



Our United Focus on Improvement

2024-25 Report to Our Community

www.ops.org

OVERVIEW

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

SUPERINTENDENT MATTHEW RAY

This was an especially important year for Omaha Public Schools.

Since February 2020, our Strategic Plan of Action guided districtwide efforts amid global disruption not seen in generations.

Staff tackled big picture work while meeting immediate and changing needs. As the plan proceeded, we saw how we could better focus efforts to improve for every one of the 52,000 students we serve.

We needed a single, unifying focus. Something that would make a difference for every student – whatever their current abilities and dreams for the future.

Entering the Strategic Plan of Action's final year in 2024-25 and with Board of Education support, we launched our Omaha Public Schools Moonshot: all students reading on grade level by 2030.

The call to action is not an initiative, slogan or hashtag.

It is a wholesale transformation of our approach.

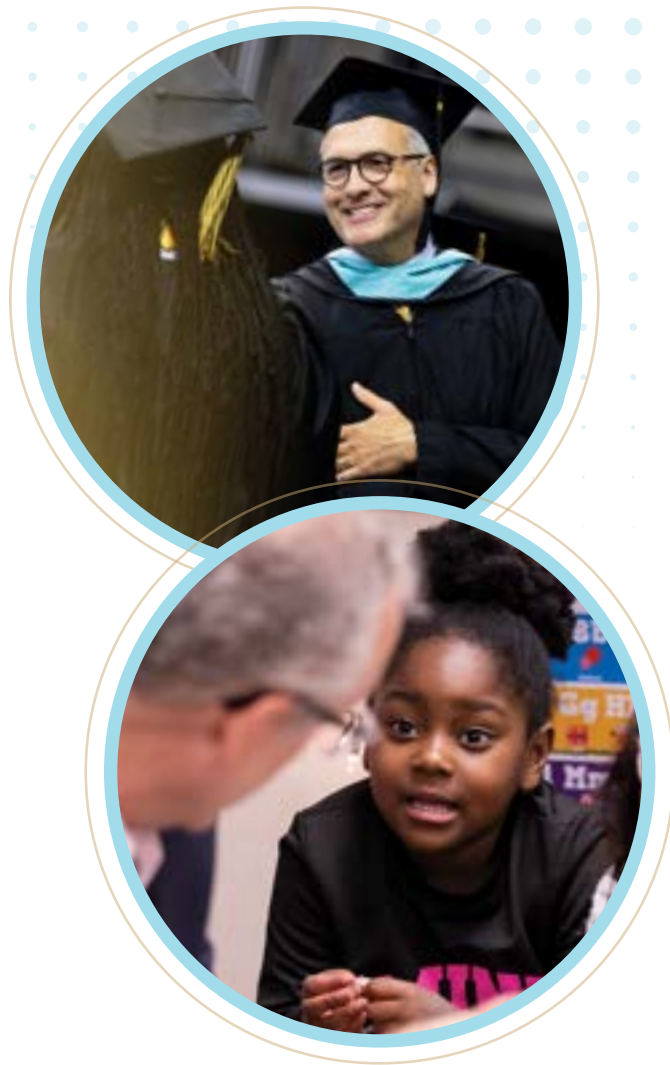
From teaching and learning to measuring student engagement, aligning our professional learning and rallying families and partners as champions for change, achieving our Moonshot takes every member of our community.

In June 2025, we concluded the 2020-25 Strategic Plan of Action with our Board of Education. Staff reviewed what goals we met early, what took more time and what we have yet to achieve.

In support of our Moonshot, we will spend the coming year planning our next five years of work.

Since August 2024, hundreds of staff, students, families and partners have been part of the work. They have shared personal experiences in our district, brainstormed the best paths forward and offered feedback on new ideas.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far – and will continue to move us forward through the years ahead. We cannot do it without you.



Every student.
Every day.
Prepared for success.

Strategic Plan of Action

POWERED BY FORESIGHT

Our district reached the final year of its five-year Strategic Plan of Action in 2025. The plan prioritized academics, staffing, financial accountability and a shared ethic of care. In June 2025, staff shared an update on the plan's progress, which is available at ops.org/SPOA. Omaha Public Schools staff have begun work to develop our district's next strategic plan, which will carry progress forward and prioritize continuous improvement.

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.

MISSION:

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

Board of Education



Jane Erdenberger
President



Kimara Snipes
Vice President



Viridiana Almanza



Bri Full



Shavonna Holman, Ed.D.



Nancy Kratky



Gini Magnuson



Ricky Smith



Nick Thielen



Omaha Public Schools Launches Improvement for Every Student with ‘Moonshot’ Literacy Focus

When this school year began, Superintendent Matthew Ray welcomed staff and shared a big goal—working together to achieve all Omaha Public Schools students reading at grade level by 2030. He outlined his vision for our district’s “Moonshot.”

“For me, it was about narrowing the biggest impact on the students we serve, and that was around literacy,” Ray explained. “Literacy connects everything. It’s the throughline to everything we do.”

In the months before our district’s Moonshot announcement, staff publicly presented data that underlined the importance of this work. They shared assessment scores, which revealed that only 38% of third through eighth graders at Omaha Public Schools were proficient in reading and writing during the 2022-23 school year.

“We realize we have to raise the level of all students reading at grade level and also invest in closing the gap,” said Omaha Public Schools Chief School Improvement Officer Susanne Cramer. “Our Moonshot is a big, ambitious and audacious goal - a singular focus for our district. This isn’t just about launching a new initiative or a new program. It’s about making literacy a top priority across the entire district.”

While identifying literacy as the goal, and since that time as

our district develops a plan to achieve it, leaders sought input and gathered feedback from staff, families, students and partners.

“We knew that we needed to bring people along and bring in experts, and those experts work in the Omaha Public Schools,” said Ray. “Everyone in the organization will be and is working towards this goal.”

With support from the Board of Education, Moonshot work extends beyond district walls. Omaha Public Schools has also engaged community partners.

“Our community partners have shown readiness and willingness to support our students and families,” said Cramer. “As we work toward our moonshot, they will be crucial to moving this forward together.”

Staff reviewed feedback from the ongoing outreach and recently presented three steps that move this work forward. The work includes developing strong leaders at every level to guide this transformation, fostering stronger family connections and strengthening student-centered learning environments where each young person’s needs and experiences are prioritized.



“Having all of the stakeholders involved in this process and getting to hear input and feedback is so important in building a sense of community, especially with our teachers who are in the classrooms every day,” said Jennifer Pudenz, literacy lead coach at Highland and Conestoga Elementary.

The input, feedback and advice from staff and community members helped identify current challenges and areas for growth, such as inconsistencies within our district.

“This tells us how people feel about where we are and where we need to go to reach our Moonshot,” said Cramer.

Our district is committed to ensuring every student has the opportunities and supports to achieve this goal.

“The word ‘all’ means that we believe all kids can learn and grow,” said Cramer. “The student experience, for all students, matters. Our work for all students matters. And we’re not assuming, from the beginning, the failure of any group of students.”

Ray says literacy is at the heart of learning and overlaps with math, science and other core subjects.

“We can easily connect it to everything the student does and their experience at the Omaha Public Schools,” said Ray. “This is not a hashtag or a gimmick. We are committed to making this goal and using terms of when, not if, we reach this goal.”

District leaders and work groups met throughout the year, gathering feedback and recommendations that will inform an action plan. Staff will bring updates to the Board of Education for approval, while further planning and implementation around our Moonshot continues during the next school year and beyond.

Curriculum Updates Support Omaha Public Schools Moonshot

Omaha Public Schools implemented new English Language Arts (ELA) and reading curriculum in fall of 2024. For kindergarten through second grade students, this includes learning materials focused on structured literacy.

“It contains fundamental skills children need as they learn to read,” said Miki Holbeck, Omaha Public Schools coordinator of structured literacy. “So, letters and sounds, how to blend sounds to make words and how to read and write words and sentences.”

In October 2024, staff presented to the Board of Education about structured literacy and how it’s taught in our schools. Structured literacy has three key parts:

- **First, teachers directly explain the skills students are learning and model how to do it.**
- **Second, after modeling, students practice the skills with teacher support until they can do it independently.**
- **Third, teachers measure how well students have learned the skill.**

“We’re seeing a lot of success in our classrooms,” said Meagan Bakhit, Adams Elementary principal. “It’s a true indicator if they’re able to read and if they can reproduce that in their writing. It’s showing great evidence that this is working.”

The updated curriculum includes new activities and tools that help students practice reading and writing in all subjects, making literacy a focus in every classroom.

Budget

Average Cost Per Pupil Educated

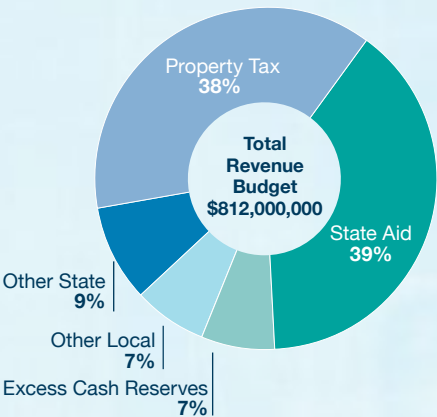
OPS \$18,961.00

State \$17,204.67

Note: 2023-24 is the most current data available

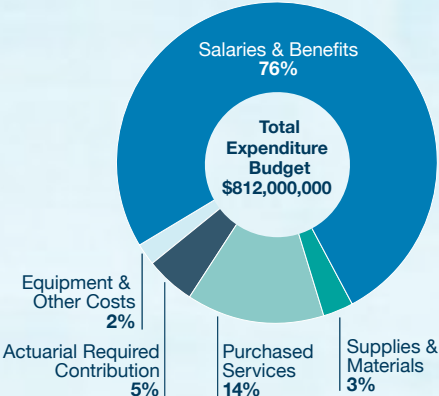
Where Does the Money Come From?

2024-25



Where Does the Money Go?

2024-25

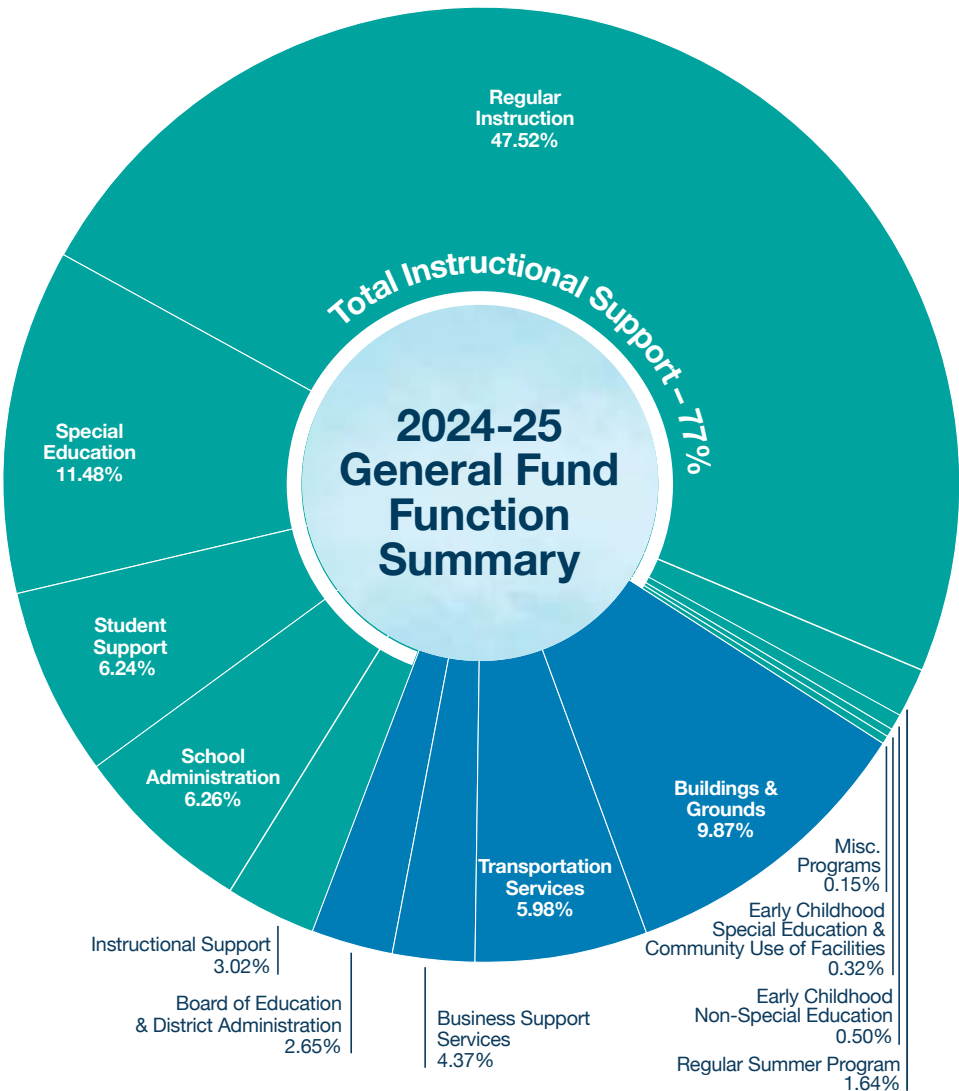


General Fund Budget

2020-21 to 2024-25

Budget Year	Allowable Budget	Adopted Budget	Unused Budget Authority
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
2024-25	\$812,000,000	\$812,000,000	*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

College and Career Ready Standards

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. Students in certain grade levels 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 Omaha Public Schools 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 across all content areas. The PreACT is given to Omaha Public Schools students in the fall of their freshman and sophomore years to prepare them for the ACT. School counselors also review PreACT and ACT results, then meet with students to help them set goals based on their scores.

2023-24 ACT Results

Average score for ALL students

STATE ASSESSMENT

English Language Arts **12.7**

Math **14.5**

Science **14.8**

GRADUATING CLASS REPORT

Composite Score **15.7**

The composite score represents the most recent score for 2024 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.

2023-24 NSCAS Results

Below is the percent proficient.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCORES

English Language Arts **40%**

Math **36%**

Science **69%**

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCORES

English Language Arts **35%**

Math **22%**

Science **36%**



Omaha Public Schools Prioritizes Improvement and Student Growth

“We are providing our students and teachers with the best tools to equip them for the future,” explained teacher Nikki Johnson as she showcased new curriculum materials in her Bluestem Middle classroom.

“The new curriculum offers opportunities,” she said of the updated English language arts (ELA) materials implemented during the 2024-25 school year.

Omaha Public Schools implemented new ELA, reading and English learner support curriculum resources and materials for secondary students since August 2024.

“These new materials are colorful and beautiful,” said Columbian Elementary fifth grade teacher Gwen Wellsandt.

The science materials engage students through hands-on activities. They incorporate digital labs and workbooks to make the lessons more interactive and accessible. All curriculum is consistent districtwide and aligned with state standards.

“Our district prioritized Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to ensure that we are getting curriculum in the hands of our students,” said Susan Christopherson, Omaha Public Schools chief academic officer. “That speaks to our priority of investing in our students and their experiences in the classroom.”

The updated curriculum materials provide new tools to engage students in grade-level content for every course and content area. The investment reflects Omaha Public Schools commitment to improvement, ensuring all students have access to resources that support success.

“We want students to value their experience in the classroom,” said Christopherson. “We understand that it’s a

partnership between families and our district, and we want families to know that we are selecting materials that will help their students learn, engage and succeed.”

Staff and Families Focus on Improvement Together

Omaha Public Schools spent months preparing for the new curriculum. Teams also reviewed data around student engagement in our classrooms and publicly shared the many ways Omaha Public Schools measures student progress. Changes in our classrooms present a new way to work more closely with our families.

“We want to provide resources and information on how best to support student learning and their experiences,” said Crystal Boyd, Omaha Public Schools ombudsperson. “We prioritize creating a safe and inclusive environment where students and families can freely ask questions and provide input so we can understand their needs.”

Schools districtwide hosted back-to-school events, connecting with families before the first day of classes. The events offered paperwork assistance, help for families who had questions about class schedules and the opportunity for students to meet their teachers.

“The orientation is helpful to make sure we have everything up to date and helps them be prepared for what they’re going to do and what classes they’re going to take,” said Ellisa Esteban, an Omaha Public Schools parent.

Omaha Public Schools student enrollment fair offered another option for families to register their children, learn about transportation options and update contact information.



“Our goal is to support families,” said Boyd. “We give them a voice, advocate for them and provide resources to help their children be successful.”

Omaha Public Schools parent portal helps families monitor their student’s academic progress all year. The portal provides access to class schedules, grades and attendance records.

Teams Help Reduce Barriers to Regular Attendance

Omaha Public Schools has attendance teams at every school. They work closely with students, families and school administrators to tackle attendance challenges and ensure that students get the support they need to be at school every day.

“Attendance is essential because it touches the academic and personal success of every child,” said Kami Piechota, Omaha Public Schools attendance and school support liaison supervisor. “When students attend, they feel connected and a sense of belonging to their school.”

Attending school on time every day helps students stay on track for graduation.

“We work with social workers and counselors, meet with families and go on home visits,” said Karen Spurgeon, attendance liaison. “We’re here to help families.”

Omaha Public Schools recently enhanced the attendance support available to students and families through federal ESSER funds. Our district invested in professional development for staff and resources that allow for more home visits to help families reduce barriers to attendance. The funding also strengthened mental health services.

“Having someone in the building who can touch base with students and have conversations with them, who makes them feel valued and gives them a sense of belonging, will make them want to come to school,” Spurgeon said.

Whether working with families to remove barriers to attendance or striving for growth in the classroom, Omaha Public Schools is intent on doing better for all.

“Even as we unite around a shared focus on improvement, our mission, vision and values are constant,” he said. “We are relentlessly committed to delivering our best for every student.”



Staff by the Numbers

Teaching Staff Experience

Average Age

43

Average Years of Teaching Experience

11

National Board Certified Teachers

21

Schools/Programs

87

Total Number of Schools*

65

Elementary Schools

13

Middle Schools

9

High Schools

1

Virtual School K-12

*OPS has 8 additional programs

Student-Teacher Ratio

13.8

Elementary K-6

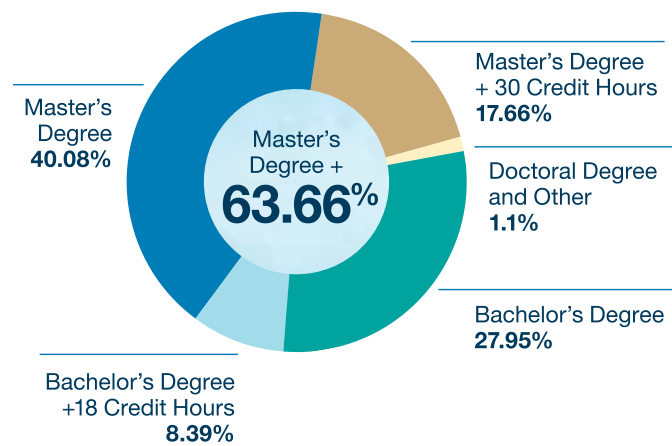
19.3

Middle School

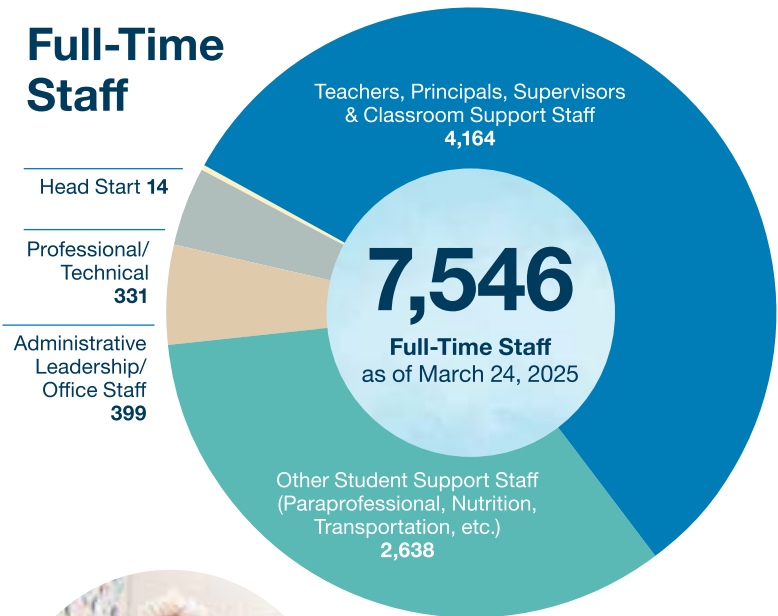
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High School

Certified Staff Degree Status

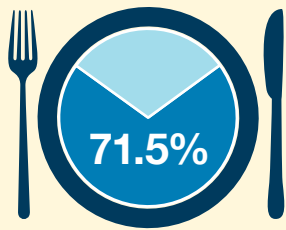


Full-Time Staff

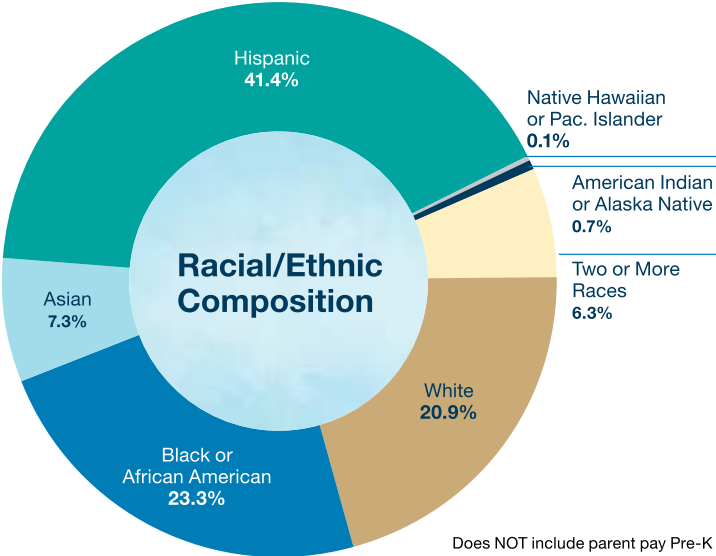


Students by the Numbers

Free and Reduced Lunch



Omaha Public Schools qualified for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide through 2024-25. The CEP provided breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students. The Educational Benefits Form allowed eligible families to access additional benefits in our schools and community. Eligibility for educational benefits replaced the metric for Free or Reduced Lunch eligibility during this time. Omaha Public Schools had to requalify for CEP status in 2025. Our district announced CEP-eligible schools for the 2025-26 school year in June. Schools that did not qualify for CEP will return to the previous National School Lunch Program guidelines.

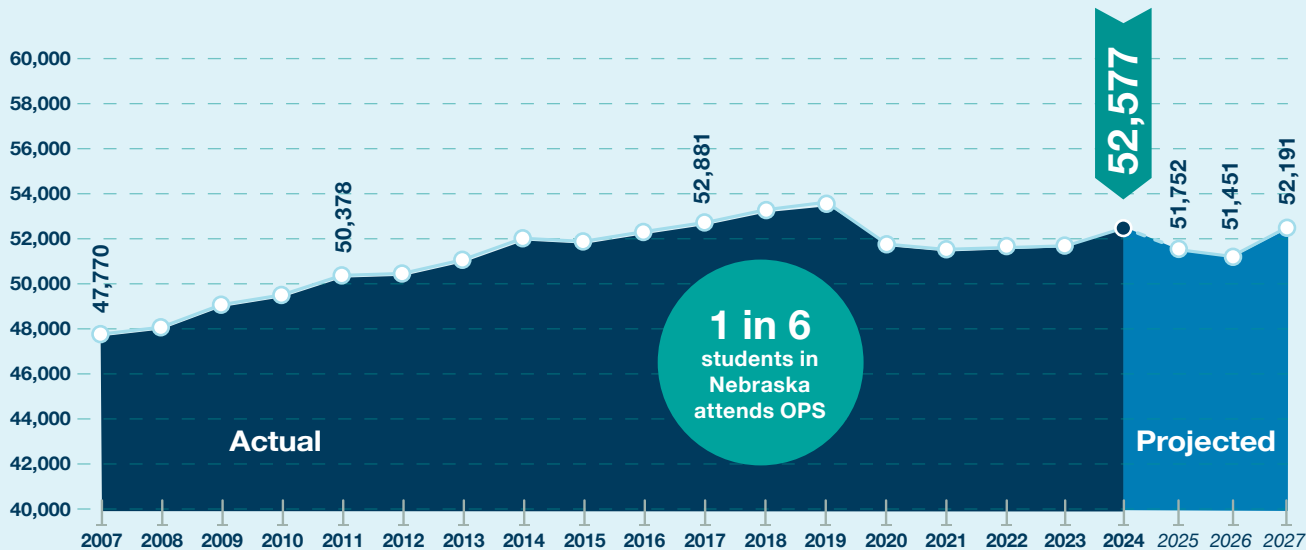


Number of English Learner (EL) Students **11,682***

*Our district serves more than 2,344 refugee students from 19 countries.

Omaha Public Schools is the most diverse school district in the state, serving students who speak **111 languages**

Number of Students



Prepared for Success

Students Share Path Toward Excellence in the Omaha Public Schools

“Go, Pack, go!” Charlotte Gregor exclaimed to a room full of Omaha Public Schools students and their families.

The senior’s school pride bubbled over as she reflected on her time at Spring Lake Elementary, Marrs Middle and South High.

“Over the past 13 years, my teachers have shown me what it means to be kind and compassionate,” she said. “From staying in during lunch to help me study for a math test, to secretly organizing posters with encouraging messages before my state cross country meet, their support has meant everything.”

Gregor credits Omaha Public Schools educators for helping her achieve excellence.

“Every day I walk into school knowing I’m surrounded by teachers with the biggest hearts,” Gregor said.



The multi-sport athlete medaled at the state level and served in leadership roles within the National Honor Society and the Nebraska Sports Activities Association during her time at South High. She also participated in the Dual Language program.

“Being bilingual has helped me communicate with people from many different backgrounds and has taught me not only to speak Spanish but to appreciate the cultures of my classmates and teachers,” Gregor explained. “Being bilingual feels like a superpower.”

Gregor’s internal drive and the support she received propelled her to pursue collegiate athletics at the University of Nebraska Omaha while working toward a business degree.

She’s among thousands of recent graduates who found their passion and voice at Omaha Public Schools.

“

Every single moment of support, whether loud or quiet, every lesson learned, every person reminded me that I could make it.

Azucena Lorenzo, a member of Buena Vista High’s first graduating class, discovered a love for the medical field, which led her to pursue a nursing degree.

“My time in education through Omaha Public Schools has shaped me in ways I’ll never forget,” said Lorenzo. “It’s where I found the courage to speak up, to have the strength to keep going and the heart to care deeply for others and myself.”

Lorenzo relied on her school community to overcome challenges and achieve excellence.

“Every single moment of support, whether loud or quiet, every lesson learned,” she recalled. “Every person reminded me that I could make it.”



Solan Bailey, part of North High's Class of 2025, echoed that sentiment.

"Whether it's my classmates, my teachers, our maintenance staff, or our amazing cafeteria staff, I've always felt comfortable surrounded by people who believed in me," said Bailey.

After high school, Bailey planned to further his education, focusing on journalism and media communications. He once thought this path was out of reach.

"I started school struggling with dyslexia," he shared. "Reading and writing were very difficult to me, and there were times that I wondered if I [could] either catch up, let alone graduate."

Through the support of those around him, he graduated and earned recognition as a Top Senior.

"I didn't just get by - I grew. They didn't just teach me academics; they taught me how to advocate for myself and ask for help. And the most important part, they believed in me," said Bailey.

**Omaha Public Schools
celebrated more than
2,800 seniors as part of
the Class of 2025.**





Expanding Access. Elevating Expectations.

Omaha Public Schools prepares students for success in college, career and life through its educational offerings. High school students have access to 115 pathways and advanced academic diploma programs, including International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement Capstone, Early College with Metropolitan Community College and Cambridge International. Students can also earn college credit through dual enrollment and Advanced Placement coursework.

DURING THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR:

- Omaha Public Schools students earned more than 1,500 industry-recognized certifications.
- Omaha Public Schools connected students with more than 10,000 experiential learning opportunities, partnering with more than 250 providers.
- Omaha Public Schools offered Dual Language programs at 10 schools to students in grades K-12. Our district will mark 25 years of the program next school year.
- More than 200 students earned the Nebraska Seal of Biliteracy, including the state's first seal for Arabic.
- Omaha Public Schools students earned more than 20,000 college credits while in high school.
- The College Board designated 220 Omaha Public Schools students as Advanced Placement Scholars.
- Students at all nine of our high schools participated in co-curricular, career and technical student organizations. Students showcased their learning at state and national levels in Educators Rising, DECA, FBLA, FFA, HOSA and SkillsUSA.

#OPSProud Awards Snapshot

Students

Five students from South High, Central High and North High achieved recognition as National Merit Finalists.

Cadet Allison Arkfeld of Burke High received the Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Outstanding Achievement from The Legion of Valor of the United States.

North High's Tyson Terry and Jermaine Dortch, Bryan High's Abdi Unle, and Westview High's Kalynn Lyons and Audre Herron finished their seasons as Nebraska State Wrestling Champions.

Student teams from Bryan High and Marrs Middle placed first in the 25th Edgar J. Hicks African American History Challenge.

More than 30 Omaha Public Schools students placed in the top five for their event at the 2025 Nebraska HOSA – Future Health Professionals State Leadership Conference.

Benson High's Wah Hsee Paw earned a Gold Key, Gold Medal and the prestigious American Visions Award in the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards contest, while South High's Jasmin Aguilar Basilio received a Gold Key and Silver Medal.

More than 55 Omaha Public Schools students qualified for the National Educators Rising competition.

Students from nine middle and high schools in our district qualified for the Nebraska Junior Academy of Science State Competition.

Kennedy Elementary, Wilson Focus Elementary and the Gifted and Talented Programs earned an Apple Distinguished Schools designation for innovation, leadership and educational excellence using technology.



Staff

Shaneice Udofia, Belvedere Elementary principal, and Valerie Varas, Crestridge Elementary principal, won Lozier Foundation Outstanding Principal Awards.

Westview High's Anthony Schik earned honors as the Nebraska Thespians Theater Teacher of the Year.

Sherrie Brownfield, health education teacher at Lewis & Clark Middle, was named Nebraska's Health Teacher of the Year by SHAPE Nebraska.

Michelle Kiel, an Omaha Public Schools psychologist, was honored with the Nebraska School Psychologist Association Founder's Award at the Nebraska School Psychologist Association State Conference.

Paula Yoachim of South High received the Nebraska Art Teachers Association Secondary Art Educator of the Year Award.

Omaha Public Schools head diving coach Kevin Hansen was inducted into the 2025 Metro Conference Swim-Dive Hall of Fame.

Kara Saldierna, Omaha Public Schools executive director of special education, received the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Patriot Award from the Army National Guard.

Omaha Public Schools Title I Director Tina Forté received the African American Leadership Award from the Urban League of Nebraska.

Jason Susnjar, Bryan High wrestling coach, received the 2024 Class A Vern Ekfeldt Coach of the Year Award.



Stay Connected with Omaha Public Schools

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
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
Talent Services.....531-299-0240

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