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Dr. Tammy Champa

September 2026

Upcoming Events:

- October 2: Homecoming (2-hour early dismissal)
- October 12: School Board Work Session, 5:30 pm, District Office
- October 15-16: No School (MEA)
- October 26: School Board Meeting, 5:30 pm, Charles S Crandall Center

Stronger Together: One Pack, One Purpose

As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, I want to take a moment to recognize and express my sincere appreciation for the many people who have helped create such a positive start to the year.

A successful school opening does not happen by accident. It is the result of months of planning, preparation, collaboration, problem-solving, and a shared commitment to our students. Across Owatonna Public Schools, countless people have worked behind the scenes and in our schools to ensure that our students and staff could begin the year feeling welcomed, supported, and ready to learn.

We have so many points of pride that truly make our Owatonna School District Special and behind every point of pride we have our incredibly talented staff. From our teachers and paraprofessionals to transportation, food service, custodial, maintenance, technology, administrative, and support teams, every person plays an important role in creating the experiences for each and every one of our students.

As we embark on the new school year, our committees are also beginning to ramp up. This past week we hosted our transportation committee, finance committee, emergency preparedness and participated in the area Joint Task Force Meeting. Each of the meetings was a reminder of our strength when we work together. We continue to be grateful for all our partners, which in turn strengthen our district.

There is a tremendous amount of good work happening across our district, and I am proud of the people who make it happen each and every day. **One Pack. One Purpose. Stronger Together.**

Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

- Continuing interviews and selection of candidates for our open support staff positions and onboarding new hires
 - Policy Committee Work
 - Employee Relations and student issues
- PELSB supply and demand report
- Opening of STAR (Staff automated reporting) report
- MDE Assurance and Compliance Report
- MNTJATC Board meetings and Policy Committee Work
- Exploring implementation of digital student records (100%)
- Managing Student Teacher and Field Hour Requests

Roosevelt/Community Education

Deb McDermott-Johnson, Director

We've had a strong start to school year programs due in large part to a talented team of program leaders who are creating unique and exciting learning opportunities across the age spectrum.

- The SAC program opened full with wait lists at 2 of our elementary sites. All sites are fully staffed with a complement of returning and amazing new talent who are choosing child care as their career journey. Additionally, a fifth care site opened at the OEC to serve 3 and 4-year-olds with "wrap around care" either before or after children's preschool experience. The Husky Playschool program is a license-exempt child care program; however, it has completed requirements to be "certified" through the Department of Human Services, making this component of the SAC program eligible for Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). CCAP is a funding stream designed to help make quality child care affordable for eligible families.
- Youth and Adult Enrichment classes are off to a strong start as judged by the number of enrollments that began rolling in on September 11th. A number of classes already have full enrollment just 2-weeks after registration began. Registrations remain open as we continue to market learning experiences. Interestingly enough, we have noted a slow start to Walking Track and Youth Driver's Education this fall. Both programs typically have heavy registration traffic early in the fall and we are watching both programs for a shift in how the community is accessing these programs.
- The ABE program has 40 students currently enrolled in programs meeting in the morning and early evening. This is a slower start to enrollment than we've previously experienced; however, student enthusiasm and engagement is high. Staff have been trained on hy-flex instruction and all classes are offered using hy-flex instruction to meet the needs of in-person and virtual learners. Due to financial constraints, area ABE sites are teaming up to offer virtual programming in the afternoons and some evenings, particularly around GED preparation, and career pathways. Owatonna is providing leadership for new career pathways in environmental education with the Riverbend Nature Center and new opportunities for primary and secondary careers in the emerging "gig" economy.

- The MN ABE Report card was released in late August and shows SE ABE ranked 8/39 in number of participants (students with 12+ hours) and 9/39 for amount of state aid received. Owatonna specifically ranked 3rd in Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) for ABE Participants and 6th for ESL Participants. Our Center also ranked 4th for Post-testing Rates across all content areas - an important destination of the number of students who persisted through 40+ hours of instruction and sat for their post-test to determine level gains in learning. Overall - a strong report of effectiveness for the Adult Learning Center students and staff!

Special Services

Shari Mensink, Director

- Future Ready Learners / Effective & Efficient Operations
 - 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.
- Future Ready Learners / Safe & Caring Community
 - 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.
- Inclusion & Access for All
 - 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.

Child Count as of 9/21/26: 1070 (+43 from last year at this time)

- EC 178
- Lincoln 115
- Washington + St. Mary's 127
- Wilson 87
- McKinley 105
- OMS 196
- OHS 167
- ALC 25

- OO 70

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

Important Dates

- September 9th PTO fundraiser kick off through Club's Choice
- 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
- September 28th-October 2nd-Dress up days at Lincoln for Homecoming week
- September 29th-4th grade Kindness Retreat at Associated Church
- October 1st-Fun Run at the Old High School Track from 6:00-7:00
- October 2nd-1st grade Teddy Bear parade at Lincoln at 10:10, student council applications are due and school releases at 12:40 for homecoming.

Lincoln Updates

- Collaboration meetings this month are focusing on Wit and Wisdom, reviewing data and IM (Illustrative math) the district's new math program
- New this year, we are serving breakfast before school in the lunchroom. Students enter the main entrance at 7:45, eat breakfast and return outside until the bell rings. The process is going well and allows students to begin their learning upon arriving in their classrooms.
- The PTO Back to School Bash was well attended with students enjoying a "foam party" and Kona Icees available for purchase
- Students and staff are settling into routines and getting into the rhythm of a new school year. We're off to a great start and look forward to all the learning and fun ahead!

McKinley Elementary

Jusin Kiel, Principal

It's been a great month of learning and relationships!

As a system, we have some updates on the work done in September:

- Our teaching teams have spent a lot of time ensuring our systems and structures are ready for high levels of student learning:
 - Schedules are all created and prioritize a sense of urgency and focus on all students receiving high quality core instruction.

- Grade-level teams met to reflect and plan for year 2 of our new knowledge building literacy curriculum.
- All instructional staff met in collaboration to look at each student's data and create individual instructional plans for our learners in the area of literacy.
- Our vision card is complete with building goals and action steps. We are now working on metrics (how to measure success) and ways for all staff to check in on our action steps.
- Homecoming is next week! We have dress up days all week and end the week with a 1st Grade Teddy Bear Parade, Family Picnic, and early release on Friday, October 2.

We're excited for another year to ensure "every learner, every day!"

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

Washington Updates:

- The school year is off to an amazing start! Students and staff have settled into routines, built strong relationships, and are working toward meaningful goals for growth and achievement.
- Our new math curriculum is off and running! Staff are implementing Illustrative Mathematics, and students are actively engaged in problem-based learning that encourages them to think critically, collaborate, and explain their mathematical thinking.
- Our PTO helped kick off the year with a Back-to-School Ice Cream Social! Students and families enjoyed reconnecting with friends, meeting new families, and spending time together on the playground. It was a wonderful celebration of the Washington community!

Wilson Elementary

Cassie Mitchell, Principal

Wilson Elementary has had a wonderful start to the 2026–27 school year! During our first month, much of our focus has been on establishing strong routines, building relationships, and creating a positive learning environment for students. Staff have been intentional about getting to know learners, strengthening collaboration across roles, and beginning the year with a shared commitment to our mission of Inspiring Excellence. Every Learner, Every Day.

PAWS at Wilson

This year, we have added PAWS as a schoolwide framework for recognizing and reinforcing positive behavior. Students are learning what it means to be:

P – Prepared for Success

A – Act Respectfully

W – Work Together

S – Stay Safe

Staff have been explicitly teaching and reinforcing these expectations throughout the building. Students can earn PAWS tickets when they demonstrate the Wilson Way, and we celebrate students through regular PAWS ticket drawings. It has been exciting to see students recognized for the positive choices they make each day.

Shared Leadership Through Committee Work

We are also launching staff committee work this year as part of our Cultivate theme and our continued focus on shared ownership of Wilson. Staff are serving on committees focused on the Wilson Way, Diversity & Inclusion, Celebrations & Events, Engaging Environment, and Social Committee.

Committees are identifying priorities and developing ideas that will positively impact students, staff, families, and our school environment. Our goal is to give staff meaningful opportunities to use their strengths and ideas to help shape our school community.

Wilson Family Game Night

We are excited to host Wilson Family Game Night on Thursday, October 8 from 4:30–6:30 PM. We have been working hard to plan an evening where families can come together for games that build reading skills while having fun together. Families will also enjoy walking tacos for supper, and the event is free for Wilson families.

This is another opportunity for us to strengthen the connection between home and school while giving families practical and enjoyable ways to support learning.

Upcoming Dates:

- October 2 – Homecoming Early Release, 12:40 PM dismissal
- October 8 – Wilson Family Game Night, 4:30–6:30 PM
- October 20 – PTO Meeting, 5:00–6:00
- October 30 – End-of-Quarter Celebration

Owatonna Middle School

Christina Mattson, Principal

We've had a great start to the 2026–27 school year at OMS! Our students are settling into their schedules, making new friends, and diving into learning. This year, we are starting with more students than we've had in quite a few years. Our enrollment is up nearly 60 students from where we ended last spring and is well above our year-to-year average of approximately 1,030 students. Needless to say, our classrooms are full of lots of middle school energy!

During the week of September 21, we will begin our fall FastBridge benchmark testing in Reading and Math and subsequent Capti ReadBasix screener. We used ReadBasix last winter to help identify students who needed additional reading support. Based on what we learned from that process, we are excited to be offering Reading 7 and Reading 8 this year—intervention classes specifically designed to support students who are not yet reading at grade level.

We are putting a strong focus on Reading and Math achievement this year. Over the summer, many of our 6–8 Math teachers participated in Illustrative Math Problem-Based Learning training as we prepare to reboot our IM curriculum and strengthen our math instruction. Our Reading Intervention teachers trained in STARI and REWARDS, two evidence-based programs designed to support students who need more intensive reading instruction. In addition, all 6–8 ELA teachers (and the principal) are participating in READ Act professional development through STRIVE throughout the school year.

There is a lot of learning and growth happening at OMS—for our students and for us as educators. We are excited about the year ahead and the opportunities we have to help every student succeed.

We remain committed to Every Student. Every Day. Every Opportunity. (Our theme this year.) Here's to a great year at OMS!

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

We are creating great routines at OHS! We continue to work with students on establishing norms for their school day and supporting them as they move into mid-quarter and the first round of assessments and grading.

Students are well versed in the new phone policy and staff have delivered a consistent message that they are not to be seen during class time.

Staff will be preparing for conferences on October 8th and we are communicating this with parents so we can have meaningful conversations about academic progress and ways we can support.

Finally, next week is Homecoming Week at OHS! We are excited for coronation, float building, the game, the parade, dress up days, and the big dance on Saturday. A lot to celebrate that week. We look forward to seeing you at the events!

Owatonna Area Learning Center

Martina Wagner, Director

- Strong Start & Engagement: ALC opened the year with approximately 80 students, with a continued focus on student connection, attendance, engagement, and ensuring every learner has a trusted adult.
- Career & Postsecondary Experiences: Students completed their first Riverland Community College visit, providing hands-on career and postsecondary exploration opportunities. Staff and student feedback was very positive.
- Building Community: iTime has launched to strengthen student relationships, belonging, and connection, while the ALC Site Team is beginning its work around programming and school governance.

Owatonna Online

Martina Wagner, Director

- Continued Growth: Owatonna Online is currently serving approximately 477 students across grades 4–12, including local, open-enrolled, and partnership-district learners.
- Strengthening Student Support: Achievement Mentors are focusing on early identification of students showing signs of decreased stamina, pacing concerns, or disengagement so support can occur before students fall significantly behind.
- Investing in Staff Collaboration: OO launched its first Collaborative Team PLC, beginning a yearlong focus on collaborative practices, shared strategies, data, and improving outcomes for online learners.