



Olathe
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School News

Fall 2025



Growing Our Own

First Day of School

Opportunity Grows Here

14160 Black Bob Road
Olathe, KS 66063

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A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. BRENT YEAGER

Olathe Public Schools Community,

The 2025-26 school year is officially underway, and we are so excited to have our students, staff, families and community back for another year of growth, learning and engagement! This year we celebrate 60 years of Olathe Public Schools since consolidating in 1965.

Just think about that! Over that time our district has grown from just a few small schools to one of the largest and most respected districts in the state of Kansas and nationally. That would not be possible without the support of our community, and our incredible staff, students and families.

I am so proud of all that our district has accomplished during that time and cannot wait to see what the next 60 years will bring! Although the landscape of public education is changing and we are not growing in size at the rate we once were, we remain committed to providing new and innovative opportunities for our students as we work to prepare them for *their* future. As we look to the future, we are embarking on a Strategic Planning process this year that will guide our system in the years ahead.

In this issue of School News, you will see photos of smiling faces from across our district on the first day of school. In addition, you will read about two remarkable first-year teachers who have returned to teach in Olathe after participating in Olathe's Hire Our Own program to educate future teachers right here in our very own school district.

Our driving theme in Olathe Public Schools this year is "Opportunity Grows Here." From stories like our Hire Our Own program to our new Innovation Campus to our national recognition as a top employer by Forbes – growth and opportunities are in every corner of Olathe Public Schools! In Olathe innovation grows here, purpose grows here, leadership grows here, and most importantly, students grow here.

We look forward to a fantastic 2025-26 school year and, as always, thank you for your continued support of the Olathe Public Schools!

Your very proud superintendent,

Dr. Brent Yeager

Superintendent

#OPS GROW HERE

The district will use #OPSGrowHere 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 #OPSGrowHere in your social media posts!

Follow us for up-to-date information:



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Olathe Public Schools

14160 S. Black Bob Road,
P.O. Box 2000
Olathe, KS 66063
(913) 780-7000
www.olatheschools.org

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School News is a news magazine published quarterly during the school year. Editorial and photography is created by the Communications Department of Olathe Public Schools and produced by CherryRoad Media. To advertise in School News, call Teresa Marrow at (913) 294-2311.

Growing Our Own:

FUTURE EDUCATORS ALUMNI RETURN TO START THEIR CAREERS

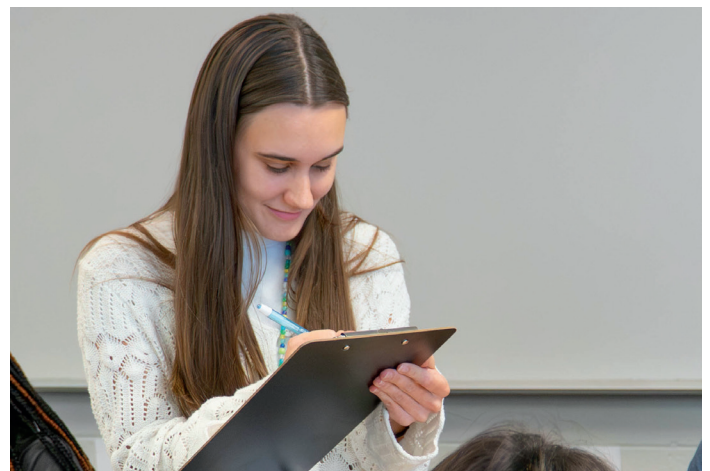
We are proud to offer 30 Career Pathways for our students to explore a variety of professional opportunities, including Two-Year Academies, Four-Year Academies, and Career Pathway Programs. These options focus on high-demand career fields and are designed to connect student interests with learning through hands-on experiences, industry-standard tools, and real-world partnerships. Each opportunity helps students build the academic and technical skills needed for success in their future careers. These pathways are divided into six industries: Health & Human Services; Public Services; Media & Technology; Design, Production & Repair; Agriculture; and Business.

The Future Educators (FEA) program is a Four-Year Academy where students work with a community of educators who strive to shape the future of education by passing on a legacy of standards, purpose and high expectations. Anna Billam and Julia Whitaker are the first two students to complete the program who have returned to start their professional careers with Olathe Public Schools.

Billam, kindergarten teacher at Indian Creek Elementary School, moved to Olathe in second grade. Although the transition to a new school was hard for her, she knew her teacher loved her. Growing up, she “wanted to impact lives the same way” her teacher impacted

hers. While in FEA, she had the opportunity to experience teaching in a variety of different grade levels to find her perfect fit. She is so excited to be in her “dream school and dream grade.”

Whitaker, Algebra 1 and Geometry teacher at Olathe North High School, comes from a family of teachers. Her mom teaches art at Green Springs Elementary School. She knew math was the subject she wanted to teach when she would “wake up every morning [during the 2020 pandemic] and watch calculus to study for the AP test.” She wasn’t required to watch the videos, but she chose to because of her love of math. Whitaker shared that she “felt ahead of the other education majors” throughout



ABOVE: JULIA WHITAKER
LEFT: ANNA BILLAM

college because of her experiences in high school and “highly suggests FEA for anyone interested in education.”

The Future Educators program began in the fall of 2016 and “is a special place” where students are equipped “to be teacher-ready by learning many things both inside and outside the classroom,” shared Kelly Warren, FEA assistant facilitator.

During their time in the program, students are involved in mentorships, visit classrooms to see firsthand how teachers implement standards and practice lesson planning. Whitaker even had the opportunity to attend the Educators Rising National Conference alongside Shelley Staples, Future Educators lead facilitator, and presented in front of hundreds of attendees.

Upon their college graduation in December 2024, they both began as substitute teachers in our district. Once the 2025-26 school year started, they entered their classrooms as full-time teachers through the Hire Our Own initiative. This initiative provides students in the Future Educators program the opportunity to interview for a teaching position while they are still in high school. If they pass their screenings, they will receive a signed letter of intent guaranteeing them a position in the district upon completing their degrees and meeting specific contract stipulations.



Like mother, like daughter! Julia and her mom Joanna, Art Teacher at Green Springs Elementary School.



“I am so happy
to finally have
my own class.”

JULIA WHITAKER

Algebra 1 and Geometry Teacher
Olathe North High School

On their first day of school, they walked into their classrooms nervous, but the excitement of meeting their students and knowing they had the support of their colleagues allowed them to be present during this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Billam shared that since being back in Olathe Public Schools, she has “received an incredible amount of support from past teachers, co-workers, and other staff,” which has made transitioning into a new school year feel “dramatically less stressful.” Whitaker echoed a similar sentiment, adding she is “so happy to finally have her own class.”

We are delighted to welcome back former students and provide our current students with opportunities to gain firsthand experiences in their areas of interest while still in high school. In Olathe Public Schools, Opportunity Grows Here.

To learn more about our Career Pathways, visit www.olatheschools.org/lacademics.



Back to where it all began! Anna and her sister in 2010 when they moved to Olathe Public Schools.

FIRST DAY -of- SCHOOL





APPLY 1ST

INGTON SCHOOL

THEIR FUTURE IS

OUR FUTURE

Opportunity
grows here.



Olathe
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CULTIVATING STUDENT SUCCESS IN A SEASON OF CHANGE

For decades, Olathe Public Schools has been defined by growth following years of increasing enrollment — but today, this story is shifting from numbers to opportunities. Across the nation, the landscape of education is changing with fewer students entering classrooms each year, and Olathe Public Schools is no exception. After decades of steady growth, the district has entered a new chapter marked not by growth in numbers, but by the opportunities that grow here every day.

Since reaching a peak of more than 30,000 students in 2019, enrollment has steadily declined over the past several years. Looking ahead, district projections estimate enrollment will continue to slowly decline to around 27,000 students over the next five years. This trend is not unique to Olathe and is one faced by nearly all Johnson County school districts and countless public school districts nationwide.

Several factors contribute to this trend: birth rates in Olathe and surrounding communities have dropped by almost 50% in recent years, reducing the number of incoming kindergartners. Housing trends also play a role — rising home prices, fewer new construction permits, empty nesters choosing to remain in their homes and a shift toward multi-family housing have resulted in fewer young families moving into the district. In some neighborhood elementary schools, enrollment has declined by 40% over the past decade.

Declining enrollment has brought new challenges, and it

is a trend Olathe Public Schools will continue to monitor as these changes bring forth discussions and decisions that will shape the future of our district. Yet, what defines Olathe Public Schools is not its enrollment numbers, but the opportunities that we provide for students.

As the district evolves, what matters most remains the same: our students and *their* future. From the district's new Olathe Public Schools Innovation Campus that will house innovative career pathways and advanced academic offerings, to expanded supports for multilingual learners and students with special needs — Olathe Public Schools is embracing this season of change with a clear focus on the future.

Even in seasons of change, opportunity continues to expand. Olathe Public Schools is not defined by enrollment numbers — it is defined by its commitment to students. And that commitment ensures one truth remains constant: **in Olathe Public Schools, opportunity grows here, and it always will.**

2019

30,000 Students

2030

Around 27,000

#OPS
GROW
HERE

8

TWO-YEAR
ACADEMIES

15

FOUR-YEAR
ACADEMIES

23

ADVANCED
PLACEMENT
COURSES

47

COLLEGE NOW
COURSES

Be Informed.



Reimagining Olathe's Strategic Plan

This year, Olathe Public Schools is embarking on a process to update the district's Strategic Plan, which guides the work and focus areas of the district. The current Strategic Plan was developed in 2019 with staff and community input and includes four focus areas: High Academic Expectations for All, Behavior & Social Emotional Development, Human Resources, and Effective Systems and Prioritized Resources. This year, the district is partnering with TrustCentric Consulting and Guild Collective to update our plan to guide us into the years ahead.

As part of this process, the district will be seeking input from various stakeholder groups. If you are interested in being involved in that process, visit the district website at www.olatheschools.org for more information and how you can get involved.

Olathe Public Schools Honored as Top 10 Employer

Olathe Public Schools was named the No. 8 "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. This is the fifth consecutive year that Forbes has recognized Olathe Public Schools as a top employer on either their Best-in-State or Best Midsize Employer lists. In the seven years Forbes has published their Best-in-State employer rankings, Olathe Public Schools has been listed among the top 10 for four of those years.

"We are so proud that Forbes continues to recognize what we know to be true here in Olathe Public Schools — year after year, this district is the best place to work," Superintendent Dr. Brent Yeager said. "This honor is one that belongs to our entire community. From our outstanding educators and support staff, to our amazing students, families and community — we know that people choose to work here, and build long-lasting careers here, because of the collective support of our entire Olathe Public Schools community."

District to Repurpose Westview Elementary School

At the Aug. 7, 2025 Board of Education meeting, the Board voted to approve the proposal to repurpose Westview Elementary School beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

This decision was not one made lightly. However, after careful consideration, the district believes repurposing the campus would provide a fiscally responsible solution to address declining enrollment, as well as a valuable opportunity to create a more

inclusive learning environment that serves all students in Olathe by repurposing the space to serve as the site of the district's new K-8 Alternative Education program.

This semester, the district is holding community meetings with the Westview Elementary School community and any other school communities impacted by the need to update school boundaries as a result of repurposing the building. In addition, district administration continues to meet with staff to discuss the process to secure employment opportunities within the district moving forward, as we are committed to finding placements for all current staff.

To learn more, please visit the district website at www.olatheschools.org.

Olathe Public Schools Innovation Campus Now Open

Programs have started moving into their new spaces at the Olathe Public Schools Innovation Campus, the district's new state-of-the-art career and technical education facility designed to meet the needs of today's students and tomorrow's industries. Several programs started the school year in their new space, including the Olathe Transitions Supports Program, which teaches life skills and work-based learning for students 18-21, as well as the district's Help Clinic and mental health services. Over the next several months, six career pathway programs will move into the Innovation Campus.

The district will host tours of the new facility for students and families involved in these programs. More information will be shared as those tour dates are established.

FOUR-YEAR ACADEMY OPEN HOUSES

For Families of Interested Students in Grades 8-11

OCT. 21 6:00 p.m.

Programs: Distinguished Scholars
Location: Olathe North High School

OCT. 22 5:45 p.m.

Programs: Animal Health, Geoscience,
Medical Professions, Sports Medicine
Location: Olathe North High School

OCT. 28 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Programs: Engineering
Location: Olathe Northwest High School

OCT. 29 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Programs: Green Tech, Public Safety
Location: Olathe West High School

OCT. 30 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Programs: e-Communication
Location: Olathe Northwest High School

NOV. 5 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Programs: Civic Leadership, Design,
Future Educators
Location: Olathe East High School

NOV. 6 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Programs: BioMedical Engineering,
Business Finance, Computer Science
Location: Olathe South High School

Learn more at

www.olatheschools.org/careerpathways

Get Involved.

UPCOMING FALL EVENTS

OCT. 13-16

Parent-Teacher Conferences

OCT. 28

Substitute Job Fair

Location: Olathe Public Schools
Education Center

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

NOV. 3

District Site Council Meeting

Location: Olathe South High School
Time: 7:00 p.m.

NOV. 4

Board of Education Election

NOV. 6

Two-Year Academy Open House

For Families of Interested Students in Grades 8-11

Programs: Animal Science & Research,
Automotive Service Technology, Construction
Technology, Culinary Arts, Electronics and
Avionics, Emergency Medical Services,
Healthcare Sciences, Welding Technology

Location: Olathe Advanced Technical Center
and Olathe Public Schools Innovation Campus
Time: 5:30-7:30 p.m.