

School NEWS



SPRING 2017

OLATHE TEACHER NAMED HORIZON AWARD WINNER



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A Message From **INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT DR. PATRICIA ALL**



A big focus of our attention this semester is on the Kansas Legislature, as they wrestle with important funding issues that will have a tremendous impact on the Olathe Public Schools. District administrators and the Board of Education are watching closely and sharing information with legislators about district, student and staff needs. We realize that our legislators have a large task ahead of them as they tackle budget issues and the need for a new education funding formula. We will continue to work closely with our legislators and advocate for the Olathe Public Schools.

I hope you find it important to stay informed. There are many ways to stay engaged in the legislative process.

- Learn the issues and how they impact the Olathe Public Schools.
- For more information about how the legislative session is impacting the Olathe Public Schools, visit www.olatheschools.com/legislativeupdate.
- Speak with your neighbors about the issues that face the state and the Olathe Public Schools.
- Get involved in the political process and encourage others to get involved as well.

- Contact your legislators. Be sure to have a clear message and give examples of how legislation would impact you, your family and your community.
www.jocoelection.org/Directory/D-Representatives.htm
www.jocoelection.org/Directory/D-Senators.htm
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Follow the process and the timeline of the legislative session.

This issue of School News is filled with stories of the wonderful things happening in our schools and the amazing learning opportunities for our students. From a story about bilingual library offerings at Westview Elementary to a feature on the new 21st Century Academies set to open for students in the 2017-18 school year, to an article about an award-winning teacher, we are proud to highlight our outstanding students, staff and programs. We are grateful to our community for its support of all we do to prepare students for their future.

Dr. Patricia All,
Interim Superintendent

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JOHN ALLISON NAMED THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT OF THE OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Beginning in July, the Olathe Public Schools will have a new leader at the reins. John Allison, currently superintendent of Wichita Public Schools, was named Olathe's next superintendent by the Board of Education.

"It is my honor and privilege to be appointed superintendent of the Olathe Public Schools," Allison said. "Olathe is a community that takes great pride in their schools and strives to offer a world-class education for each student. I look forward to working with the Board of Education, staff, students, parents and community to make

sure our students are prepared for *their* future."

Allison has worked in public education for the past 29 years and has served as superintendent in the Wichita Public Schools since 2009. Prior to becoming superintendent for the Wichita Public Schools, Allison served for two years as superintendent of the Mt. Lebanon School District in Pennsylvania. His educational career also includes service as deputy superintendent of the Grapevine-Colleyville School District in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, associate superintendent for education services for the Shawnee Mission School District, and as a middle school and high school building administrator. He began his teaching career in Spring Hill as a high school social studies teacher and coach. His experience includes service in rural, urban, and suburban school districts.

"I can't imagine a profession that gives you a better opportunity to change people's lives than education," Allison said. "You are opening, through knowledge, an unlimited potential in every student."

Allison obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kansas, and his Master of Science from Emporia State University. He has completed doctoral course work in Education Leadership at St. Louis University and Southwestern College.

"We, as a Board of Education, are thrilled to have John Allison as our next superintendent," Board President Rick Schier said. "In our search for the next leader of the Olathe Public Schools, we were looking for an individual who has a student-first philosophy, has the strong leadership skills to work in a large school district, has excellent people skills, is

a strong communicator and has an ability to work well with elected officials. We feel John Allison possesses every one of the qualities and skills we were looking for. He brings great experience, and a strong educational background. We are confident he will be an outstanding leader for our students, staff, parents and community."

Allison is looking forward to spending his first months in Olathe, listening, seeking to understand the district and to find ways to get involved the community.

"My approach is about being student-centered," Allison said. "Our focus has to be on what's best for students. The way I go about doing that is engaging our stakeholders, including our students, to do what we need to do. Keeping students as the primary focus is first and foremost."

BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES LOCATION CHANGE FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS IN 2017

At its January meeting, the Board of Education approved an exciting change that will impact the families of graduating seniors. Citing the crowded gymnasiums and high demand for tickets, the board has moved graduation ceremonies outdoors for the Class of 2017 as a way to better accommodate the families of large graduating classes. The date for graduation will remain Sunday, May 21, but the times and locations will be as follows:

- Olathe East High School graduation at 2 p.m. at College Boulevard Activity Center
- Olathe North High School graduation at 2 p.m. at Olathe District Activity Center
- Olathe Northwest High School graduation at 7 p.m. at College Boulevard Activity Center
- Olathe South High School graduation at 7 p.m. at Olathe District Activity Center

If weather indicates a need to move indoors, that decision would be made by 9 a.m. on graduation Sunday and ceremonies will take place at home high schools. Notices would be sent via the Blackboard communication system to parents, and posted on the district website and social media sites.



OLATHE TEACHER NAMED HORIZON AWARD WINNER

Kim Ingraham witnessed firsthand the impact an outstanding teacher could make on a child's life. When her young son needed some additional support, she contacted Infant Toddler Services and later teachers at Heartland Early Childhood Center. She watched them work with her son, Andrew. She observed the way he thrived with their assistance.

It was in that moment, she knew she wanted to be a teacher. Now in her second year as an early childhood teacher at Pleasant Ridge Elementary, Ingraham is receiving her own praise for outstanding teaching. She was recently named a recipient of the Kansas Horizon Award, a prestigious award that recognizes the exemplary work of teachers during their first year in the classroom. Ingraham was one of 32 teachers across the state honored with the award this year.

"I am so honored and humbled to represent Olathe by having been selected for this award. It is truly a great honor to be chosen amongst the amazing teachers we have throughout the district," Ingraham said. "Being chosen for the Kansas Horizon Award resonates deeply within me, and it was quite an emotional and pivotal moment."

Ingraham received her bachelor's degree from Fort Hays State University and her master's degree from the University of Kansas.

Pleasant Ridge Principal Krystal Actkinson credits her passion for the classroom and for students as part of Ingraham's success in the classroom.

"Her energy and enthusiasm radiates from her personality and energizes whomever she surrounds – her students, her parents, her colleagues, and her principal," Actkinson said. "The relationships she builds with each individual student and family is personal, and she seeks to emphasize the dignity and importance of everyone she interacts with. She has a keen understanding of child development and incorporates a variety of effective instructional strategies to promote high levels of learning in her early childhood classroom. She is successful in creating an instructional environment that is relevant, real to life, and interactive."

Ingraham credits the support of her colleagues for her success. She said reaching out to her colleagues when she had a question or needed feedback made a world of difference in her first year. And more than anything, the students she teaches have made a tremendous impact on her as well.

"It has been so rewarding to be able to make a difference in the lives of my students. I feel so blessed," Ingraham said. "Not everyone can say that right out of school they landed their dream job in their dream district."

BILINGUAL BOOKS HELP STUDENTS LEARN NEW LANGUAGE

Katie Chiaverini has a dream, and a grant from the Olathe Public Schools Foundation is helping it come true at Westview Elementary School.

“My hope is that students will become more interested in becoming biliterate, increase the pride in their biliteracy, increase the number of biliterate students, spend more time reading in both languages, and better involve families in the literacy taking place in the home,” the English Language Learner teacher said.

English and Spanish go hand in hand at Westview; whether it is English-speaking students and their Spanish-speaking classmates getting to know each other, bilingual students helping their Spanish-speaking parents learn a new language, or English-speaking students picking up a second language. The blending of languages is being helped this year thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Olathe Public Schools Foundation Women’s Giving Circle.

Chiaverini submitted the Fostering Bilingual Literacy grant application in the hopes of impacting more than 4,000 elementary students and their families over the next 15 years. The grant enabled Westview to purchase 433 bilingual library books, and more than 300 paperback bilingual books for students to read in the gym before school each day. The fiction and non-fiction books are written in English and Spanish from cover to cover. Some books are as simple as showing the names for various shapes or colors; others are short stories written in two languages.

“It has been great to go into our gym in the mornings and see groups of students reading together in both English and Spanish,” Principal Jon Bell said.

Chiaverini is developing a group of parent volunteers who will regularly participate in the gym reading time and another reading period as breakfast is served in classrooms. Her primary focus is a group of first-grade students who are native Spanish speakers and learning English.

“I met with the first-grade teachers and we chose six ELL students,” Chiaverini said. “The teachers are doing their own interventions with these students during the school day, but I’m looking for a way to get more help for them during non-academic times.”

She already sees enthusiasm from both English- and Spanish-speaking students.

“I see children improving their Spanish literacy skills when they try to read the bilingual books in the morning,” she said.



“They look at the English and Spanish parts to help them figure out new words and have a heightened literacy awareness in both languages.

“It’s amazing to see a child suddenly understand a language they have spoken their whole lives as it matches printed words. It really does increase their understanding of words in print and as a language in general.”

The morning gym reading period began this school year, and Chiaverini takes some of those books to the weekly Mission Southside Homework Huddle in the Eagle’s Point Apartments.

“I know some teachers who come and use the books to help improve their Spanish,” she said.

On the flip side of the bilingual books, Chiaverini hopes parents who regularly volunteer to help with the morning reading session will reap the benefits of learning English.

“I think this will develop even more with the help of the library books,” she said.

The after-school Spanish Literacy Club meets for 25 minutes, twice a week. Chiaverini and one student helper work with 10 students in kindergarten through third grade.

“We started with the basic alphabet, sounds and syllables and have moved on to reading and writing basic repetitive books,” she said. “The students created books as a group and I made copies for them to take home and read over and over. I’ve had several parents comment on how excited they are to read these books with their children and that their children are learning to read and write in Spanish.

“My daughter is one of the non-native Spanish speakers in the club and she is already reading basic Spanish books from her book bag to her extended family members. The kids are so proud to be reading in another language.”

Principal Bell sees changes in many of the students who participate in morning reading or the Spanish Literacy Club.

“In both programs, students who might not typically interact with each other now have a way to connect with one another,” he said. “I think it is neat that students who sometimes typically

are quiet due to the language barrier, now can take on a leadership role. I am excited that the bilingual library books will enable our Spanish-speaking parents at home to read with their children and talk about what is being read."

Chiaverini is promoting the bilingual library books via fliers and many families have heard the good news via word of mouth. She shared the good news with the audience of the school's musical theatre program, which coincidentally was about the adventures you can find in books. Any child who attends the morning gym reading period or her ELL class knows the library's selection of bilingual books will grow from about 35 to more than 450.

"I am trying to come from all different angles," she said. "I'm getting the kids excited about the books so they will check them out and getting the parents involved so they can hopefully ask their kids to look for the bilingual books to check them out and then just promoting the idea of reading together as a family."



When Daniel Kerns, Savanna Smith and Brandon York talk about SkillsUSA, their faces light up with enthusiasm. They feel a great sense of pride because in many ways, they are SkillsUSA. Together, they are three of the leaders of the state organization, a huge feat for students from the same organization.

Kerns, Smith and York are all students at the Olathe Advanced Technical Center. Kerns is in Welding, Smith is in Auto Technology, and York is in Auto Collision. Each wanted to run for state office in SkillsUSA. Each did. Smith is the secretary, Kerns is the parliamentarian and York is the state representative or alternative on the board, filling in for any board member statewide who cannot attend a meeting. OATC has been fortunate to have state level representation for several years, but this is the first time we have had three students representing and participating as state SkillsUSA officers.

"To have three state board members in one building is phenomenal," said Amy Stolz, OATC building administrator. "They have taken so much ownership in not only their roles, but in our building. My heart swells to see the confidence they have gained and the experiences they are getting."

According to the organization, SkillsUSA is a "partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce." SkillsUSA provides educational programs, events and competitions that support career and technical education (CTE).

Kerns is a senior at Olathe Northwest High School. He

THREE OATC STUDENTS TAKE ON LEADERSHIP AT STATE SKILLSUSA

said being a part of Kansas SkillsUSA has provided him with greater public speaking and leadership skills. After he graduates, he'd like to get a welding certificate from Johnson County Community College and then head off to Kansas State University.

"Hard work paid off," he said. "I put the effort in and took an amazing opportunity."

Smith, an Olathe East High School senior, has always liked to push herself. In fact, when she graduates from the Olathe Public Schools, she plans to enlist in the Marines. She hopes to take the experience she's gained in the Auto Technology program and apply the skills to aviation.

"I want to push myself to do great things," she said. "Being a part of this program, being a part of SkillsUSA in an industry that is not female-dominated, is empowering."

York, a junior at Olathe North High School, could never have imagined he could stand and speak in front of his peers at OATC, let alone other state SkillsUSA officers.

"The best part of being a part of SkillsUSA is getting to meet with other student leaders from across the state," York said. "It's a great opportunity to be a part of SkillsUSA."

Stolz cannot help but be proud of her students and all they have accomplished with SkillsUSA. She's watched them gain confidence, learn to speak in front of groups and become leaders among their peers.

"To say that I am proud is an understatement," Stolz said. "These kids are extraordinary."

NEW 21ST CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL



For more than a decade, the 21st Century High School Academies have provided an opportunity to combine student interest with student learning. As the district continues to grow, so too do the 21st Century Academies. Olathe West High School is slated to open its doors this fall and when it does, two new 21st Century Academies will make their debut as well: Green Tech Academy and Public Safety Academy. In addition, four other new academies will launch at that time across the district: BIOengineering Academy, Business Finance Academy, Civic Leadership Academy, and Future Educators Academy. A total of 15 academies will be available throughout the district to students starting next school year. These academies were designed by a team of professionals in the field, higher education professors and Olathe district staff experts.

These innovative, four-year academies allow students to build upon their passions and learn industry-specific knowledge and skills they can apply toward their post-secondary experiences and career fields. These transfer programs, in addition to the comprehensive high school courses and experiences in which students are involved, provide a focus for a student's entire high school career. For more information about the 21st Century Academies, go to www.olatheschools.com/21stCentury.

Learn more about the new academies, from each academy's facilitator.

BIOengineering Academy, located at Olathe South High School

Jeff Witters, Facilitator

Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: BIOengineering will be an entry point for students into an amazing set of career fields that bring together the love of making/tinkering with the desire to help bring people back to health and wholeness.

Q: What do you hope students experience as a member of your academy?

A: From many conversations with professionals in the field, our focus will be on getting students to the place of seeing every problem as a challenge in need of a solution, and begin to deeply learn the mindsets and conceptual tools of this field. As the students develop intellectually, they will also gain confidence in getting their hands into a challenge by working with materials, tools and processes – learning through doing.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: While we will have similarities to some other academies in the engineering and medical fields, we will be the only academy with its sole focus on the expansive field of bioengineering. For the many students who find interest in both areas, we will help them explore the myriad careers that bring together engineering and medicine in the perfect hybrid to reflect their own developing passions.



Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: One of the crucial types of activities will be reverse-engineering all kinds of medical devices, starting with some of the seemingly simplest devices so that the students truly grasp how the devices work. The students will engage in experiments as they learn to examine variables in a problem or evaluate the performance of a prototype solution. Every year the students will tackle design challenges, both small and in-house as well as larger competitions where they test their growing skillsets against other teams regionally or even nationally. Students will be working with higher education experts to expand their horizons.

Business Finance Academy, located at Olathe South High School

Cindy O'Brien, Facilitator

Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: In addition to students learning business theory and concepts, they will study business ethics and professionalism. Students will have the opportunity to engage in accounting, the language of business, and the field of wealth management.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: The Business Finance Academy is unique because it is the only one preparing students for a career in business and finance. A unique feature is the fact that the students will work together in a cohort group their freshman year. They will experience business in a hands-on, dynamic year-long course that will include job shadows, guest speakers, and field trips to local businesses and universities.

Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: Students will have the opportunity to participate in competitive clubs and organizations at the local, state and national levels. Seniors will have the opportunity to obtain professional experiences with a local business partner. They will be able to experience firsthand what it is like to be part of the business world. They will meet contacts and build relationships that will stay with them way beyond their time in the academy. Connections that students will make with professionals in the field of business and finance will provide great networking opportunities.



Civic Leadership Academy, located at Olathe East High School

Breanna Francis, Facilitator

Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: Students in the Civic Leadership Academy are agents of change in our community. They are real-world problem solvers and community builders. The program is designed to develop leadership potential for students interested in law, public service, non-profit fields, and other fields of civic engagement.

Q: What do you hope students experience as a member of your academy?

A: I hope they find themselves empowered by the opportunities available. The networking and professional experiences will be the greatest assets to students completing our academy as they continue their education after high school.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: There really are not many programs like this available to high



SCHOOL ACADEMIES TAKING SHAPE

school students in our region. The connections with professionals in the field and access to field experience set 21st Century Academies districtwide apart from the traditional high school experience.

Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: Mock trial experience, internships in the fields of law and public administration, field trips, practical experiences in both the field and in the classroom. Whether in the field of law or public administration, students will have exciting opportunities such as mock trials, Youth Court, working with city leaders, and learning how to run a non-profit organization.

Future Educators Academy, located at Olathe East High School

Josh Umphrey, current facilitator. A facilitator for 2017-18 school year will be announced this spring.



Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: Our academy is designed to prepare the next generation of great educators. Whether you want to be a teacher, a coach, a pastor or an educator in the business world, our academy will provide you with the necessary skills to be successful.

Q: What do you hope students experience as a member of your academy?

A: Our goal is for our students to experience a wide range of educational opportunities. We want our students to be equipped with effective strategies to meet the needs of the diverse learner.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: Our academy is designed to showcase our profession as educators. The unique thing about our academy is that the students will be surrounded by expert educators on a daily basis. Olathe schools has some of the best teachers in the nation and our students will have the chance to learn from our own!

Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: Our students will receive real world experience. They will have the opportunity to move out in the community. They will work closely with educators all across our district at all levels from early childhood to high school. They will get to work up close with other students and see the lifelong fulfillment of changing someone's life through education. Students will participate in local, state and national educators organizations and competitions designed to prepare students for their future careers. Students will participate in field trips to higher education institutions that prepare future educators.

Green Tech Academy, located at Olathe West High School

Trinda Wheeler, Facilitator

Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: The Green Tech Academy has two interconnected areas of focus: Energy and Sustainability. As a student progresses through the four years, the topics covered gradually narrow, from a very broad-sweeping global outlook in the first year through to a student-chosen single focus during the capstone year.

Q: What do you hope students experience as a member of your academy?

A: Through their four years of short- and long-term projects,



students will develop an understanding of how human activities affect our local, national, and global ecosystems.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: While the Green Tech Academy will include some aspects of engineering, earth science, and design, our focus will always be on how each decision we make affects the environment. There is also a strong focus on debating environmental issues and policies.

Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: We'll be taking field trips to power plants (coal-fired, wind farms, maybe even nuclear!), water treatment facilities, and local businesses with strong sustainability programs. As we progress in our study of alternative energy sources, students will have multiple opportunities to design, build, and evaluate systems of solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal energy, and more.

Public Safety Academy, located at Olathe West High School

Jeff Van Dyke, Facilitator

Q: What do you want people to know about your academy?

A: The 21st Century Public Safety Academy was developed by local, county, and state public safety professionals (i.e. police officers, firefighters, EMS personnel). The curriculum was actually written by members of these organizations in conjunction with district staff.

Q: What do you hope students experience as a member of your academy?

A: Students will get to experience a real-world/hands-on type of learning environment due to the support of our community partners. Students will network and develop relationships with our community partners that will lead to their employment and a future in the public safety industry. Students will truly get a feel for what it takes to become a public safety professional and know that this is what they want to do as a career.

Q: What makes your academy unique?

A: The involvement of our community partners in the actual development of the curriculum is what makes it so unique. This curriculum was written by the very people that these students will be applying for jobs with and working next to in the future. The Public Safety Academy is the type of program focusing on real employability skills that students will be exposed to the true nature of the professions within public safety. The academy also has unique coursework for students such as Public Safety Physical Fitness and health to prepare students for the rigorous fitness requirements required in these fields. Students will also take Spanish for First Responders, Science and Photography Documentation, and Forensic Sciences, other unique courses.

Q: What exciting activities can students experience in your academy?

A: The students within this academy will participate in multiple scenario-based experiences where they will have to apply what they learned to a possible situation they would encounter if they were a public safety professional. For example, students in the law enforcement strand of the academy will participate in real-world scenarios which will teach them how to communicate and apply the appropriate laws to resolve disturbances, car stop violations, and other situations that occur in the typical call load of a law enforcement officer. Some of the fire rescue student scenario training will involve extracting persons from vehicles, maintaining equipment in emergency situations, and application of appropriate first aid during emergency situations.



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