

School NEWS



OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

SPRING 2018

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A Message From **SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON**

With 30,000 students and nearly 5,000 staff members, the Olathe Public Schools is more than just a collection of schools. As the largest school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area and the second largest district in the state of Kansas, the district is also one of the largest employers in Johnson County.

What many people don't realize is how large we really are, the economic impact we have on the community and how diligently we work to keep our business running. There are 6,053,515 square feet of asphalt and concrete in the district or 139 acres (or 105 football fields) to clear when it snows.

There are 27,850,211 square feet of green space to maintain in the district or 639 acres (484 football fields). This acreage is big enough to place all four Disney World amusement parks in with room to spare.

Our Food Services Division serves 5,100 breakfasts a day, which equals more than 860,000 per school year. We serve 20,000 lunches per day, which is 3.38 million per year. In terms of technology, we have more than 6,000 devices and our network is the fourth largest

in the metropolitan area.

I share this because I believe it's important for our community to understand the scope of the business needs of such a large school district. While our "business" and focus will always be providing our students with an outstanding education and preparing them for their future, we take very seriously the responsibility of being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

We are grateful to our community for its support of the district, our students and staff. We appreciate all the support our community has had of our bond elections. District staff continues to monitor aging facilities, growth and technology demands as future bond election needs are considered.

We are proud of all that our students and staff accomplish on a daily basis. Thank you to our community for giving us the opportunity to educate your children. It is an honor.

**John Allison,
Superintendent**

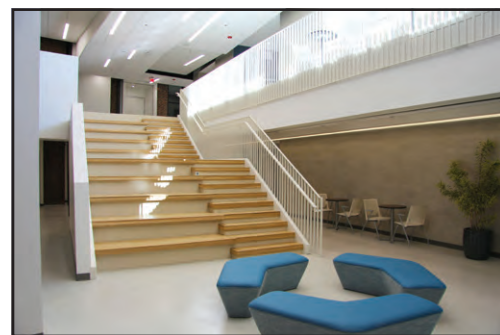
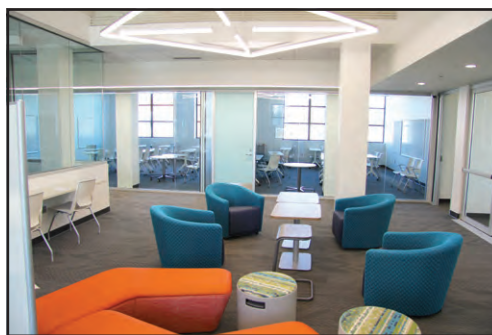
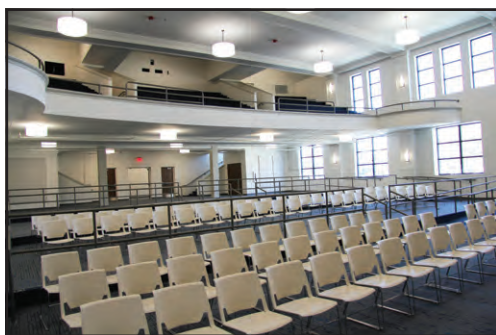
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REVITALIZED MILL CREEK CAMPUS OPENS IN DOWNTOWN OLATHE



Exciting changes have come to downtown Olathe. In the same location that education in Olathe began in 1868, a new chapter is beginning. In early January, the first occupants of the newly renovated Mill Creek Campus, 300 E Loula St., started moving in. The new building includes the repurposing of the three existing buildings, including the former John P. St. John Memorial High School. This renovation provides new education and program spaces needed for the district.

District support programs and services previously housed at the North Lindenwood Support Center, including Parents as Teachers, Community Development and the Olathe Public Schools Foundation, now call Mill Creek Campus home.

Additionally, the district's SOAR program, an alternative education program for grades 8 through 12, will be moved to the Mill Creek Campus from Prairie Learning Center. This will help consolidate many of the district's alternative education programs into one location and provide more space to the district's therapeutic learning programs that are currently housed at PLC. The student programs will move in the summer to be ready for students in August.

"We have vital needs that we need to address and feel that we can accomplish this in a cost-effective way through the renovation of the Mill Creek Campus," Chief Financial and Operations Officer John Hutchison said. "In the process, we are able to preserve a piece of the history of our community and work closely with the City of Olathe on the revitalization of the downtown area."

Other occupants of the building will be district health services, extended absence, night school/Step-Up, off campus learning, credit recovery and a conference center for professional development.

"It is really exciting that we have been able to take this historic site that has been home to so many educational programs over the last century and prepare it for another century of serving students and our community" Hutchison said. "Mill Creek Campus will provide essential services to some of our students who may not be as successful in our larger comprehensive high schools and deserve a chance to succeed."

DISTRICT AND YMCA PARTNER FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the hurdles teachers commonly face regarding professional development days offered through the Olathe School District is child care. For many teachers who are also parents of students in Olathe schools, finding care during a workday creates a challenge.

“Last spring on our District Professional Development survey, teachers shared the difficulty of not having child care for their school-aged children who are at home on district professional development days,” Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Dr. Jessica Dain said. Past professional development exit surveys showed that plans for their children greatly influenced teacher availability to attend sessions. To increase attendance for the learning opportunities, Olathe Public Schools leadership reached out to a longtime partner for a remedy. “We were able to create a solution that we believe works well for everyone,” said Dain.

For all professional development days during the 2017-18 school year, the YMCA provides child care for teachers who are the attending educational session. Washington Elementary hosts younger children and Santa Fe Trail Middle School hosts older children. Both schools utilize YMCA staff members and student volunteers to engage children in activities.

As the YMCA offers before- and after-school Y-Care for all families, the solution to the problem was the work of Olathe district leadership and Jordan Elo, senior district program director, West Region, YMCA of Greater Kansas City. “We strive to have an impact on children daily,” Elo said. “This is just another great opportunity we have to bring our programs and community partners in to reach kids.”

In an effort to reduce costs for all parties, the Olathe Public Schools and the YMCA were able to use student volunteers and waive rental fees to keep costs low. Olathe high school students needing National Honor Society (NHS) volunteer hours and students enrolled in the 21st Century Future Educators Academy, located at Olathe East High School, have been eager to volunteer on their day off.

“We all have an interest in our teachers being the best they can be for our students,” Executive Director of General Administration – Elementary Dr. Brent Yeager said. “The YMCA is a strong partner and was eager to collaborate in our efforts. It was a natural fit as they already provide before- and after-school experiences for a very large number of our students.”

“The YMCA and the Olathe School District have had a partnership for years,” added Elo. “When Dr. Yeager and Dr. Dain approached our Associate Vice President Lorna Kerr and Vice President James Spearin earlier this year it was another natural fit.”

After the completion of the school year, district leadership and the YMCA will debrief and discuss future opportunities as the results have been overwhelmingly positive. “I receive multiple emails from staff every time we send out the sign-up sheet. I have also had teachers who have grown children who congratulate our offers and share they wished it had been offered when their children were little,” said Dain. “We are very proud of this service and thankful for the work of our teachers. It is a small token of our appreciation!”



NAME, MASCOT DECIDED FOR THE DISTRICT'S 10TH MIDDLE SCHOOL



Summit Trail Middle School Principal Dr. Sarah Guerrero stands in front of the Summit Trail construction site.

The newest middle school in the Olathe Public Schools has a name and mascot. Summit Trail Middle will open in August at 22201 W. 118th Street in Olathe. The middle school is located across the street from Millbrooke Elementary. The colors will be black and silver and the mascot is the Sabercat.

Dr. Sarah Guerrero, current principal of Indian Trail Middle, will be the principal of Summit Trail and is looking forward to welcoming staff and students in August.

“The team at Summit Trail Middle School will lead and pursue the quality and excellence which the Olathe community has become accustomed to and what the Olathe Public Schools is known for,” Guerrero said. “It is our goal to embody the district’s vision of ‘Students Prepared for *their* Future!’ We look forward to continuing to partner with you and the community to provide our students with an engaging and high-quality middle school experience that focuses on improving student achievement through challenging, comprehensive and engaging instructional practices. I look forward to continuing my commitment to building strong relationships with our families, students and community partners.”

For the latest updates, visit the Summit Trail website at www.olatheschools.org/summittrail or follow the school on **Twitter (@ST_MS10)** and **Facebook (Summit Trail Middle School – Olathe, KS)**



CHISHOLM TRAIL SCIENCE TEACHER HONORED WITH HORIZON AWARD



Melissa Kinzer received a surprise phone call from Kansas Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Randy Watson.

Chisholm Trail Middle School seventh-grade science teacher Melissa Kinzer didn't start out her career in education. After nine years in the medical industry, working as a radiology and nuclear medicine technician, Kinzer realized her calling was in teaching. And following in the footsteps of a seventh-grade science teacher who impacted her life, Kinzer went back to school to become a teacher. That decision has made a tremendous impact on Kinzer's life, as well as the lives of her students.

In January, Kinzer was honored for her work as a new educator with the prestigious Horizon Award. The Kansas Horizon Awards, which are sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education, recognize the exemplary work of teachers during their first year in the classroom. Kinzer was one of 32 teachers across the state honored with the award this year. She is now in her second year of teaching in the district.

Kinzer received her bachelor's degree in middle school science from Baker University and completed her master's in technology enhanced teaching from MidAmerica Nazarene University.

"I am humbled to receive such a prestigious award. I also know that this would not be possible without the support of the Olathe School District, Chisholm Trail administration, staff, and community," Kinzer said. "I truly enjoy passing on my passion of science to my students and watching them grow as individuals. My specific philosophy is, if I'm not making my classroom fun, then I'm not doing my job right. Students are going to model the enthusiasm of their teacher, so I need to make sure that I don't

hold anything back to capture their attention and leave them a little awestruck with the content taught. This means we play games, make up crazy dance moves, teach class outside, research scientists who study bizarre topics, wear costumes, and do more hands-on activities and labs than sitting in chairs taking notes."

Principal Mike Wolgast said she is truly a special individual in the field of education.

"She is very deserving of this recognition," Wolgast said. "While she is being honored as an outstanding new educator, she is outstanding in her field when compared to all educators. Melissa works tirelessly to improve each and every day and she strives to build positive relationships with her students, colleagues and parent community. Chisholm Trail is fortunate to have her as a member of our family."

Kinzer comes into her classroom each day ready to teach her students, as well as learn from them.

"Teaching means learning," Kinzer said. "I want my students to see that I love to continue learning each day. While I teach specific content in my classroom, I am learning the best way to convey that content to my students. This means learning new teaching strategies, learning to use technology in new ways, learning how to collaborate with other subject areas to make connections, and most importantly, learning about my students. Building a positive and safe environment has to be the foundation my classroom is built upon or else my students will never learn what I am teaching."



THE ART GALLERY OF MADISON PLACE



When the 2017-18 kindergarten class leaves Madison Place Elementary, students will be able to take a look back at every single art project they created. The Madison Place Digital Art Gallery is the brainchild of art teacher Ashley McClaskey who wanted to provide each student a digital art portfolio. "My students had been keeping physical art folders," McClaskey said. "But they took up a lot of room and were difficult for students to access and manage."

Using district-issued iPads and a free app, Artsonia, students are able to document their projects, write personal statements regarding their thought process and showcase their art in real time. "When parents grant permission for their child's art to be posted in the digital gallery, students can show off their art from anywhere in the world," McClaskey said.

The concept is simple but the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Students create pieces of art, just like in any traditional elementary art class, however, after they have made finishing touches, students take their artwork to a photo-friendly white backdrop and snap a picture using their school-issued iPad.

Utilizing the Artsonia app, students upload the photo and are able to give an artist statement and describe their thought process when creating the piece before submitting their art to their personal digital gallery.

"Uploading finished art has made keeping art at the school until the Creativity Showcase that we host in the spring less difficult," McClaskey said. "Students can't wait to take things home to show their families and now, they don't have to."

In addition to providing each student their unlimited digital art portfolio and showcasing their amazing work, Artsonia also gives parents the option to order keepsakes with their child's art and designs. A percentage of those sales is returned to the art department of Madison Place.

"This technology is amazing and not only enriches my students' art learning, it provides a vital tool to involve and communicate with parents," McClaskey said. "This has been an engaging tool for my students!"

COMMUNITY RALLIES AROUND OLATHE STUDENTS

IMPACT OLATHE



Hardship can impact students in various ways in several levels of severity or concern. For Olathe's most vulnerable students, finding a place to stay or dealing with family financial burdens often interferes with classroom efforts and student success.

The mission statement of the Olathe School District is to provide a safe, positive environment where all students acquire knowledge and skills to be productive citizens. A lesser known, but equal in importance, mission is to keep student focus on the classroom regardless of what hurdles life may place.

Under federal law, specifically the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, school districts must identify homeless students or families who are doubled up or are in temporary housing situations. It is also a requirement to have a liaison for such students. Heather Schoonover is the community development liaison for Olathe Public Schools and one of Schoonover's responsibilities is to help connect community resources to families in need so that students can focus on the classroom.

To help in meeting the need and to stretch McKinney-Vento funds, Impact Olathe was created in an effort to face community challenges head on. Once a family is confirmed as homeless through the district, services are provided not only through McKinney-Vento but also through the new Impact Olathe program.

After receiving support from district leadership, planning of the project was expedited. "Impact Olathe started in the fall of 2016 and we started a six-month planning process before launch," Schoonover said. "We spent a year creating a model that fit our community and attended professional development training on the benefit of partnering with the community to meet the needs of

students and families."

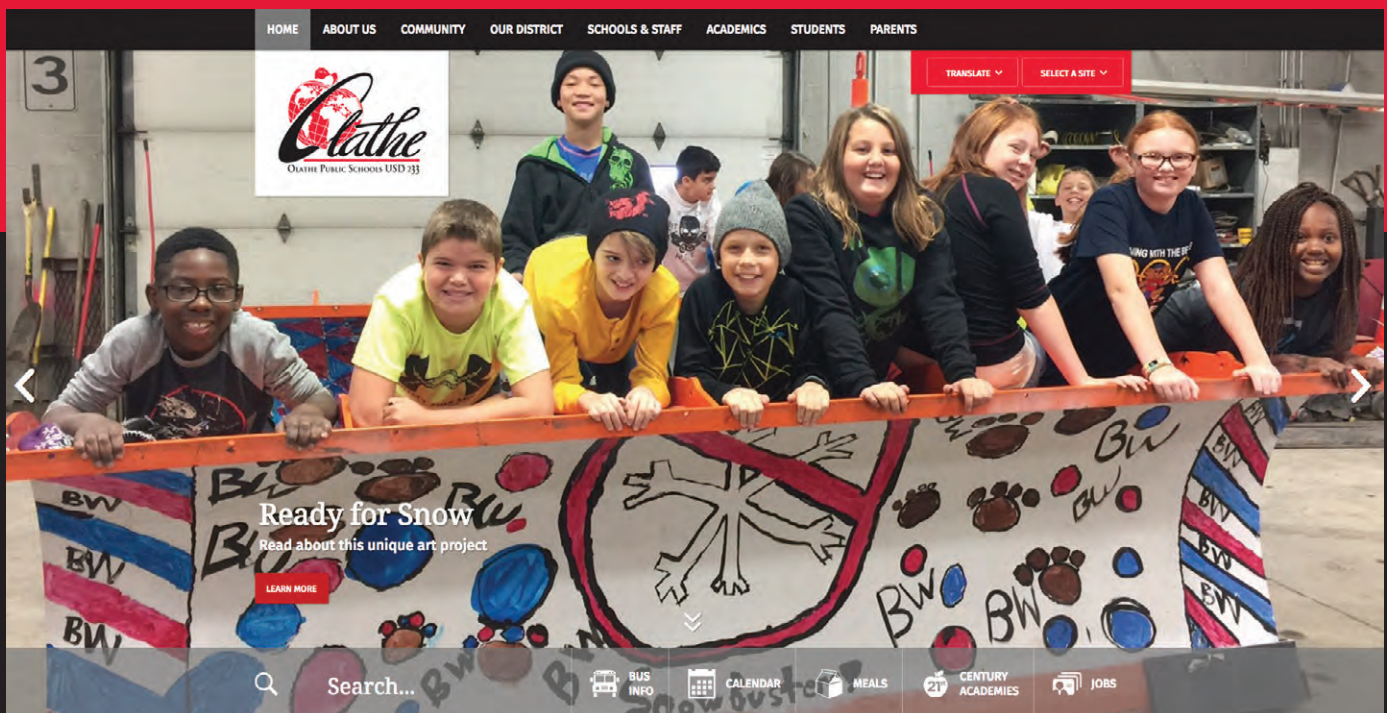
Partnerships and donations are what make this program sustainable, said Schoonover. "We have nine consistent social service agency partners at the table including the Olathe Housing Authority," Schoonover said. "Our goal is the academic success and total well-being of our students. We are always in need of business and faith-based groups for support of our students facing economic and residential challenges."

Before school starts each August, Schoonover and multiple community resources and partners band together for a Back to School Outreach for McKinney-Vento families. During this outreach event, students and their families are provided food, haircuts, shoes, dental care, clothing, coats, school supplies, toiletry kits and much more. In 2016, this event received a national award from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) for best school district outreach program.

During the 2016-17 school year, 29 percent of students in Olathe schools qualified for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Over 400 were classified as homeless. "Can you imagine getting a student ready for school each day, going to work and then having to decide if there's enough money for a medical bill, to put food on the table or to pay rent? Some families have bumps in the road and some struggle for longer," Schoonover said. "Parents want the best for their children and we are blessed to have the support of our Board of Education, district leadership and community programs who want the same level of success for each student. We have an entire community that cares about our students!"

NOTIFICATION STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION.

The Olathe Public Schools prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion or disability 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 and other relevant state and federal laws. Inquiries regarding compliance with applicable civil rights statutes related to ethnicity, gender, age discrimination 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 General Administration, 14160 S. Black Bob Road, 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 General Administration. (12/17)



NEW DISTRICT WEBSITE

In an effort to better serve its patrons, the Communications Division of Olathe Public Schools worked tirelessly to update and develop a refreshed, integrated user experience for the district website.

"It's our goal in communication to provide our parents, staff, students and patrons with a website that gives all the information they need, available in an easy to navigate format," Olathe Public Schools Director of Communications Maggie Kolb said. "We want visitors to find the information they need quickly and most importantly to find value in what we share and have available on the website."

During the summer of 2017, Olathe Public Schools released a mobile app that pulled information from its website and social media. Because the previous district website wasn't mobile friendly, the Communications Division expedited plans to update the website knowing that the mobile app would also be enhanced.

The new district site was launched in December 2017 and district staff are currently working on individual school sites.

"Regular visitors to the district site will find that most information stayed in the same place as the old site," District Web

Manager Marlene Colgan said. "But it's now easier to view on smart phones and other mobile devices."

"We're using the same approach for the elementary websites, which began rolling out in February," Colgan said. "In addition to school-specific news and events, the elementary sites will have districtwide news on the home page, quick links for popular information, and the ability to report absences via email. Principals are excited about the ability to publish their social media news on the school home page, and to reach non-English speaking families via the translate button on each page of their site."

One addition to the website parents may have noticed in January was the notification alert about the Jan. 11 snow day. Website visitors were greeted with the same notification that mobile app users received.

Once elementary sites are completed, the middle schools and high schools will also see their websites refreshed with the new web platform in the next year. "New websites will only enhance parents' and patrons' digital experience when teamed with the mobile app," said Kolb. "These tools go hand in hand to keep our community informed and engaged."

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