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Dr. Tammy Champa

October 2026

Our hearts are heavy following the recent school tragedy in Bend, Oregon. Our thoughts are with the students, staff, families, and community members who are navigating unimaginable loss. As we stand with the Bend community, we are reminded of the responsibility we carry each day to provide safe, supportive learning environments for each and every student and staff member. We continually review our safety protocols, emergency response procedures, and preparedness practices to ensure we are taking thoughtful, proactive steps to protect our school community. While we can never eliminate every risk, we remain committed to learning, improving, and working together to strengthen the safety of our schools. As a reminder, if you see something or hear something, please say something!

Highlight: Owatonna Growth Breakfast

The recent Owatonna Growth Breakfast provided a valuable opportunity to highlight the important role school districts and local businesses can play in working together to strengthen our community and prepare students for future success. The conversation reinforced that schools and businesses share a common interest in developing a strong workforce, creating meaningful career pathways, and ensuring students understand the opportunities available to them in our community.

A special shout-out goes to our Steele Co Works partnership and to our career navigators for the important difference that their work is making in our community. The work helps bridge the gap between education and employment by connecting students with career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, and local professionals who can help them envision their futures. They are building relationships, opening doors, and helping students recognize the many pathways available to them. We are grateful for the leadership and dedication of our career navigators, our leaders and our partners who had the vision and for the businesses that welcome our students, invest their time, and partner with us.

Looking Ahead

As we wrap up our annual audit, considerable time will be spent working on budget adjustments for the 2027-2028 school year. Several economic factors will require us to make difficult financial decisions, including legislative changes to compensatory funding, summer unemployment costs,

rising diesel prices, and other budgetary pressures. With students at the forefront of every decision, we will approach this process with a commitment to transparency, thoughtful consideration, and meaningful opportunities for input and collaboration. Our goal is to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Owatonna Public Schools.

Upcoming Events:

- October 30: End of 1st Quarter
- November 2: No School, Teacher Work Day / Professional Development
- November 9: Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness and Achievement and Integration Progress Annual Meeting, 5:00 pm, District Office
- November 9: School Board Special Meeting (canvass election results) followed by a Work Session, 5:30 pm (or immediately following the CACR meeting), District Office
- November 13: No School Grades K-5, Conferences
- November 23: School Board Meeting, 5:30 pm, Charles S Crandall Center

Department of Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

Updates

- ➢ Continuing interviews and selection of candidates for our open support staff positions and onboarding new hires
- ➢ Recruiting substitute teachers and support staff
- ➢ Job Fairs - St. Mary's, UW River Falls
- ➢ Employee Relations Issues
- ➢ Policy Committee work
- ➢ Threat Assessment Team Meetings
- ➢ MNTJATC Monthly Meeting and Monthly policy committee meeting
- ➢ STAR Report
- ➢ CEU Committee

Teaching and Learning

Julie Sullivan, Director

The T&L Department is staying busy as we near the end of the first quarter. The week of October 19 has two committee meetings for us--Staff Development on Wednesday, October 21 and District Curriculum Advisory Committee on Thursday, October 21. In addition, we are planning for the PD day that takes place at the end of quarter 1 on November 2 for PreK-5. Our elementary staff will spend half of the day working with our Illustrative Math representative, Alexis and half the day focused on vocabulary work as related to Wit & Wisdom. We are also in the midst of preparing the CACR report, which you will hear about at the November 9 meeting along with an update on the Achievement and Integration grant/goals. In the meantime, we are getting into as many classrooms as we can to see new resources in action!

- October 26-29: Four days of Guided Observations with our Wit & Wisdom coaches
- November 2: Pre-K PD Day
- November 2: T&L focus for OPS Insider
- November 9: CACR and A&I reports for the board meeting

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.

- We are planning for our fourth year of special education teacher apprentices; we are conducting interviews before Thanksgiving Break and are excited to see the level of interest in joining the profession.
- Safety Care training has been completed for staff who were identified as needing the training due to their role.
- First-round literacy intervention observations and their corresponding feedback sessions have been scheduled.
- We are starting our MDE due process compliance review cycle, monitoring the goals, objectives, and progress reports of our IEPs.
- The Special Education Advisory Committee held their first meeting of the school year on September 28th.
- Shari attended the MASE Legislative Committee meeting in October; our department is keeping a close watch on legislative updates.

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

Important Dates

- October 5th kindergarten fire safety and firetruck visit
- October 6th choir at 2:40 and PTO meeting at 6:00 at Lincoln
- October 9th We All Play school wide field trip to Manthey Park and Dr Champa visited Lincoln for a building listening session
- October 12th and 26th PLC meetings at 2:45
- October 14th-student council representatives were announced
- October 19th-staff meeting at 2:50 at Lincoln
- October 20th-Author, Michael Hall visits Lincoln for 3-5 grade students
- October 21st-student council meeting at 2:45
- October 22nd-PTO fundraiser delivery at 4:00 and open gym night at Lincoln at 5:30
- October 27th-Choir at 2:40
- October 30th-End of the first Quarter

Lincoln Updates

- Collaboration meetings this month are focusing on Wit and Wisdom, reviewing data and IM (Illustrative math) the district's new math program
- This month we continued our building staff meetings (certified staff) around our current book study.
- The building leadership team has been charged with carrying out the professional learning with the whole staff. Each month, a different partnership/trio heads up the learning work with the whole staff
- As an end of the quarter celebration, students went to Manthey Park for an hour per grade level on Friday, October 9th to play in the park or go on a nature walk.
- Those students interested in being a student council representative in grades 3rd through 5th gave speeches to their classmates and students then voted on who would represent their class for student council.
- Author Michael Hall visited Lincoln and read picture books. To engage students, interactive illustrations were used for student participation. There was a question and answer session, and he explained the process of writing books.

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

Updates:

- Our students have earned their first school-wide celebration. We enjoyed choosing various activity stations at school.
- Students are working on explaining math reasoning and engaging in academic conversations across content areas.
- Our Best Buddies program put on a parade at Washington for homecoming.

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

Greetings from Owatonna High School! We are back after a short MEA break and are heading into our final week of the first quarter. It has gone by very fast but it was filled with a lot of learning, focus and engagement. It is always great to see our 9th graders get acclimated to the building and to high school and I can say they have done a great job! We are excited to have them here and to watch them grow throughout the school year.

We are wrapping up fall activities and will now start to see registration for winter sports and activities. This is exciting for many and will help them as we move into winter and the long evenings. We invite you all to attend events at OHS!

Area Learning Center (ALC)

Martina Wagner, Director of Alternative Services

1. Student Voice & Leadership
Nine ALC students were selected to participate in the Student Advisory Panel, providing opportunities to share their perspectives directly with Superintendent Champa and School Board members throughout the year.

2. Career Exploration Opportunities
ALC students participated in the Mayo Health Fair on October 19, gaining exposure to healthcare careers and postsecondary pathways.

3. Student Engagement & Academic Progress
ALC staff continue prioritizing student progress monitoring, family outreach, and collaborative PLC work focused on practical strategies for increasing student motivation and engagement.

Owatonna Online (OO)

Martina Wagner, Director of Alternative Services

1. Student Engagement & Instructional Practices
Owatonna Online PLC teams are examining how to move beyond measuring coursework completion to intentionally creating learning experiences that increase student engagement.

2. Quarter 1 Completion & Student Support
Staff are focusing on academic progress, proactive family communication, and targeted outreach to help students successfully complete first-quarter coursework and earn credit.

3. Quarter 2 Transition & Enrichment Opportunities
Owatonna Online is preparing for its November 3 transition day, including student onboarding, course transitions, and virtual enrichment breakout sessions for students in grades 7–12.