

# School NEWS



OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD 233

WINTER 2017

## PERFORMING ARTS PLAYS A LARGE ROLE IN OLATHE MIDDLE SCHOOLS



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## *A Message From* **SUPERINTENDENT JOHN ALLISON**

As the end of my first semester in the Olathe Public Schools winds down, I am feeling particularly grateful for Olathe's outstanding students and staff and supportive community. It has been a joy to visit schools, attend events and meet people across the district. Thank you for your warm welcome.

As January approaches, a big focus of our attention will be on the Kansas Legislature, as they work through the latest Kansas Supreme Court decision on school funding and wrestle with important funding issues and solutions that have a tremendous impact on the Olathe Public Schools. District administration has been and will continue to watch closely and share information with legislators about district, student and staff needs.

It's important for the community to stay informed and engaged

on important legislative issues and communicate with your elected officials. As we do each year, we will continue to maintain our Legislative Update page on the district website to keep you up-to-date on legislative issues that impact the Olathe Public Schools. You can access this page by visiting [www.olatheschools.com/legislativeupdate](http://www.olatheschools.com/legislativeupdate).

There, you can also find other important information, including contact information for state legislators.

Once again, I thank you for your support of the Olathe Public Schools.

**John Allison,  
Superintendent**

## *In This Issue...*

**Olathe Public Schools 14160 S Black Bob Road, Olathe, KS 66063  
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### **NOTIFICATION STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION.**

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# SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE



Students in the Certified Nursing Assistant program at Olathe North High School learn a broad range of skills.

**Olathe** high school students have a number of course options available to them as they plan for their post-secondary lives. They may want to attend a local two-year college to get a jump-start on their degree, or they may prefer some hands-on training that will prepare them for a technical career. The district's advanced high school programs include College Now courses, Advanced Placement classes and career-technical programs.

## College Now

There are 39 College Now courses offered in Olathe Public Schools. The dual-credit program allows students to earn high school and college credit through Johnson County Community College, said Angie Salava, college and career readiness coordinator.

"The tuition is the same as the current JCCC rate, but students do not have to pay for their textbooks for the class," Salava said. "College Now students also have all the perks of being an on-campus JCCC student such as access to free tutoring and math and writing centers, access to the library and gym and fitness center, and discounts on student events."

Amy Iwert, a counselor at Olathe South High School, knows College Now classes have been popular at her school for many years.

"College Now courses are a great benefit to our students because they can earn college credit for courses they likely would have taken anyway during their time in high school," she said. "Because the tuition at JCCC is significantly less than what other local universities charge, the credits they earn through College Now are at a great savings."

Salava points out that although JCCC credit is accepted at over 120 different four-year universities throughout the United States, each university makes their own policies on transfer credit and how/if it is accepted. Students are advised to go to the JCCC website to investigate credit transfer options at <http://www.jccc.edu/admissions/high-school/college-now/transfer.html> or to contact the admissions office at the university they're considering.

## Advanced Placement

Longtime AP Literature teacher Mardy Ortman says Advanced Placement classes help students prepare for college better than any other type of course. More than a dozen Advanced Placement classes are offered in Olathe schools.

"The experience and education they receive through the year is

The Emergency Medical Responder class at Olathe North High School is one of many career-technical offerings for Olathe high school students.



invaluable," the Olathe West High School English department chair said. "The students know how to take notes at a college level, study for college tests and finals, prepare for college labs, and feel confident that they can be successful in college."

Enrolling in an AP class can reduce college costs and the time required to obtain a degree by providing post-secondary credit for courses and examinations completed successfully in high school.

"It's great for our schools to have more students enrolled in AP classes because the rigor they will experience in AP classes mirrors the work they will see at the university level," Ortman said.

## Career-Technical

Career-technical programs in the district range from Certified Nursing Assistant and Culinary Arts to Automotive Technology and Welding Technology. In all, there are more than a handful of two-year career-technical options as well as 15 four-year 21st Century Academies.

Kris Kennedy, Certified Nursing Assistant and Emergency Medical Responder course instructor at Olathe North High School, has noticed an increase in the number of students taking her courses.

"I've seen a huge increase in enrollment," she said. "Nine years ago I only taught one morning and one afternoon CNA class. Now I'm up to a total of seven CNA classes. At one point we set the eligibility GPA at 3.8 because of limited space in the classes, then we added more programs to accommodate the increased interest."

The Certified Nursing Assistant is a licensure program and the Emergency Medical Responder is a certification program. Both earn College Now credit at Johnson County Community College.

"College Now credit courses decrease the students' load in college and increases their flexibility with core classes," Kennedy said. "Students can take any of these classes now and if they decide it's not for them as a career, they haven't wasted any money for tuition or college time."

Several of her students are enrolled in both programs, and she knows of many who have gone on to become doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists and paramedics.

"I can't go anywhere without seeing one of my former students in a medical career," Kennedy said.

She cited the Bureau of Labor Statistics which indicates careers in healthcare will see a 19 percent increase from 2014-2024, adding more jobs than any other occupation.

# ELEMENTARY *Innovation*

*It's* not often that an entire elementary school can visit the Great Barrier Reef or the Rose Garden at the White House. It's also not often that elementary students can manufacture their own Lincoln Logs and other architectural manipulatives. At Manchester Park Elementary, the "not so often" educational events happen daily.

In the Manchester Park 3D lab, no location is out of reach thanks to virtual reality goggles. With help from a 3D printer, students can create their own manipulatives and have their creations brought to life. "Teachers have had the opportunity to use the room multiple times," Manchester Park librarian Amy McFarland said. "Everyone loves having the space to create and work!"

Teachers can lead students on guided tours using an iPad connected to the virtual reality goggles. These tours enable classroom lessons brought to life, no matter how far away.

In addition to virtual reality goggles and the 3D printer, comfortable seating and tables adorn the lab. Activities include Osmo iPad stations and marble runs. The goal is to bring student creativity to the forefront and allow real-world exploration.

To pursue funds for this innovative lab, the Manchester Park Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) chose to save a percentage of previous fundraisers to invest in a larger project for the school. Parents were asked to rank several different ideas and the overwhelming response was for this learning lab. "The opportunity to enhance the learning for our kids was an opportunity we could not pass up," Staci Aberle, PTO vice president said. "Mr. Bohon (the principal) and the teachers were instrumental in choosing the equipment that would build the foundation for the room. As time goes on, the investment in this room will pay off in the additional educational opportunities provided to our children."

Across the district, Tomahawk Elementary promotes project-based learning (PBL) in which students tackle real-world problems through collaboration, critical thinking and situational awareness. Such problems include students constructing their own island and land features to understand the effects of climate. Students also are thrust into the work of paleontologists as they dig for fossils and explain their findings to their peers. Young students are thinking critically and working collaboratively to understand the surrounding world.

"Project-based learning provides students the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills to real world settings," Tomahawk Principal Christy James said. "Students are expected to locate, organize and evaluate information in science or social studies and then are asked to communicate the information learned in innovative and creative ways."

During each learning unit, students are given a real world role or a "job" so they can explore the world through a specific set of lenses. "For this project my students are paleontologists. Last month they were constitutional framers from 1787 and in August they were city planners," Dani Lynch, third-grade teacher said. "Students are experiencing learning with a purpose rather than just simply for an assignment. They have ownership for their learning."

Often enough, students are having so much fun, they don't even realize they are learning. "PBL has totally transformed my classroom," Emily Jones, second-grade teacher said. "Each day, my students are working together with their peers, solving problems and thinking critically, all while having fun!" Lori Hoisington, first-grade teacher added, "Students get to explore, learn and discover through technology, experiments and more. Every day, students come to class excited and leave just as excited for the next day. I come to work excited to watch my students do activities that are meaningful."



The 3D Lab at Manchester Park Elementary houses virtual reality goggles that enable student "field trips" to locations all over the globe.



Osmo utilizes the iPad camera to give students real-time feedback during educational activities.



Students created their own island using clay and other manipulatives to help study climate and land mass.



# KANSAS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

*The* Kansas School Superintendents' Association (KSSA) has selected Olathe Superintendent John Allison as the 2018 Kansas Superintendent of the Year. Allison began his service as superintendent of the Olathe School District this July. Prior to moving to Olathe, Allison served as superintendent of the Wichita Schools since 2009.

Candidates for Superintendent of the Year are assessed according to their professionalism, communication, community involvement, and leadership while meeting the needs of students. As Kansas Superintendent of the Year, Allison will now be considered for the National Superintendent of the Year program. KSSA, in cooperation with the Ogden Financial Group, will host a celebration honoring him in Topeka in January along with providing a \$1,000 scholarship to a high school senior to be selected by the Kansas Superintendent of the Year.

A proud product of Kansas schools, Allison obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kansas and his Master

of Science from Emporia State University. He is completing his doctoral dissertation at Southwestern College in Winfield. During his 30-year career in education, 23 in Kansas, Allison has had teaching and coaching positions in the Spring Hill and Shawnee Mission school districts, along with his time in the Wichita School District. Allison served as a building administrator in both De Soto and Shawnee Mission school districts. Allison has also served as a district level administrator in both Texas and Pennsylvania.

"As a Board of Education we are thrilled that Mr. Allison has been named Kansas Superintendent of the Year," Board President Brent McCune said. "He has impressed us with his unwavering commitment to student achievement, his professionalism, his track record of success in his previous districts and his vision for the Olathe Public Schools. This honor is well-deserved."

"I'm honored to receive this prestigious award," Allison said. "I'm humbled to represent all who serve public education in the state of Kansas."



# PERFORMING ARTS PLAYS A LARGE ROLE IN OLATHE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

*When* you walk into a middle school in the Olathe Public Schools, a sound you will often hear is music. From band, to orchestra, to choir, the performing arts are strong in the district and especially at the middle school level. Middle school student participation in the performing arts is incredibly high in all nine Olathe middle schools.

"Middle school performing arts gives the student opportunities to reach inside themselves and begin to find out who they really are as a person," California Trail Middle Orchestra Teacher Sherry Wann said. "As human beings we are creative individuals and the performing arts gives an avenue for that self-expression and creativity. Performing arts teaches students more than musical, theatre or art skills. We are teaching children about how to function in life. The lessons I learned through music were life skills that I still use today, such as how to be disciplined and focused, how to work in small and large groups, how to develop a project over several months and develop something that I am really proud of at the end, how to stick to a task even if it is difficult, how to work with people I enjoy working with and how to work with difficult people. Performing arts teaches real life skills."

In the 2017-18 school year, nearly 60 percent of all middle school students are enrolled in a music ensemble, which means that more than 4,000 students are involved in band, choir, or orchestra.

"I am so proud of our band, choir and orchestra directors and of our kids for all they have accomplished, and all they continue to do," District Fine Arts Coordinator Martha Gabel said. "It's incredibly rewarding to see such high levels of participation."



Executive Director of General Administration and Secondary Programs Jim McMullen said that he sees the large numbers of music participants at the middle school level for a variety of reasons. "We have extremely highly qualified music directors at the middle school level," McMullen said. "They have the qualifications to teach at high school or above but have a passion for middle-level education. We also have supportive parents in our district who see the value in performing arts. We are a district and community that is incredibly supportive of an arts education."

From the connections students make to music and to their fellow musicians and teachers; to the cognitive benefits that come from learning to read and play music; to the ability to have a creative outlet through music, there are a variety of benefits from participation.

Beyond that, many students enjoy being a part of a musical ensemble because it's fun. It's something they enjoy.

"Primarily, I think it's because at some level our kids have a sense for how worthwhile the performing arts are," said Mission Trail Middle Band Director Eric Griffin. "For example, it doesn't take long for a beginning fifth-grade band or orchestra student to see that it's really fun to make music, and they feel accomplished when they know that the music they hear is something that they create. Simply put, they keep coming back because it's fun!"

# SAFE STUDENTS, SAFE SCHOOLS



Officer Andy Falcon is the SRO for Olathe West and has been an SRO for several years across the district.

*The* safety and security of students and staff is the top priority of the Olathe School District. As the manager of safety and security, Rick Castillo is responsible for the safety of more than 30,000 students and nearly 4,500 staff members. Castillo's responsibility includes the training of school security initiatives, such as the cameras at the entrance of each school and the alert, lockdown, inform, counter and evacuate initiative more commonly known as A.L.I.C.E. while working with the School Resource Officers (SROs) located at each secondary school.

"In regard to safety, we provide a multi-layered approach, everything that we do is based off relationships, partnerships and interaction," Castillo said. These partnerships help to build trust within our community by involving parents, staff and students. "Our community is our biggest resource for safety," added Castillo.

As stated by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), successful SROs operate off a triad concept with three foundational pillars: be an educator, be an informal counselor/mentor and be a law enforcement officer. According to Castillo, Olathe Public Schools has some of the best resource officers in the country. "It's a goal by and large for students to feel like they can confide in our SROs with any of their school or personal needs. They are an outlet for our students and often times help to keep their learning environment safe," he said. This level of student trust doesn't come without having some fun either. "I've seen our officers have specific handshakes with upward of 20 different students. The level they get to know our students on is just unreal," added Castillo.

A new initiative for this school year has been the Safe Schools Safe Students (SSSS) program. This initiative revolves around preparedness and awareness of one's surroundings. By this time, parents and visitors know about the check-in process before being

allowed access into buildings. On the front door of each building, the SSSS crest assures patrons that building safety is founded on security best practice. "Our logo means that we're working behind the scenes to ensure their learning environment is safe and allows them to be successful in the classroom. We want our patrons to know that when they see that seal, their student is in a safe environment," said Castillo.

On the back of each student ID card, the SSSS logo is emblazoned with the Kansas safe schools 1-800 number, the SSSS tip line and the suicide prevention lifeline. "Each student has possession of important safety and mental wellness outreach opportunities," Castillo said. "It's important that our students know all of the avenues that are available to them."

In addition, the new Olathe Public Schools mobile app has a safety resource tip line. "We are so proud of the safety feature in the mobile app," Castillo said. "Patrons can be active in school safety. You can submit a concern with a picture and it goes directly to our office and administration in real time. By phone, by email or through the app, the safety, security and wellness of our families and students is at the forefront of everything we do."



## Additional safety resources for students:

- **Kansas school safety tip line:** 1-877-626-8203
- **Safe Schools Safe Students tip line:** (913) 780-7777
- **Suicide Prevention lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255
- **Olathe School Safety Twitter:** @OPSSafety
- **The Olathe Public Schools app can be found in the Google Play Store and the Apple App store**

## PARENTS, CHILDREN LOOK FORWARD TO KINDERGARTEN ROUND-UP

Kindergarten Round-Up in the Olathe School District will be held from 1-6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22 in each elementary school. Parents who are not sure which elementary school their child should attend may use the school locator feature on the district website, [www.olatheschools.com](http://www.olatheschools.com).

Kindergarten Round-Up is a drop-in enrollment activity for parents and their future kindergartners (children who will turn 5 on or before Aug. 31). Parents should bring a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, or any document which reasonably establishes the child's age and can be used as temporary proof of identity. State law governs the age at which a child may enter kindergarten or first grade, and the district cannot deviate from the law.

In addition to the birth certificate, parents should bring information about the child's immunizations and inoculations. (See the Enrollment page on the district website for more details.)

Other round-up activities include meeting the teachers and seeing the kindergarten classrooms. Some schools hold additional kindergarten activities later in the spring. Parents should contact their school if they have questions about Kindergarten Round-Up or the enrollment process.



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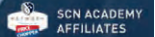
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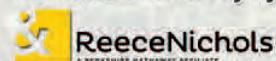
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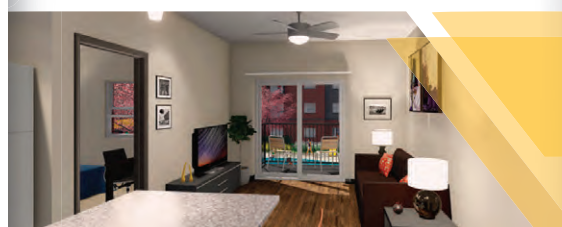
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