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Dr. Tammy Champa

August 2026

Upcoming Events:

- August 24-27: Teacher Work Days
- August 31: First Day of School Grades 9-12, 6th Grade Orientation
- September 1: First Day of School Grades 6-8
- September 2: First Day of School Grades K-5
- September 4: No School
- September 7: No School/District Closed
- September 14: School Board Work Session, 5:30 pm, Owatonna Public Schools District Office
- September 28: School Board Meeting, 5:30 pm, Charles S Crandall Center

Stronger Together: One Pack, One Purpose

As we prepare to welcome students back for another school year, there is an incredible sense of excitement throughout Owatonna Public Schools. Each new school year brings new opportunities, new relationships, new goals, and, most importantly, another opportunity to make a difference in the lives of each and every one of our students.

This year, we are embracing the theme “Stronger Together: One Pack, One Purpose.” It reflects our belief that when we come together with a shared commitment and purpose, we are better able to meet the needs of each and every student. We are deeply grateful for the many partnerships across our district and recognize the unique opportunities, advantages, and experiences they create for our students. Furthermore, we are equally grateful for the continued support, encouragement, and investment of our entire community.

Preparing for a New Year

A tremendous amount of work has taken place behind the scenes throughout the summer to prepare our schools for the arrival of students and it has NOT gone unnoticed. A huge thank you to all the work that has been done to prepare for the new school year. From facility improvements to summer maintenance, technology updates, curriculum training and preparation, transportation scheduling, menu planning, staffing, safety planning, scheduling, and countless other details, our staff have worked diligently to ensure we are ready!

Welcoming New Staff

We are also excited to welcome the many talented individuals who are joining the Owatonna Public Schools team this year. To our new staff members: welcome to the Pack! We are grateful that you have chosen to bring your talents, experience, and passion to our schools.

We look forward to welcoming all staff together on Wednesday, August 26, as we officially begin the new school year as one team. It will be an opportunity to reconnect, celebrate, learn together, welcome new colleagues, and focus on the important work ahead. A special thank you to the Owatonna School Board is in order for their willingness to step outside the box to provide an extra special addition to our welcome back.

A Warm Welcome to Our Families

And, of course, we are excited to welcome our students and families back.

To our families, welcome to a new school year! We are grateful for the trust you place in Owatonna Public Schools and for the partnership you provide in supporting your children. We know that strong schools are built through strong relationships between students, families, staff, and community.

As the school year begins, we invite our families to stay connected, ask questions, share ideas, celebrate successes, and partner with us when challenges arise. We are all working toward the same purpose: creating opportunities for each and every student to learn, grow, belong, and succeed.

Community Engagement Opportunities

As we kick off our school year, we’re proud of the established opportunities for our community to be engaged with our schools and we’re so excited about two new opportunities.

Existing Opportunities	New Community Engagement Opportunities
District Curriculum Advisory Committee	Budget Advisory Council
Transportation Committee	OPS Insider
Coffee and Conversation with the Superintendent	
Special Education Advisory Council	
Community Education Advisory Council	

There is much to be excited about as we begin this new chapter. We have important work ahead, and we also have an incredibly talented team committed to doing that work together.

Stronger Together. One Pack. One Purpose.

I am excited for the year ahead and grateful to be part of the Owatonna Public Schools team.

Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

Updates

- Recruitment of substitutes - all positions
- Onboarding new employees
- Teacher Licensing Applications
- Induction week - 8/17-8/19
- Employee Relations issues
- Policy work
- Launch of the Cohort 3 Registered Teacher Apprentice Program
- Continued Efforts with our GYO student and adult pathway grant work and concurrent enrollment grant reports
- Steering Committee for launch of a new tri-license teacher apprenticeship program - Elem Ed, Sped-ABS, EL/ML
- Project Ready Go and Threat Assessment Teams

Roosevelt/Community Education

Deb McDermott-Johnson, Director

A very full and active Summer SAC program has drawn to a close. 150 students were served this summer in six classrooms. Average daily attendance was 109 students. There was no end to the creative and enthusiastic activities created by staff and students to help pass the anything but "lazy days of summer"!

School year SAC is full at all but one of our elementary sites. We have been fortunate to recruit a near full staffing complement. We will start the year with just one open position; although we continue to work diligently to recruit a high-quality candidate before our first day with students on September 2nd.

The Fall program brochure is with the post office and finding its way into homes this week. Registration begins on September 11th. Amy James and Lydia Yahnke have organized an amazing array of learning opportunities. Please take the opportunity to browse their work, available both online or in the print brochure when it arrives in your home.

The Adult Learning Center welcomes back students with an Open House and Registration event on August 25th. Classes will launch on September 8th. State and Federal funding entitlements have been certified for the SE ABE Consortium. Federal funding remains flat, while state contact hour funding, our primary funding stream, went up slightly by .43 cents per hour. Operation Metro Surge last winter curtailed a projected 8% growth in student contact hours, resulting in a .5% increase statewide for the academic year. Owatonna did experience an 11.2% decline in student attendance for the 2025-2026 program year. The slight increase in contact hour reimbursement will help recover a portion of lost revenue due to the last year's reduction in attendance.

Special Services

Shari Mensink, Director

1. ESY - Extended School Year special education services were provided to qualifying students from July 6-16; 29 students received special education instruction on identified IEP goals.
2. Summer Training -
 - a. Safety Care - This is our Restrictive Procedures training, provided to ensure safety and security in the event of student dysregulation. Training was held over four days in August, with 86 staff in attendance. Twenty-two additional staff are scheduled for training in mid-September.
 - b. Life Space Crisis Intervention - This is a trauma-informed, verbal strategy designed to de-escalate situations of student crises and turn them into teachable moments. Seven staff, assigned to specialized school roles, are attending training this week.
 - c. Special Services staff attended curriculum & intervention training sessions held by the Teaching & Learning Department.
3. Apprentice Orientation - Our two apprentice groups engaged in orientation and professional learning on August 11-12. We are anticipating two apprentice graduates in May 2027 and two in May 2028.
4. Staffing - We currently have 3 full-time paraprofessional positions open and are actively interviewing candidates.
5. Teacher Induction - Our department welcomed 7 new certified staff members this week. We are excited and honored by their commitment to our schools.
6. Workshop Week - Our team is prepared for a productive week of planning and professional development. Throughout the week, various Special Services sub-groups will come together to engage in collaborative sessions focused on student support.
7. Department Goals - We will continue building capacity around the baseline established during 2025-26.
 1. By June 2027, all staff implementing district-approved literacy interventions will demonstrate implementation fidelity as measured by district fidelity checklists. Fidelity data and student progress monitoring data will be reviewed regularly to ensure interventions are implemented as designed and are producing improved student outcomes.
 2. By June 2027, all district school social workers participating in the Minnesota Department of Education Demonstration Project will implement at least two additional evidence-based social-emotional interventions within their practice. Implementation will be documented through grant accountability measures and demonstrated through increased intervention capacity across the district.
 3. By June 2027, the Special Services Department will improve the quality and measurability of IEP goals, objectives, and progress reports. Success will be demonstrated through internal IEP audits showing increased compliance with district expectations for measurable goals, aligned objectives, and meaningful progress reporting.

Teaching and Learning

Julie Sullivan, Director

As it is for everyone else, things are ramping up right now as we get ready for the new school year. The month of August has been filled with math training on our new resource, Illustrative Math. All elementary teachers participated in a six-hour training session and a three-hour unit planning session. In addition, the 6-8 math teachers have a full day of professional development on August 20. Wendy Eggermont's work in rolling out this new resource has been extraordinary.

In addition, we are preparing for new reading interventions. At OMS, 6th grade ADSIS students will experience REWARDS with Abby Olson, the new reading intervention teacher. OMS has also added a reading intervention class in 7th and 8th grades. Courtney Benson and Madi Lurken will be using STARI to work with students who need a boost in reading instruction. All three of these interventions, along with Lexia PowerUp that is being used schoolwide, are on the highly approved list from MDE. The new reading Title teacher at Washington will be piloting Voyager Passport, another highly recommended intervention resource from MDE. OHS will be incorporating Lexia PowerUp in all English 9 courses as well as in specific special education and EL courses. We are working hard on our supports to ensure students are reaching grade-level reading targets.

Upcoming Events:

- Monday, August 17-Wednesday, August 19: New staff and new teacher induction
- Wednesday, August 19: Last Unit Planning session for K-5 Math from 8:00-11:00
- Thursday, August 20: Illustrative Math training at OMS from 8:00-3:00
- Monday, August 24-Thursday, August 27: Back-to-School Workshop
- Tuesday, August 25: Lexia PowerUp Training (1:30-3:00)
- Wednesday, August 26: Fastbridge Progress Monitoring w/interventionists and Sped teachers
- Wednesday, August 26: READ Act Strive Live Session (2:15-3:00) for 6-12 ELA teachers
- Thursday, August 27: Intensification of Functional Phonics training for interventionists, EL, Sped (1:15-3:00)

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

Important Dates

- August 27th, August 31st and September 1st Classroom Connection Days at Lincoln
- September 2nd-First day of school Grades 1-5
- September 3rd-First half of kindergarten classes attend
- September 4th-Second half of kindergarten classes attend
- September 10th-PTO Back to School Bash at 6:00pm at Lincoln
- September 16th-Bus Safety
- September 23rd-Picture Day
- September 25th-Bring Your Parent to PE Day

Lincoln Updates

- We have eight new staff members at Lincoln. Some are new to us, but not to Owatonna.
- Lincoln classrooms received new cabinets to provide improved storage and organization. Also, new flooring inside of door 8 by the library was installed. These projects were completed during the summer months to minimize disruption and ensure classrooms and common areas were ready for students and staff when the new school year began.

- This year, we will offer breakfast in the school lunchroom before school starts, instead of the classrooms after school begins. This will allow students to be ready to learn, focus, and participate upon entering the classroom.
- Lincoln site team met last week to look over data and discuss goals and action steps for the coming school year.

McKinley Elementary

Justin Kiel, Principal

We are fully underway with preparing for another great year at McKinley!

- We held a “Summer Recess” on August 13th. This was a time for our students to come enjoy recess with their friends. We had a great time playing on a beautiful August night!
- Our school theme is “The Power of Us: Learning Without Limits”
- We are welcoming 13 new staff to McKinley this year (classroom teachers, paras, EA's, etc)
- Our focus for the year is around implementation of a new math resource in K-5. Last year, we had our Kindergarten and 5th grade as pilot teams for this resource; this year, our 1st-4th grades will learn the resource. A huge shout out to Wendy Eggermont in Teaching and Learning for all her work in supporting this implementation.

We are excited to welcome 490 learners to our building this year!

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

Washington Updates:

- Building Connections: We are excited to welcome our scholars and partner with families during our upcoming Classroom Connection Days as we begin building strong relationships for the 2026–2027 school year.
- New Math Resource: Our teachers have been working hard to prepare for the implementation of Illustrative Mathematics. We are excited to bring more problem-based learning opportunities to our classrooms and engage students in meaningful mathematical thinking and problem solving.
- 2026–2027 School Theme: Our theme this year is “Dream it. Do it. Be it.” Our scholars come to us with dreams, goals, and limitless potential, and we are excited to create opportunities for them to discover their strengths, pursue their goals, and turn their dreams into reality.

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

Greetings from Owatonna High School!

We are ready for the school year and are excited to welcome students and families to OHS for our open house and the first day of school! Please see below for important events that are coming soon and join us for fall activities.

All Student & Family Open House will be held Tuesday, August 25th from 1:00pm-5:00pm in the Auxiliary Gym at Owatonna High School. Students will receive schedules, activity tickets, take pictures, pay technology insurance, walk schedules, and get a locker if needed.

9th Grade Orientation: It will be held at OHS on Tuesday, August 25th at 8:00am. At this event they will connect with Junior and Senior Mentors, get schedules, take school photos and tour the school.

New Students in 10th, 11th & 12th Grades & Exchange Students:

New students to OHS will have an information meeting with our team of OHS counselors along with a staff member from our Health Dept. and Food Services Dept on Tuesday, August 25th from 2-3pm in the Counseling & Career Center. This will be an opportunity to tour the school, meet staff and help answer any questions they may have before the 1st day of school.

Important Dates:

- Tuesday, August 25 - 9th Grade Orientation Link Crew (8am-1pm)
- Tuesday, August 25 - 10th-12th Grade Student & Family Open House (1pm-5pm)
- **Monday, August 31 - 1st Day of School!**
- **Friday, Sept 4 & Monday, Sept 7 - NO SCHOOL - LABOR DAY WEEKEND**
- Wednesday, September 23 - COMPASS DAY SCHEDULE
- Friday, October 2 - HOMECOMING PARADE DAY (Early Release)
- Saturday, October 3 - HOMECOMING DANCE (OHS Commons, 9-11:30pm)

Area Learning Center

Martina Wagner, Director

- Enrollment: The Area Learning Center currently has 64 students enrolled, with additional students onboarding daily.
- Increased Engagement & Attendance: Over the past two academic years, ALC staff have worked collaboratively to strengthen student engagement and develop strategies to better support student success. We are proud to report a 17% increase in student attendance from the 2023-24 school year to the end of the 2025-26 school year.
- Looking Ahead: During the 2026-27 school year, we will continue to build on this progress by implementing high-leverage engagement strategies designed to further increase learner attendance, engagement, and achievement

Owatonna Online

Martina Wagner, Director

- Enrollment: Owatonna Online currently has 401 students enrolled, with additional students onboarding daily.
- New Partnership Districts: We are excited to welcome two new partnership districts this year: Melrose Public Schools and Hermantown Public Schools.

- Returning Partnership Districts: We are pleased to continue our partnerships with Northfield, NRHEG, Kasson-Mantorville, Pequot-Lakes, Triton, Waseca, Waterville-Elysian-Morristown, and Fertile-Beltrami.
- Professional Development: Our teachers and support specialists will begin a year-long professional development series focused on collaborative teaming in the virtual space. This work will support staff in strengthening communication, collaboration, and student support within an online learning environment.