School NEWS



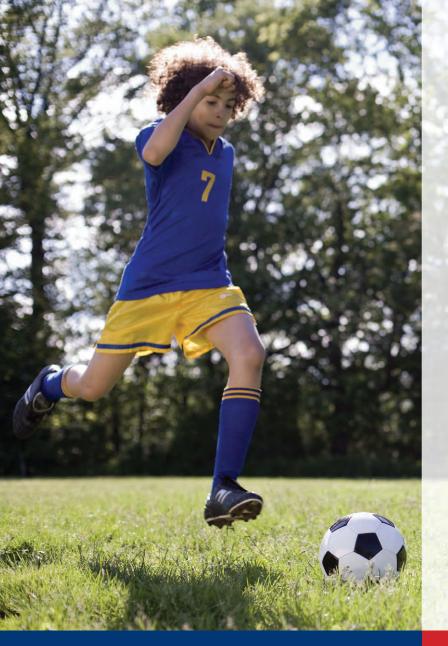
FALL 2017



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PRESORTED STANDARD US POSTAGE INSIDE OPENING WEEK AT OLATHE WEST HIGH SCHOOL IMAGES FROM THE SOLAR ECLIPSE OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNVEILS MOBILE APP



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A Message From SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON



It is difficult to express my level of excitement in beginning to serve the Olathe community as your superintendent of schools. I am humbled to be a part of Olathe's rich history as we move education forward and into the future. As we challenge our teachers and students to achieve greatness, it is my task to work collaboratively with the Board of Education to pursue a high level of excellence as a district in the ways we educate our future generation.

The beginning of the school year is one of my personal favorite times of year as it is a time of optimism and opportunity. With the opening of Olathe West High

School, there is a new level of optimism and educational opportunities in our district. As you'll see in this issue of *School News*, it takes dedicated work from committed professionals to make a vision come to fruition.

Our work is far from over. I look forward to advancing the Olathe Public Schools into the future and as an educational leader in not only Kansas but across the nation. When we work collaboratively and put students first, great things happen!

John Allison, Superintendent

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GET ECLIPSED

The historic solar eclipse engaged the nation and created excitement locally in our school district. August 21 brought a solar eclipse with 99.4 percent totality across Olathe. At approximately 1:08 p.m., students witnessed history with special, NASA-approved solar viewing glasses. The Olathe School District purchased enough glasses for every student and staff member to ensure safe participation for all.

For several months, district leadership and curriculum coordinators had planned on using this event as a learning opportunity for all students.

Classroom activities included collaboration between class subjects, such as experiencing the eclipse through historical lenses or understanding the science in the drop in temperature. Many students made journal entries of observations.

Several schools started the day with safety assemblies and discussed safe viewing practices and the importance of wearing the safety glasses at all times.

Students at Heatherstone Elementary traced the shadows of the sun intermittently throughout the eclipse and recorded temperature and wind changes. The nearby wooded area provided an opportunity for students to listen to changes in animal noises. Snacks such as Moon Pies, Sun Chips and Starbursts were given out to students as parent volunteers assisted with each class to make sure students kept their glasses on.

Bentwood Elementary students practiced their eclipse viewing plans the previous week as teachers were provided age-appropriate activities which included videos, songs and activities. Younger students made headbands and paper models.

"Teachers and staff members have taken the utmost precautions and practiced the correct viewing procedures to ensure that students are safe and understand the importance of wearing their glasses during the eclipse," Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Jessica Dain said. "This is truly one of life's best science experiences and we feel so lucky to have the opportunity to help guide student learning!"



INTERVIEW: A LOOK AT THE 21ST CENTURY ACADEMIES AT OLATHE WEST HIGH SCHOOL

August, Olathe West High School became the fifth high school in the Olathe School District. As each high school is home to innovative 21st Century Academies, Olathe West unveiled the Public Safety Academy and the Green Tech Academy. In total, there are 2,049 students enrolled across the 15 academies. Trinda Wheeler is the facilitator for the Green Tech Academy. She has been teaching chemistry and physics since 2011. In her previous career, Wheeler worked as an environmental engineer for various agencies. Jeff Van Dyke is the facilitator for the Public Safety Academy and has been in the Olathe School District for the past 15 years. Before Olathe, Van Dyke was a police officer and detective with the Wichita Police Department.

How many students are in your academy this year?

Trinda Wheeler: Roughly 55 students are enrolled in the Green Tech Academy. **Jeff Van Dyke:** We will have 75 students in the academy.

What is some of the exciting feedback you've heard from parents/students about your academy?

Wheeler: Parents are excited to have their students get a head start in an industry with such a strong and broad job potential. Students are excited to be involved in a program that can really make a difference, both in the school community and globally.

Van Dyke: When I describe the partnerships that we already have made with organizations such as the Olathe Police Department, Johnson County Sheriff's Department, FBI, Secret Service, Olathe Fire Department, Johnson County MedAct, Johnson County District Attorney's Office and many others, you can see the excitement just light up in their faces. The opportunities for these students to network and learn from these public safety professionals is going to be amazing.

What are some projects students will be working on this year?

Wheeler: We'll be working to reduce our personal ecological footprint, developing the recycling at Olathe West High School, and starting the process of getting the Energy Star rating for Olathe West.

Van Dyke: One project the students will be working on will be to develop a marketing tool that organizations can use to recruit the younger generations to become public safety professionals. The students will investigate the hiring practices of a specific agency and research the skills needed to gain employment within that agency. They will then create a product that will help their agency of choice recruit quality candidates. When finished, students will present their products to members of these agencies, who will then decide on the quality of the marketing strategy.

What is your favorite aspect of the new academy?

Wheeler: The focus on learning about all aspects of an environmental issue – environmental, political and economic. These students will have a wide-array of opportunities thanks to wonderful partners.

Van Dyke: My favorite aspect up until now has been the overwhelming support from the professionals in the industry. It amazes me to see how excited they are about this academy and how willing they are to help. Our community partners are the backbone of this academy and truly are what will make this academy special for the students.

What are you personally looking forward to this year and moving forward with a brand-new academy?

Wheeler: Getting students' input on how best to implement the curriculum. I have lots of ideas for implementing a truly project-based learning model, but I'm counting on the students to add to the list of ideas and then help decide which ones we should try.

Van Dyke: Personally, I am looking forward to learning with the students. It has been many years since I was in the industry and I look forward to catching up. Also, to see what develops as we move forward in regard to certifications and college credits that students will be able to attain through this academy.









SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ENHANCES THE THREE Rs

Parents and teachers often share the same goals - educate their children for the evolving world that surrounds them and to prepare students socially and emotionally to become well-rounded adults.

"There is an abundance of evidence-based research that supports social-emotional learning as the foundation for improving academic outcomes," said College and Career Readiness Coordinator Angie Salava. "When a student is socially aware and emotionally well, she/he is ready and able to fully engage and learn in the classroom."

Across the Olathe School District, teachers, principals and support staff work to provide students with character-building initiatives. Earlier this year, two elementary schools and a middle school were recognized by the Kansas Schools of Character program.

Sunnyside Elementary School and Frontier Trail Middle received the Enhanced Spotlight Recognition for Social, Emotional and Character Development. The caring school community engaged families and community members in character-building initiatives. The recognition also noted the staff's work to implement meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that highlights respect.

"The Olathe school counselors, along with administrative and teacher support, have made social-emotional learning for all students a priority in their buildings," Salava said. "Frontier Trail Middle School and their counselors, Mary Smith and Jessica Colson, have literally changed what counseling looks like at their school. Mindy Wells, counselor at Sunnyside Elementary, has taken social-emotional learning in her building to new levels, involving every staff member in order to improve students' social-emotional learning and to improve student achievement. I'm pleased that the state of Kansas is recognizing and rewarding their innovative work."

Ravenwood Elementary School earned two Promising Practices Awards from the Kansas Schools of Character and Character.org for work to teach social and emotional life skills through specific lessons and modeling kindness in the school and community.

Social-emotional learning at Ravenwood includes counselor lessons, positive behavior intervention supports, and social skills. Throughout the year, students will focus on being empathetic toward others, and each quarter they will focus on a Pillar of Character (respectful, kind, trustworthy and responsible). A series of 34 basic skills will be addressed throughout the year, one week at a time, and each Tuesday is a "tune up" review of procedures and routines at Ravenwood.

"We see students using appropriate social skills and manners daily around the school," Ravenwood Principal Christi Gottschalk said. "Parents make an effort to go out of their way to tell teachers or other staff members how polite the students are at Ravenwood."

Another element of the social-emotional learning at Ravenwood is the weekly Boy's Town social skill. These range from making an apology to greeting others, disagreeing appropriately to showing appreciation.

"Kindness is displayed randomly and intentionally as part of



our everyday climate at Ravenwood," Gottschalk said. Many times students write notes of thanks and encouragement to staff saying how much they enjoy learning at Ravenwood.

"Deliberate teaching of self and social awareness, selfmanagement and relationship skills, as well as responsibledecision making in every classroom and throughout the curriculum from grades PreK-12 will ensure that all Olathe students have these skills to be able to learn and to achieve success throughout their lives," Salava said.

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 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 General Administration. (07/17)



Visually unique from other area high schools, the three-story, 370,115-square-foot school was the brainchild of national best practices and the innovation of education. The building is divided into "neighborhoods" which house different grade levels.

The inception of Olathe West High School can be traced back to 2013, when officially greenlit as part of the 2013 Bond Issue. The need for a new high school in Olathe sought to relieve crowding at the other high schools. For the better half of nearly four years, Olathe West was meticulously planned and constructed; every detail purposefully placed.

Well in advance of the school year, plans were in place for students and staff. As the school year began in mid-August, more than 900 freshmen, sophomores and juniors known as "Original Owls" walked through the doors of Olathe West. The first week was a whirlwind of excitement and events.





Wednesday, August 16

Principal Jay Novacek arrived at Olathe West before 6 a.m. A local news crew was outside the building ready to interview him regarding the first day of school for freshman students. "It's not hard to get excited for the first day of school," Novacek said. "Teachers get just as excited as the students do."

Students began to fill the commons area at 7:20 a.m. Dozens of students decided to scope out the selection of books in the library. The excitement continued to build as more students began to arrive. A late-summer rain would not dampen student spirit.

At 8 a.m. students were lead into the gym for an introduction to "Owl Life." Freshman students passed through a tunnel of teachers



Members of the Olathe West administrative staff team watch as the "Founding Freshmen" are welcomed to the building.

and administrators on their way to the assembly.

The rest of the whirlwind day included breakout meetings with various teachers and student groups throughout the building. As classrooms are adorned with flexible furniture that can be easily moved to fit the needs of each specific class periods or projects, a classroom might not look the same from day to day. Having young students get a feel for their surroundings was vital for early student success. Incoming students have had multiple opportunities to view the building but a refresher never hurts.

Thursday, August 17

Excitement again filled the halls of Olathe West as all grade levels reported for the first full day of school. The commons area was filled with students eager to begin the school year.



Thursday began with a booming pep assembly. Students learned the alma mater and fight song as they began to build camaraderie.

After the assembly, students followed their schedules, met with teachers and began to get familiar with the neighborhoods. Students passed by many areas that they will begin to utilize, such as the "learning stairs," as the school year unfolds.

Students at Ŏlathe West are the initial group to implement the 1-to-1 laptop initiative, meaning each student will be issued a MacBook. Teachers began to work with students and explain expectations for the year and how the technology would be leveraged.

Friday, August 18

The first week concluded with a building dedication where all students gathered in the gym and joined in the singing of the alma mater and fight song. Highlights of the ribbon cutting ceremony included remarks from Board of Education President Brent McCune and Superintendent John Allison.

Opening week at Olathe West concluded with a parent informational meeting and a mixer for all students.



Olathe West was designed to maximize learning spaces and enhance opportunities for students. "Learning stairs" double as an alternative for a small auditorium, perfect for a presentation too large for a classroom setting.



Superintendent John Allison speaks to students during the building dedication.



Board of Education President Brent McCune congratulates students and staff on an amazing first week.



Olathe West High School leadership cut the ribbon with John Allison and Brent McCune.

OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS – THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

an increasingly mobile world, apps are a becoming a musthave for services and companies. A mobile app often offers breaking information simultaneously with a story posted to a website. This July, in an effort to efficiently serve families, the Communications Division of Olathe Public Schools released the district's first mobile app.

"We are thrilled with the launch of the Olathe Public Schools mobile app," Director of Communications Maggie Kolb said. "Keeping our parents informed is vital and this app is just one more way we can accomplish this goal. We hope that all parents download the free app and feel more connected to the Olathe Public Schools."

The Olathe Public Schools mobile app includes a number of features that parents can find useful. Within the app, parents can subscribe to receive news from the district and individual schools. Parents are able to tailor their newsfeed to include as many or as few schools as they wish.

Push notifications help to keep parents informed on pertinent information such as snow days or emergency communications from principals.

The district calendar is available as well as a staff directory for each school building. Parents can view the month's lunch menu as well as receive information regarding student transportation with a tap of an icon.

District and school social media pages can be accessed all in one location through the app.

ParentVUE is a program that students and parents leverage throughout the year to access grades, update student information and view other school-specific information. Parents can access ParentVUE with a simple login via the mobile app.

Keeping student safety at the forefront of all district initiatives, the Olathe Public Schools mobile app includes a Safe Schools Safe Students Tip Line that allows users to notify the school and district of any safety risks. Users can attach a picture of the complaint and even include GPS coordinates specific to the image. The Tip Line allows users to attach their name and contact information or remain anonymous.



Manager of Safety and Security Rick Castillo makes student safety his No. 1 priority. "It's imperative that students and patrons are able to voice their concerns," Castillo said. "It's also important that our patrons have the knowledge their concerns will be acted upon immediately and with integrity. Our patrons' safety is paramount."

The Olathe Public Schools mobile app is available for free through the Apple App Store or Google Play store. Before publishing, the mobile app has been downloaded over 3,000 times.

NEW DISTRICT MIDDLE SCHOOL TO OPEN IN 2018

The district's 10th middle school, under construction at 119th Street and Sunnybrooke Boulevard, will open next fall and relieve overcrowding at Mission Trail and Prairie Trail middle schools. Each of those schools is expected to have more than 900 students this fall.

In preparation for the opening, district staff held community meetings this fall at all potentially impacted schools to gather input on boundaries. The Board of Education is expected to vote on boundaries in November or December, and name a principal by semester break. Next spring, the principal will hire staff, and work with students and the community to determine the school's colors and mascot.

Middle School 10 will closely resemble Mission Trail Middle School, which opened in 2010. It will occupy about 150,800 square feet of space and have a capacity of 700-800 students.







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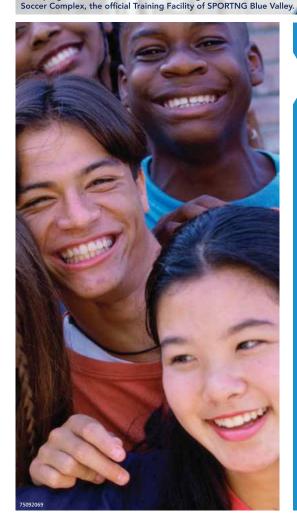
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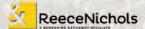
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