduate, and friend Ethan Jagoda, 2020 Blue Valley North High School graduate, were motivated to help because of the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers on the front lines.

“I realized that all around the world, people were using commercial and personal technology, like 3D printers to create useful supplies for healthcare workers,” Pore said. “We figured this was an amazing chance for us to use our prior experiences with manufacturing technology to help healthcare workers around us and jumped on the opportunity.”

FreePPEKC (freeppekc.org) was formed. Shortly thereafter they built a website to highlight their efforts and show their products and share images of facilities across the country using their PPE.

Pore's sister Aarushi Pore, 2020 freshman at Olathe North High School and member of the Medical Professions Academy, joined the process early on by growing the group's social media presence and greatly impacting their outreach.

Leaving no stone unturned, the teens desired to maximize production of PPE and contacted makerspaces, universities and other facilities to gain access to materials and 3D printers. FreePPEKC was able to gain access to 16 printers. The group knew that creating PPE would require filaments (ink for the 3D printers), face shields, boxes and other supplies so a GoFundMe was established to provide funding.

At the time of publishing, FreePPEKC is averaging two deliveries per week. In May, the group made their largest donation of

1,000 face shields to Children's Mercy. Masks have even been delivered as far as New York.

Of course, starting a new organization doesn't begin without facing hurdles.

"This came with a lot of rejection, continual effort and perseverance," Pore said. "But we wouldn't have it any other way."

"Our organization has been fortunate to have people involved from different schools

and areas, allowing us to reach an amazing amount of people," said Pore. "Nathan Seibold (2020 Olathe East graduate), Akshay Shastri (2020 Olathe North graduate), Mrs. Fogt and Mr. Elniff all had a hand in our success. There's an opportunity for everyone to help, it's just a matter of searching for it."

Pore plans to attend the University of Colorado – Boulder and study aerospace engineering with double minors in astrophysics and computer science and hopes to be involved in organizations like Engineers Without Borders to reach as many people in need as possible. Pore and Jagoda hope to alleviate poverty through engineering.

FreePPEKC can be found on Instagram and Twitter at @FreePPEKC, online at freeppekc.org or reached by email at free.ppek@gmail.com. To get involved, the organization has information available on their website.

We figured this was an amazing chance for us to use our prior experiences with manufacturing technology to help healthcare workers around us and jumped on the opportunity.

- Aaditya Pore
2020 Olathe East High School graduate



Walgreens pharmacy workers in Hicksville, NY, wearing protection equipment made and donated by FreePPEKC.



Free PPE KC creates a headband with 3D printers which holds plastic face shields in place.



STUDENT PROFILE: LYLENA ESTABINE

School News staff had an opportunity to catch up with LyLena Estabine, 2020 graduate of Olathe Northwest High School. Estabine won Best in Show at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration three of the past four years, has been recognized as an emerging playwright and is a published author. Following her time at Olathe Northwest, Estabine discusses her early inspirations and aspirations for her future.

School News: As a talented individual who accomplished a great deal before graduating high school, what inspires you to pursue your passions and where do you receive your motivation?

LyLena Estabine: Literacy, and more importantly storytelling, is something that's always been emphasized in my family. My parents read to me every night when I was younger, or made up stories before we went to sleep. Before I could write, I would tell my mother stories and she would write them down for me. My parents have always been supportive of my siblings and me sharing our voices and our stories.

While it started out as an enjoyable hobby, my motivations for writing changed around the time of the 2016 election. In the media there was a lot of hate speech surrounding immigrants, and Haitian immigrants specifically. As the daughter of a Haitian immigrant, I wanted a way to raise my opinion about the issues of prejudice against immigrants that would resonate with my peers. That's when I decided to write *On the Bridge*. I'm definitely most proud of this book because it has allowed me to speak with other students about writing for social justice and sharing their stories, as well as started important conversations with my peers about the social issues that it entails. While it serves as an allegory for the immigration crisis that we faced and continue to face, it is a coming of age story before anything else, and it calls my peers to step out of the shelter of their parents' world and on to their own bridges between childhood and adulthood.

School News: What advice would you give to younger students who want to find their voice, to advocate for causes or subjects in which they feel passionate or interested?

Estabine: I would encourage any young student who has a story to share to do so through whatever medium they feel best supports the story they have to share. A few tips I'd also like to share would be:

- **Don't be afraid to jump in head first.** The only job that the first draft has is to exist. The refined editing and research can come later.
- **Stick with it!** Lots of people start, but not many finish. Find the story that is clawing its way out of you and do it the justice of making it heard.
- **Don't be afraid when you're first starting to copy.** The greats are great for a reason. Find authors or poets that you like, figure out why you like them, and use their expertise to find your voice.
- **Stay committed to the story, not the words you use to tell it.** Giving your work to someone can be really scary, especially if you're telling something personal, but their feedback will make it so much easier to connect with when the world reads it. Don't be afraid to delete words, scenes, chapters, stanzas. Sometimes less is more, and if you have a reader you can trust, they will help show you the way.

School News: What are your plans after high school?

Estabine: I'll be attending Harvard University this fall. While I will always continue writing, I'll be pursuing a degree that focuses on community-based design and international development, particularly in regards to infrastructure. I love being able to change people's lives with my words, but through community-based design, I hope to make a more palpable impact in the lives of those who need it the most.

To learn more about Estabine, purchase her book or request her to speak at a venue, you can visit her website at www.lylenaestabine.com.

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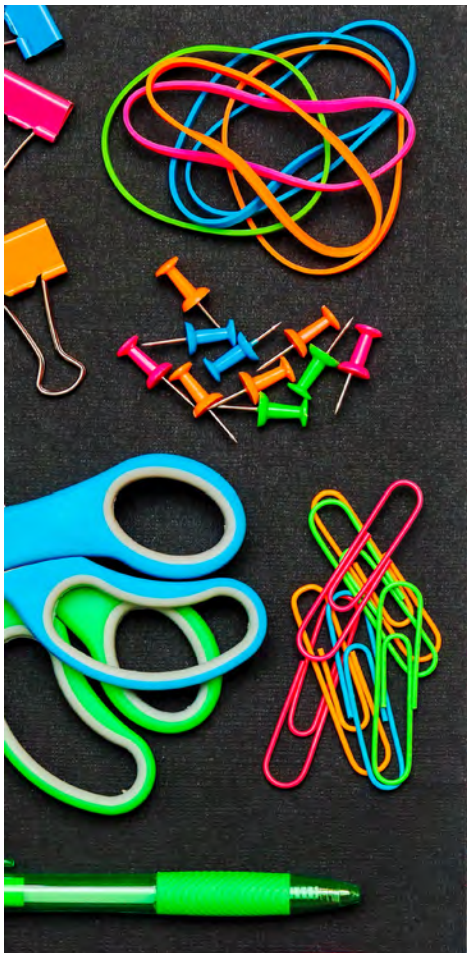
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PARENT TIPS FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

From the American Psychological Association

- **Make connections:** Teach your child how to make friends and how to be a good friend.
- **Have your child help others:** Children learn empathy and empowerment by helping others. Full-blown volunteer work isn't necessary; even helping around home can help build resilience.
- **Maintain a daily routine:** Children crave structure and boundaries. Knowing that structure and boundaries exist can help children when their world gets a little chaotic.
- **Take a break:** Help your child learn how to take a break when stressed and to focus their minds elsewhere. Sometimes taking a break is all that is needed to help a child stay refreshed and ready to resume their task at hand.
- **Teach self-care:** Teach your child the importance of eating properly, exercise, and rest. Also, make sure that every moment of your child's life isn't scheduled. Children need lots of down time.
- **Goal Setting:** Teach your child to set reasonable goals and help your child break them down in manageable steps.
- **Teach positivity:** Allow your child to make mistakes and then recover from them. Remind your child that they have successfully handled hardships in the past and have the ability to do so now and in the future.
- **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook:** Help your child understand the "bigger picture" of life events and provide continuous hope for a positive future.
- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery:** When bad things happen, what has your child learned from the situation? Make hard times a teachable moment.
- **Accept change:** Help your child understand that change is a part of living and provide them coping skills when change does occur.



OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

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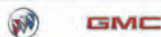
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