



2023-24

Report to our Community

OVERVIEW

We See How Much We've Accomplished, and We Know the Work Ahead of Us

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT MATTHEW RAY

I am excited for our work together.

It is an honor to continue serving our community. Thank you to our Board of Education for their trust and support.

Classroom data is more connected than ever to our improvement as a school district. Through the last year, we shared results – and our work to grow – at Board of Education meetings, in messages to staff and families, through district news articles and more.

We know the work ahead of us.

We are adopting new curriculum, aligning the systems we use to improve and focusing how we invest our resources. Through it all, we work to retain our dedicated staff and recruit top talent.

The students we serve are so important.

Thank you for being part of Omaha Public Schools.



OUR VISION:

**Every student.
Every day.
Prepared for
success.**

OUR MISSION:

**Omaha Public Schools
prepares all students
for success in college,
career and life.**

Board of Education



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Strategic Plan of Action

Our district is four years into a five-year Strategic Plan of Action that prioritizes academics, staffing, financial accountability and a shared ethic of care. Omaha Public Schools seeks to achieve each priority through our organizational values: equity, results, leadership, accountability and joy. Our Strategic Plan of Action demonstrates the work, classroom instruction, care and success that make Omaha Public Schools a leading urban school district.

PRIORITY 1

Academics

Omaha Public Schools students are prepared to meet post-secondary expectations. The Portrait of a Graduate outlines the expectations for all Omaha Public Schools graduates. To that end, the academic strategic priority will focus our work on early literacy, program redesign and establishing a high-quality portfolio of school programs.

PRIORITY 2

Staff

Omaha Public Schools has highly qualified and effective staff in every division. Recruiting and maintaining a highly qualified, developed staff is the most essential component of a successful school district.

PRIORITY 3

Financial Accountability

Omaha Public Schools demonstrates financial accountability tied to student outcomes. School district budgets across the U.S. are challenged daily to be funded, and many districts are unable to fund their highest priorities. Omaha Public Schools understands the challenges of developing and adhering to an approved budget and recognizes the need to be accountable to the funding provided and supported by the community it serves.

PRIORITY 4

Ethic of Care

Omaha Public Schools demonstrates an ethic of care for students and staff. Fostering a caring, inclusive culture assures all feel value, support and joy. Everyone benefits as a result of students, staff and the community being served with care.

ESSER in Action

Omaha Public Schools students, staff and families continue to benefit from federal Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds established to support school communities during and post-pandemic.

During the 2023-24 school year, our district fully invested its allocation of \$86.42 million in ESSER-II funds. We remain on track to complete all ESSER-III spending by the Sept. 30, 2024, deadline.

Grant spending focuses on critical opportunities to improve, including curriculum, academic support, technology, staffing and facilities updates.

Our district invested more than \$50 million of ESSER-II and III funding in essential curriculum updates for the 2024-25 school year. Students in grades K-12 will see updated computer science, art and social studies materials. Secondary students will also experience new English learning, English language arts and reading materials. At the same time, elementary and high school students will enjoy an updated science curriculum.



As a part of this process, staff and students field-tested the proposed curriculum in the classroom and provided feedback. Community members were also able to review the materials.

“The materials have been wonderful. My students are invested in what they are learning and can’t wait to learn more,” said Belvedere Elementary first grade teacher Karli Frederick. “It’s important to have engaging and interactive lessons for students because the more engaging the lessons are, the more the students want to learn.”

ESSER funding gives students access to academic support beyond the classroom, including early literacy, summer reading programs and high-dosage tutoring.

Since August 2022, our district has provided in-person tutoring to our students. With the launch of our virtual tutoring option, Paper, in January students from every school have engaged with tutors, logging activities in various subjects.





“Supporting our students’ academic progress is at the center of how we invest ESSER funds,” Interim Superintendent Matthew Ray said. “Planning, implementing and evaluating these initiatives reflects our commitment to student success from early childhood through graduation and beyond.”

Omaha Public Schools became a 1-to-1 technology district in 2020 with the rollout of internet-connected iPads for each student. ESSER funding supported a substantial refresh of 20,000 student devices and maintained internet service after school and during breaks.

We also invested in new technology for staff and classrooms, and digital radios for all schools, improving safety and communication.

ESSER funding supported staff retention stipends through the conclusion of the 2023-24 school year. Beginning in 2024-25, staff will see the stipend amount rolled into their regular pay as part of our general fund budget.

Expanding our long-term focus on staffing, ESSER funds covered stipends for student teachers and staff leadership development.

“Leadership development programs are an important retention strategy as they provide opportunities for current and aspiring leaders to see and build a future in our school district,” said Kanyon Chism, Ed.D., executive director of professional learning and development. “As they engage, staff grow skills not only for future endeavors but also strengthening the impact they make in their current roles.”

We have also invested in building updates across our district, including cleaning machinery, hydration stations and HVAC upgrades. We have begun the construction phase of mechanical upgrades at South High and the new Benson High addition, which will provide health services for area students and healthcare education opportunities.

ESSER funds reached school districts in three rounds. ESSER-I spending ended in September 2022. ESSER-II spending concluded in September 2023. Throughout the year, we managed our ESSER-III spending plan, staying on track to use the entire \$194.56 million by September 2024.

**Families and
community
members can
learn more about
how our district
uses ESSER funds
at www.ops.org.**

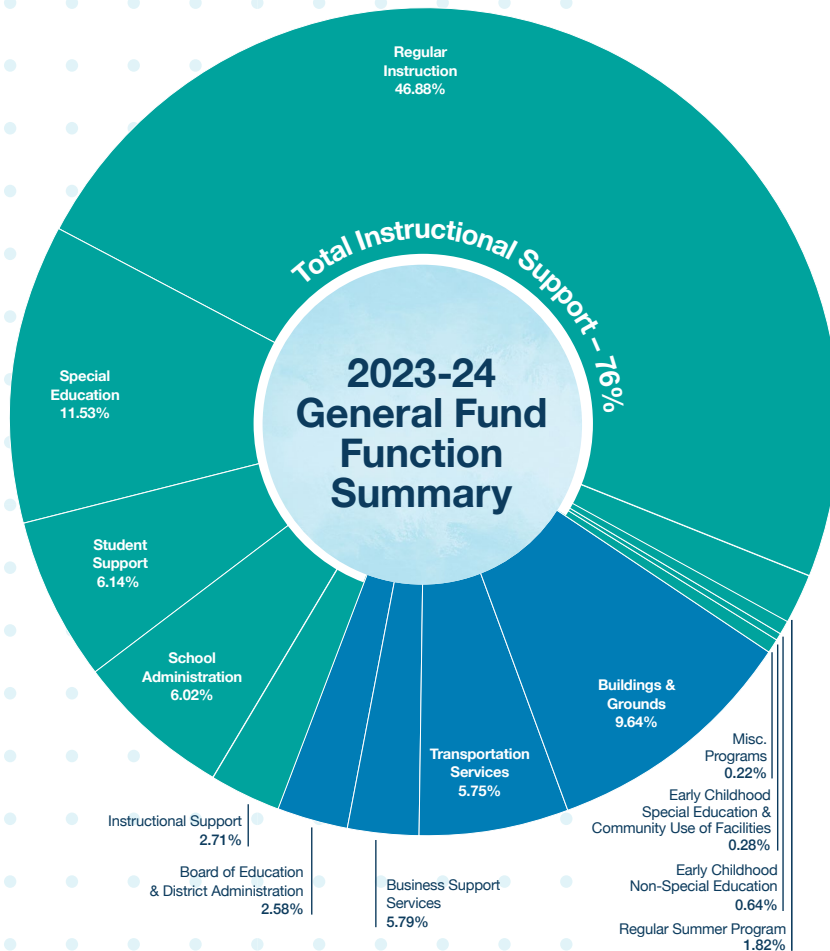
Budget

General Fund Budget

2019-20 to 2023-24

| Budget Year | Allowable Budget | Adopted Budget | Unused Budget Authority |
|-------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 2019-20 | \$680,218,611 | \$621,000,000 | \$59,218,611 |
| 2020-21 | \$692,572,835 | \$666,000,000 | \$26,572,835 |
| 2021-22 | \$691,240,528 | \$690,000,000 | \$1,240,528 |
| 2022-23 | \$710,000,000 | \$710,000,000 | *0 |
| 2023-24 | \$727,000,000 | \$727,000,000 | *0 |

*Per direction from NDE, the Special Grant Fund Expenditure exclusion is reduced to eliminate any unused budget authority.



Expenditures as a Percent of Total Budget

Average Cost Per Pupil Educated

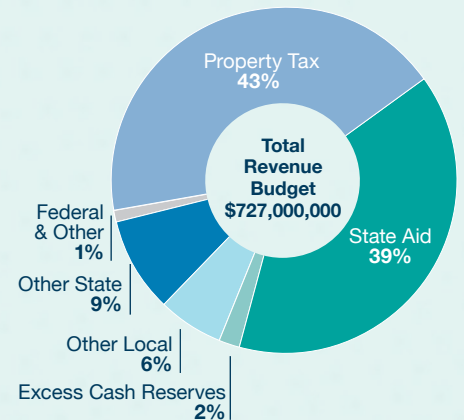
OPS \$17,901.00

State \$16,213.89

Note: 2022-23 is the most current data available

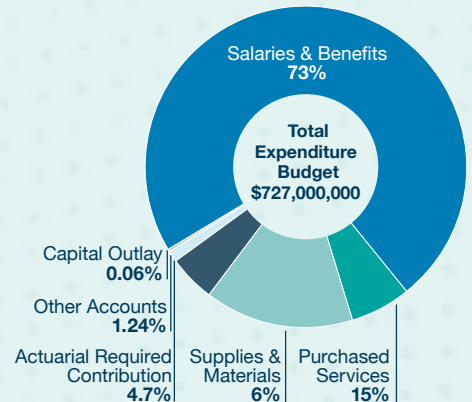
Where Does the Money Come From?

2023-24



Where Does the Money Go?

2023-24





College and Career Ready Standards and Nebraska State Accountability Test Scores

Student data guides teaching and learning in Omaha Public Schools. State test scores are one source of that data. In Nebraska, college and career-ready standards are measured on state tests for elementary and middle school students. All juniors in Nebraska take the ACT, which is used as the high school state test. Some students take the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) test. The NSCAS is a statewide test that helps prepare students in different grade levels for success in postsecondary education, career and life. The NSCAS includes several measures that help inform educators and families as they support students.

What is OPS doing to prepare all students for the ACT?

Omaha Public Schools provides a guaranteed and viable curriculum for students along with rigorous instruction. ACT standards are aligned and addressed within the A+ Curriculum Guides for all content areas. The PreACT is given to Omaha Public Schools students in the fall of their sophomore year to prepare students for the ACT. Advisement teachers and school counselors also review PreACT and ACT results, then meet with students to help them set goals based on their scores.

2022-23 ACT Results

Average score for ALL students

STATE ASSESSMENT

English Language Arts **12.8**

Math **14.2**

Science **14.6**

GRADUATING CLASS REPORT

Composite Score **15.6**

The composite score represents the most recent score for 2023 graduates who took the ACT as sophomores, juniors or seniors either as the state assessment or on a national test day. These students earned a score that ACT allows to be reported to postsecondary educational institutions.

2022-23 NSCAS Results

Below is the percent proficient.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCORES

English Language Arts **38%**

Math **35%**

Science **58%**

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCORES

English Language Arts **34%**

Math **29%**

Science **58%**





Monitoring Student Growth and Improvement

How Omaha Public Schools Supports Student-Centered Teaching and Learning

Isabella True and her classmates were in a social studies lesson learning about Rome when a group of educators walked in.

“They walked around the classroom and observed and talked to the teachers and students,” said True, a Lewis & Clark Middle sixth grader.

What she didn’t know was that the group was also there to learn.

“It’s cool because students aren’t the only ones learning,” she said.

Instructional facilitators, assistant principals, program directors, principals and others participated in a three-day coaching workshop in March 2024. These experienced educators traveled to multiple schools across our district to work on continuous improvement. Coaches mentor teachers, offering ways to be even more effective and grow student achievement.

“Instructional coaching really is in the service of the teacher,” said Melissa Prante, Omaha Public Schools coordinator of early childhood. “As instructional leaders, we’re there to support them and to give them the resources and tools they need so that they can feel successful and to help them continuously in the classroom.”

Another resource supporting improvement in Omaha Public Schools is a new tool called the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool or eleot (pronounced “Elliot”), which teachers and leaders can use to look at engagement in the classroom. In January 2024, our Board of Education held a workshop to learn more about the framework tool used to measure a student’s experience in school.

“The eleot is the classroom observation tool which focuses solely on student engagement,” said Susanne Cramer, Omaha Public Schools chief improvement officer. “This is a K-12 tool that allows us to look at what the student is doing, saying and learning.”

Instructional coaching and eleot represent some of the tools we use to improve in Omaha Public Schools. Students also participate in statewide assessments measuring academic growth in reading, mathematics and science. This helps educators identify the best approach to meet student needs and deepen classroom lessons.

“Those are all measures that tell the story of how our improvement journey is going,” said Cramer. “We’re always supporting our schools and leaders to have the tools that they need to get better and improve.”



At Omaha Public Schools, we rely on data and research to help guide our decisions, aiming to improve student outcomes and support staff development. By embracing tools like eleot our district works to provide students like True with the skills they need to succeed after graduation.

Staff by the Numbers

Teaching Staff Experience

Average Age **42**

Average Years of Teaching Experience **11**

National Board Certified Teachers **19**

Student to Teacher Ratio

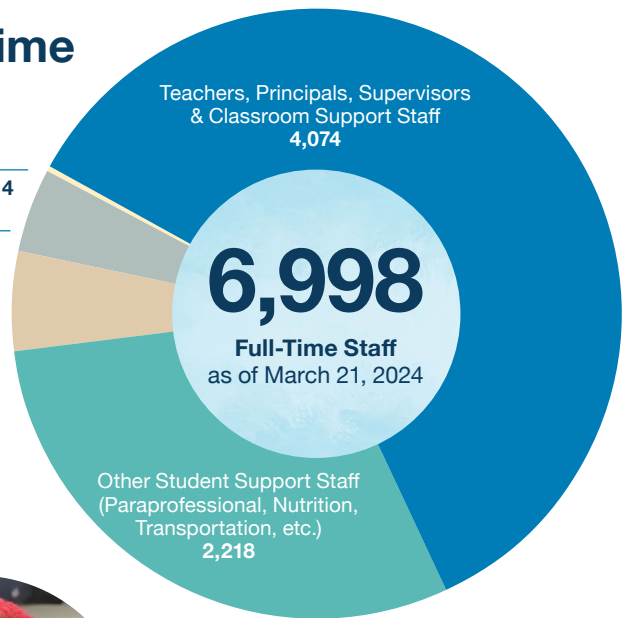
Elementary K-6 **13.7**

Middle School **20.6**

High School **20.3**

Full-Time Staff

Head Start 14
Professional/Technical 316
Administrative Leadership/Office Staff 376

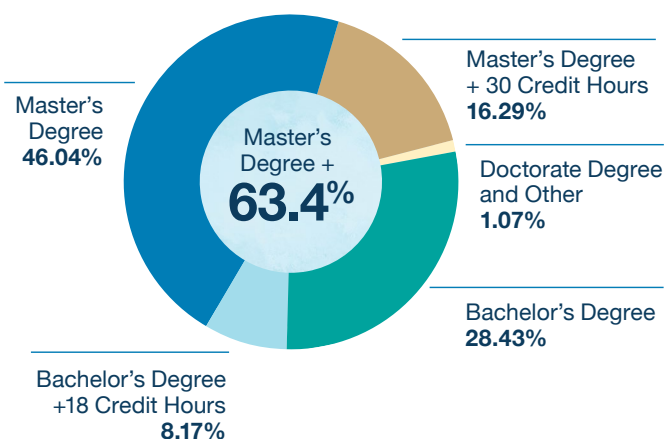


Schools/Programs

87
Total Number of Schools*



Certified Staff Degree Status



65
Elementary Schools

13
Middle Schools

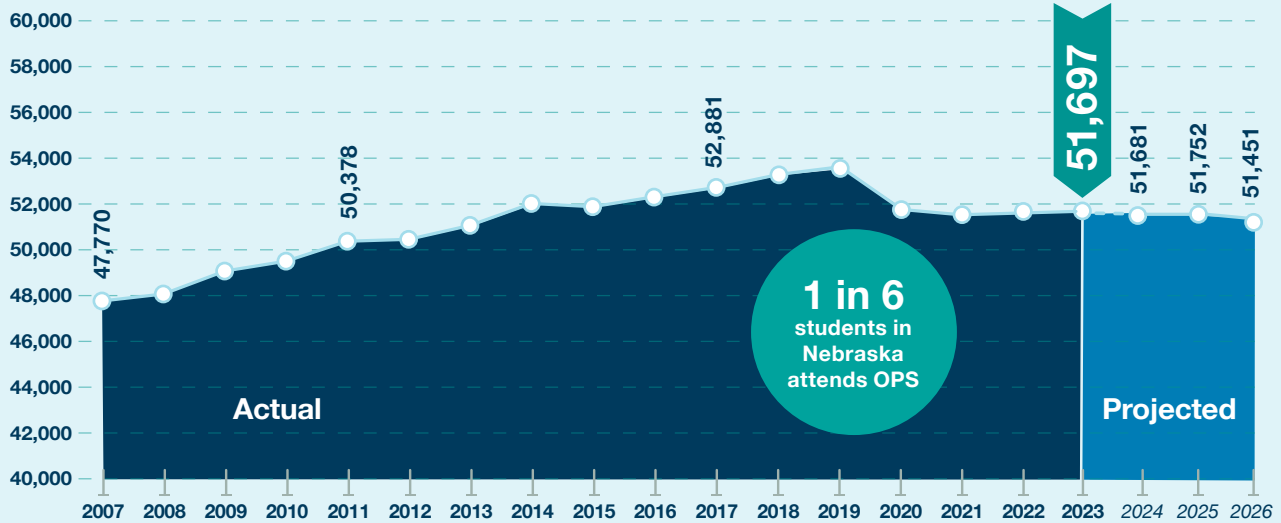
9
High Schools

1
Virtual School K-12

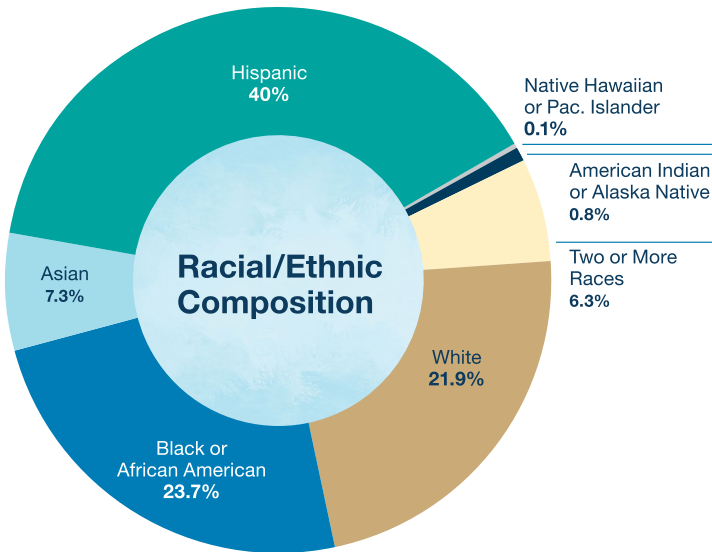
*OPS has 8 additional programs

Students by the Numbers

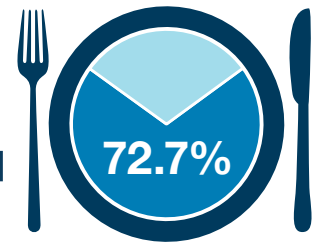
Number of Students



*Includes Pre-K through 12



Eligible for Educational Benefits



Starting in 2022-23, Omaha Public Schools qualified for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide. The CEP provides breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students. A new Educational Benefits Form (EBF) allows eligible families to access additional benefits in our schools and community. Eligibility for educational benefits is the replacement metric for Free or Reduced Lunch eligibility.

Number of English Learner (EL) Students **11,682***

*Our district serves more than 2,300 refugee students from 19 countries.

Omaha Public Schools is the most diverse school district in the state, serving students who speak

111 languages

Portrait of a Graduate

A student's journey to achieving excellence in the Omaha Public Schools

A game of Simon Says brought the entire fifth grade class to their feet for a brain break at Hartman Elementary.

"We're going to play Simon Says," said Brady Starkweather, who had just joined Hartman Elementary as a teacher. "Everyone, stand up!"



Sher Mu Ku jumped from her chair with her classmates.

"Simon didn't say stand," Starkweather exclaimed, receiving a collective sigh.

The fun played out on a video recorded in 2016. It's a year Sher Mu Ku remembers fondly, thanks to Starkweather.

"He was very engaging," she recalled. "The class really felt like a family rather than just your peers or acquaintances. He really made that connection big and the memories impactful."

Fast forward to April 2024. Sher Mu Ku, a senior at Northwest High, waited outside the door of a different Omaha Public Schools classroom, ready to surprise Starkweather. She wanted to let him know the difference he made in her education.



"Oh my gosh, no way!" said Brady Starkweather in awe, as Sher Mu Ku walked into his classroom.

The surprise meet-up at Forest Station Elementary was the first time the two had seen each other in nearly eight years.

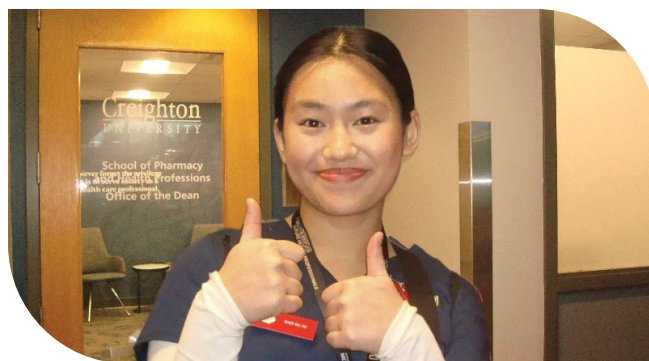
"You made my year," Starkweather said, holding back emotion. "I am really, really honored that you remember me."

Sher Mu Ku credits educators like Starkweather for helping her achieve excellence during her time at Omaha Public Schools.

"If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't want to be where I am right now," she said. "I really thank them for doing all that they can to help me and support me along the way."

Sher Mu Ku earned recognition as one of Omaha Public Schools Top Seniors among the Class of 2024. Her accomplishments include student body president, senior council and National Honor Society. She participated in clubs like HOSA – Future Health Professionals and took part in Upward Bound and College Possible. She also found success as a student athlete, participating in soccer and swimming.

"My greatest strengths come from being in this high school and joining many activities and being a part of so many things," she said. "I feel like it will help me to do what I want to do in the future."



Sher Mu Ku's path to success included time at Franklin Elementary, Hartman Elementary, Hale Middle and Northwest High. She started as a multilingual learner.



Omaha Public Schools prepares all students for success in college, career and life. Our Portrait of a Graduate devines what every student should know and be able to do upon graduation. Starting in Pre-K, students learn skills to become Resilient Achievers, Collaborators, Communicators, Critical Thinkers, Innovators and Civic & Global Contributors.

"I speak Karen and English. When I started, I didn't know proper English, but I knew basic English," she shared. "I had English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers that would help me and also adults and mentors that would help me learn more about my grammar and reading English."

Her family's journey inspired her to prioritize education. "My motivation comes from my parents, especially as an immigrant or a refugee from a different country. Since they weren't given that opportunity to achieve higher education, I feel like it's my duty to do what they never had the opportunity to do."

Sher Mu Ku's gratitude extends to educators in the Omaha Public Schools and the support offered along the way. She is now pursuing a career in healthcare.

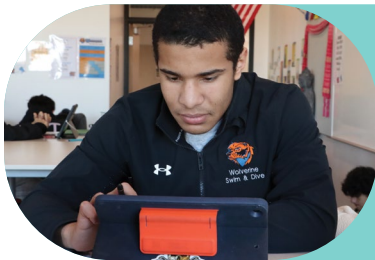


"I would like to say thank you for always believing in me," she told Starkweather when they reunited. "And just providing for a better relationship between me and my peers and allowing us to have great memories that we can always look back on."

Seeing a student come full circle makes the work even more worthwhile for those who serve in Omaha Public Schools.

Expanding Access. Elevating Expectations.

Omaha Public Schools is proud to offer diverse educational opportunities, including 115 pathways across our nine schools and our Career Center. Offerings include our College & Career Academies and Pathways, International Baccalaureate, the Advanced Placement Capstone Diploma Program, Omaha Public Schools Early College Program with Metropolitan Community College, Cambridge International and dual enrollment. Each school is unique, and they all make us #OPSProud.



Omaha Public Schools students earned more than 1,400 industry-recognized certifications during the 2023-24 school year.

Omaha Public Schools connected students with more than 1,000 experiential learning opportunities in 2023-24, including work-based learning.



Omaha Public Schools offers Dual Language programs at 10 schools to students in grades K-12.

Omaha Public Schools students earned more than 22,000 college credits while in high school during the 2023-24 school year.



#OPSProud Awards Snapshot



Students

Cadet Lt. Colonel Alex Krasnoslobodtsev of Central High received the Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement from The Legion of Valor of the United States.

Student teams from Bryan High and Marrs Middle placed first in the 24th Annual African American History Challenge.

Eleven Omaha Public Schools students earned recognition as Distinguished World Language Scholars during World Language Week from the Nebraska Department of Education.

North High's Ann Marie Meiman and Tyson Terry, Central High's Kevin Boston and Bryan High's Abdirahman Unle each won their weight class at the Nebraska State Wrestling Championships.

South High's Diego Martinez Gutierrez won the 2023 Congressional App Challenge.

More than 100 students in our district earned recognition as Advanced Placement (AP) Scholars, AP Scholars with Honors or AP Scholars with Distinction.

Central High students Lucy Rawlinson, Lachlan O'Keefe and Brayden Simpson achieved recognition as National Merit Finalists. Rawlinson also achieved a perfect ACT score.

More than 75 students from Omaha Public Schools earned the Nebraska Seal of Biliteracy this school year.

Burke High junior Lea Hansen earned recognition as the Phenomenal Woman Rising Star Award recipient from the Phenomenal Woman Academy.

Staff

Omaha Public Schools teacher Lori Maestas became the first recipient of the Dr. Benton and Harriet Kutler Outstanding Vision Teacher Award from the Nebraska Foundation for Visually Impaired Children.

Dan Kirchhevel, Miller Park Elementary principal, won the Lozier Foundation's Outstanding Principal Award.

Forest Station Elementary teacher Amy Page earned recognition as an Award of Excellence winner by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Burke High nutrition manager Kurt Sage won first place in the Nebraska High School Breakfast Challenge.

Burke High teacher Andrea Burton received recognition as the Nebraska Educators Teacher Leader of the Year.

Melissa Zeiszler of Kennedy Elementary received the K-12 Technology Educator of the Year Award from the Aim Institute.

South High teacher Danielle Laurion received the K-12 Dance Educator Award from the National Dance Society.

Jane Luethge, an Omaha Public Schools teaching and learning consultant, was honored as the Nebraska Educators Rising Administrator of the Year.

Gateway Elementary Principal Terry Burton was named Administrator of the Year by the Nebraska School Counselor Association.





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Families, please ensure your phone number and email address are current with your child's school to receive important updates about school and district happenings.



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Administrative Department Numbers

Information Center.....531-299-0220
 District Communications.....531-299-0221
 English Learner Department.....531-299-0259
 Help Desk.....531-299-0300
 Human Resources.....531-299-0240

Nutrition Services.....531-299-0230
 Omaha Public Schools Foundation....531-299-0250
 Student and Community Services.....531-299-0314
 Student Placement.....531-299-0302
 Student Transportation.....531-299-0140



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