OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INSPIRING EXCELLENCE • EVERY LEARNER • EVERY DAY

333 East School Street · Owatonna MN 55060 · 507-444-8600 · www.isd761.org

Dr. Tammy Champa

November 2026

As we approach the upcoming holiday and the beginning of the winter season, I am reminded of how much there is to appreciate and be thankful for throughout Owatonna Public Schools. From the dedication of our staff to the accomplishments of our students and the continued support of our families and community partners, there are many reasons to be proud of the work within and outside our district.

American Education Week

November provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate American Education Week. This is a wonderful reminder of the many individuals who contribute to the education of our students each and every day.

Education is truly a team effort with everyone of our staff members critical to the success of our district. I am grateful for the dedication, care, and professionalism demonstrated throughout our district. We are continually reminded of the importance of working together and living out this year's theme: **Stronger Together: One Pack, One Purpose!**

Veterans Day

We also took time this month to recognize Veterans Day and honor the men and women who have served our country. I appreciate the efforts of our buildings and staff in helping students understand the significance of this day and the importance of honoring those who have served.

To all veterans in our Husky community and beyond, **thank you** for your service and many sacrifices.

Activities and Fine Arts – From Fall to Winter

As we move through November, we are beginning the transition from fall activities and athletics to the winter season. Fall provided another opportunity to celebrate the hard work, dedication, and accomplishments of our student-athletes, coaches, and activity participants. As those seasons come to a close, we look forward to welcoming our winter activities and athletics and the opportunities they provide for our students.

This transition also provides an opportunity to recognize the many students and staff involved in our fine arts programs. Recently, audiences had the opportunity to experience the production of *Radium Girls*. Congratulations to the students, directors, and everyone who contributed to bringing this production to the stage.

As you make your winter plans, whether in the gymnasium, ice rink, or on the stage, please take the opportunity to support our students as they showcase their talents, share their passions, and represent Owatonna with pride.

Upcoming Events:

- November 25: No School
- November 26-27: District Closed
- December 14: School Board Meeting, 5:30 pm, Charles S Crandall Center
- December 14: Truth in Taxation Hearing, 6:00 pm, Charles S Crandall Center

Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

HR Updates

- ➢ Recruitment and Selection of support staff and onboarding new hires
- ➢ Job Fairs - UW-River Falls, MSU Speed Interviews
- ➢ Employee Relations Issues
- ➢ Policy Committee work
- ➢ GYO and Teacher Apprenticeship meetings
- ➢ STAR Report
- ➢ Digitizing Current Student Records

Roosevelt / Community Education

Deb McDermott-Johnson, Director

Preparation is underway for winter programming, with catalogued programs already in final revisions. Catalogues will mail to the community during the winter break, with registration opening on January 4th.

School Age Care is currently undergoing selection and onboarding of new staff for 2 of our sites. Sites remain full with waiting lists. The PreK Wrap Around Childcare program at OEC has experienced a decline in enrollment, but remains hopeful that additional marketing will attract new students to join us after the winter break. The most recent Fun Day (non-school day programming) for K-5 students featured a trip to the Air Insanity Trampoline Park in Rochester. It was a bouncing good time for the 36 students that participated.

ABE enrollment remains below recent fall benchmarks; however, student persistence is high and students are very engaged with staff through their participation in the Student Advisory Circle, a focus group lead by Lydia Yahnke that provides students with an opportunity to provide staff with feedback and overall Adult Learning Center improvements. Of all our efforts to engage students in helping drive Center services, the Student Advisory Circle has been the most effective. Staff has been highly responsive to turning student feedback into instructional gains.

Teaching and Learning

Julie Sullivan, Director

We are in year two of implementing a new resource at the elementary, which is an incredible amount of work for the teachers carrying out the work in the classrooms; however, they are doing the hard work. As of the time I am writing this, I have been in 90 classrooms since the beginning of the school year to watch Wit and Wisdom and Illustrative Math in action. These walkthroughs help us understand the resource rollout and help us gauge what PD and supports we need to provide our teachers. The bottom line: there are so many good things happening in classrooms across the district. The T&L team has wrapped up the Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness report and the Achievement and Integration update to the state. The fall amendment window for our Title programs is currently open, so I am working with St. Mary's to finish the documentation we need for their portion of the grant. We also received some good news with an additional $38,000 awarded to the district through Title I, II, III, and IV. Our team will be doing CoGat testing at the elementary schools (second grade plus new move-in students) at the beginning of December; this test is used to help determine advanced academics (along with other assessment data). In addition, we will be helping fill in slots at Washington Elementary to allow teachers to get into other classrooms to see how students are responding to the new resources. At the same time, we are working with the high school Geometry teachers as they look at a potential new resource for their classrooms. We rarely find times when we all aren't scrambling, in a focused way, to get the work done!

Upcoming Events:

- Wednesday, November 18: PreK-K Transition Team Planning
- Thursday, November 19: DCAC Meeting
- Wednesday, December 2: Intern Interviews
- Thursday, December 3: Second Geometry resource presentation
- Tuesday, December 8 & Thursday, December 10: IM Learning Walkthroughs

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.

- First-round literacy intervention fidelity checks are wrapping up; data review is scheduled for early December.
- Quarter 1 Demonstration Project data has been collected; the team will review and discuss their progress on Nov. 19th.
- All MDE submissions are complete and waiting for their response. We continue monthly due process trainings at each site.
- November 2nd Elementary PD focused on using Capti ReadBasix data to inform specialized instruction in IEP goals.
- Elementary setting III restructuring is underway (Board presentation 11/9).
- Our administrative assistant, Theresa Caswell, is retiring in December after 20+ years with the District. We wish her well and are in the process of finalizing the hire of her replacement.
- November's MASE Legislative Committee update: We will be asking for a repeal of the $250M, matching the recommendations of that group.

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

<u>Important Dates</u>

- November 2nd PTO meeting in the Lincoln Art Room at 6:00pm
- November 3rd, 10th, 12th,17th choir practice from 2:40pm to 3:30pm
- November 4th and 18th Student Council meetings at 2:45 in Mrs. Karsten's room
- November 11th-Veteran's Day
- November 10th, 11th and 13th Lincoln Conferences were going on and the PTO book fair was open during this week.

- PTO Read and Feed Event during student lunch hours was well attended on November 10th and November 12th
- November 16th, 17th and (18th if needed) Let's Smile dental clinic was at Lincoln
- November 16th and 30th PLC meetings from 2:45pm to 3:45pm
- November 16th-20th American Education Week
- November 18th-Site Team meeting at 2:50pm in the flex room
- November 19th-Lincoln Concert at OHS at 6:30 pm for choir, 4th and 5th grade students
- November 23rd-Healthy Husky Challenge in PE class and teacher collaboration day
- November 24th-Dress Up day-PJ Day and Turkey Bingo from 9:40 am to 10:40 am
- November 25th-November 27th No School

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 the work we are doing with our current book study.
- Mike Halverson was at Lincoln on November 9th to answer staff questions about technology. Mike's team helped us with trialing how to "present" student work so the students can be the thinkers rather than the teacher being the center of instruction! We are excited to see where this can take us!
- The Read and Feed event during student lunches was well attended with Lincoln parents. Parents signed up to eat lunch with their students and shop the book fair on Tuesday and Thursday of conference week. We are looking forward to another one in the winter to accompany family/teacher conferences and the PTO Book Fair
- Lincoln student council is collecting toiletries in collaboration with the OHS student council for Giving Week.
- American Education week is being celebrated at Lincoln in correlation with our theme Stronger Together, One Pack One Purpose. Each day there will be treats or a fun activity celebrating the week.
- Lincoln choir, 4th grade and 5th grade will participate in the Fall Concert at OHS on Thursday, November 19th at 6:30pm.
- The Healthy Husky Challenge Day is Monday, November 23rd in PE classes. Students have raised money for Community Pathways, the Youth Scholarship Assistance Fund through Owatonna Park and Rec and the Lincoln PE and the Lincoln Fun Run.
- On November 24th, students will be participating in the annual Turkey Bingo event for one hour. When students receive a bingo they gobble down to get their prize.

McKinley Elementary

Justin Kiel, Principal

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

A couple upcoming events:

November 24 - EL Graduation

We are excited to "graduate" 17 students from our EL program. Not only are we excited to celebrate these graduates, but we are proud to share this is our third year in a row of exiting a higher number of graduates. Kudos to our students, families, and their teaching team(s) who helped them reach this milestone!

November 30 - Connection Day

After a long break, we have a tradition at McKinley of hosting "Connection Days" in which we rebuild and re-establish routines. It's been a great way to get everyone back into the routines and relationships of school.

Thank you for your continued support!

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

Updates:

- Washington hosted a successful Math Night, giving families an opportunity to engage in problem-solving activities and learn more about our new Illustrative Math resource.
- Our PTO welcomed an incredible turnout for Family Bingo Night, providing a fun opportunity for students and families to connect with our school community.
- We enjoyed connecting and partnering with families during fall conferences and continuing to build strong relationships that support student success.

Wilson Elementary

Cassie Mitchell, Principal

November 16, 2026

Wilson Elementary has had a wonderful first quarter! As we move into Quarter 2, we continue to build on our Cultivate theme, focusing on positive school culture, student growth, and shared leadership.

The Wilson Way & PAWS

On November 3, we held an all-school assembly to reinforce the Wilson Way and our schoolwide PAWS expectations. Students continue to be recognized for their positive choices through PAWS ticket drawings, Positive Office Referrals, and classroom celebrations.

We also celebrated the end of Quarter 1 with a schoolwide bowling celebration at SpareTime Entertainment. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our students and their hard work. Thank you to our Wilson PTO for supporting this experience!

Family Engagement

We recently wrapped up fall parent-teacher conferences and our Wilson Book Fair. Conferences provided a wonderful opportunity for families and teachers to celebrate student growth and discuss goals for continued learning. We are grateful for our staff, families, and PTO for making conference week a success.

Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Our Wilson Diversity and Inclusion Committee continues to support our school community through its committee work. This month, the committee is sharing Smithsonian resources with staff to support accurate and culturally responsive instruction around Thanksgiving. They will also share a schoolwide message during morning announcements on November 24.

Upcoming Dates:

- November 25–27: Thanksgiving Break, No School

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

Greetings from OHS! It is a busy week here. Huskies GIVE Week is a very special week where our students rally together to support many groups in our community. They are raising money for Lighthouse, cereal and socks for Community Pathways and toys for Toys for Tots. On top of that, they are looking at over 400 hours of community service throughout the area. This is really what being part of the OHS community is all about, giving back!

I look forward to seeing what we raise and meeting our daily goals because Federated Insurance has offered to match us up to $10,000!

This time of year is when our students have really found a routine and have started 2nd quarter classes and are well into their 1st semester classes. They know what to expect and we can seek ways to support those that need the extra help in class and with attendance. We have many interventions in place that will likely help.

We are also working with many students on future plans as we just finished College Knowledge month and many are applying to schools or talking to our career navigators to look at career options for spring and into next year. Exciting times to make plans for the future.

We are proud of our Girl's cross country team and individual boy runners as well as diver who are state qualifiers! Our fall season was great and we look forward to a great winter activity season as well. We hope to see you all at concerts, games, matches and competitions! Go Huskies!

Owatonna Online

Martina Wagner, Director

Continued Growth, Student Success & Partnerships

Owatonna Online continues to expand educational opportunities for students in grades 4–12 through flexible learning pathways and strong partnerships with districts across Minnesota.

- **Expanding Partnerships:** We continue to welcome new partnership districts, including Byron, Medford, and Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton, extending access to online learning for more students.
- **Student Achievement:** Staff remain focused on improving course completion, student engagement, and attendance through proactive Achievement Mentor outreach, individualized support, and data-driven instruction.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Professional Learning Communities are focused on strengthening instructional practices, student engagement, and academic outcomes.
- **Building Community:** Our November Transition Day provided opportunities for students to connect, participate in enrichment activities, and engage in the *Be You* experience. We are also celebrating our dedicated online staff during American Education Week.

Looking Ahead: Our priorities remain increasing successful course completion to 80% or higher, strengthening attendance to 93% or higher, and continuing to build a high-quality online learning experience for all students.

Owatonna Area Learning Center (ALC)

Martina Wagner, Director

Building Connections, Increasing Engagement & Celebrating Progress

The Owatonna ALC continues to focus on creating a supportive, structured learning environment where students can reconnect with school, build confidence, and make meaningful progress toward graduation.

- **Academic Achievement:** Quarter 1 data indicate encouraging progress in course completion and attendance compared with previous years. Staff continue working toward our goal of having at least 55% of students successfully complete all enrolled courses each quarter.
- **Attendance & Engagement:** We are strengthening consistent attendance, student accountability, and meaningful participation, with a quarterly attendance goal of 70% or higher.

- **Positive Learning Environment:** Staff are reinforcing consistent classroom expectations, cell phone procedures, and active student engagement throughout the instructional day.
- **Expanded Credit Recovery:** Fall Night School began November 9, providing additional opportunities for students to recover credits and stay on track toward graduation.
- **College & Career Readiness:** Students are participating in experiences such as mock interviews and career exploration to build skills for life beyond high school.

Looking Ahead: Our focus remains on improving attendance, increasing successful course completion, and ensuring every student has a clear, supported pathway toward graduation.