



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

Dr. Tammy Champa

November 2025

❖ Important Dates

- November 25: 2-Hour Early Release, Staff Development
- November 26: No School
- November 27-28: District Closed
- December 8: School Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Charles S Crandall Center

❖ District Updates

As we move forward following the recent operating levy outcome, our leadership team remains focused on aligning our work with the needs and expectations expressed by our community. Three priority areas are currently guiding our districtwide efforts:

Budget Adjustments & Fiscal Responsibility

We have initiated a comprehensive review of the district budget as we prepare for the 26-27 school year and beyond. Upcoming recommended adjustments will be made to ensure financial sustainability for the next two years. Thank you to building and department leaders who are actively identifying areas for reduced spending while maintaining our highest priorities—students, safety, and quality teaching and learning. This work will involve transparency, collaboration, and timely communication as recommendations are refined and brought forward.

School Perceptions Survey Data Analysis

To better understand the lived experiences and priorities of our students, staff, and families, we are closely analyzing our very recent School Perceptions survey results. Through this data, we are identifying what is working well and, equally important, areas in need of improvement. This feedback is directly informing decision-making around academic supports, communication needs, and overall school climate. Each building is currently reviewing building specific data with plans to address identified needs and trends.

Community Engagement Series

In response to both survey results and budget realities, we are planning a community engagement series designed to ensure transparency, provide information and to ensure we move forward together. These events will provide opportunities for staff, families, and community members to learn more, ask questions, and offer feedback. The focus will be on clarity around financial decisions and strengthening trust through transparent communication.

Together, these priorities support our commitment to maintaining strong educational opportunities while navigating a changing financial landscape. On behalf of the Owatonna School District, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide each student with an excellent, well-rounded educational experience — **Inspiring Excellence. Every Learner. Every Day.**

Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

- 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
- Fine tuning PowerSchools implementation
- STAR Report
- Nurse negotiations

Community Education/Roosevelt

Deb McDermott-Johnson, Director

- National Community Education Day was celebrated on November 13th with an Open House in the Foundation Room at OHS. Staff and community instructors worked together to provide a sampling of activities showcasing the community-building this team does everyday to create learning for life. The Walking Track was open, samples of our partnerships with Riverbend Nature Center, Youth Enrichment League's Fencing program, VIBES, Robotics Club and individual instructors presenting acrylic painting and parent/child projects with "stuffies." Great time created with terrific teamwork!
- Final fiscal and participation report preparations are underway. Mid-year program reviews are also underway as we continue to pivot in response to community needs and wants while we execute our annual performance plans.
- School Age Care enrollments show 29 children on wait lists dating back to mid-July. Availability of quality candidates is hindering our ability to fully address the care needs. As families exit the program, we backfill slots from the waitlist. SAC staff have been active in planning and training for handling site emergencies and responding to the ever-expanding needs children bring with them to the program.

- Four members of the CE program leadership team participated in the Minnesota Community Education Annual Conference the last week of October.

Teaching and Learning

Julie Sullivan, Director

The week of November 17 is a big week for T&L in the area of elementary literacy. Wit & Wisdom success leads will be with us for four days as we do classroom observations on the implementation of our new resource. This time together with principals, coaches, and T&L is extremely valuable as we learn the nuances of this implementation and areas we can coach and support this resource for those delivering it. While there are definitely hurdles in the implementation, there are so many good things happening in our Language Arts classrooms. Students are showing us they can meet the high expectations of writing, reading, and civil discourse! In addition, last Friday, MDE released the professional development options for our 6-12 Language Arts teachers with READ Act implementation. Over the course of the next couple of weeks, Kelly and I will be listening to the four vendors to help determine which option we will choose. We will have 28 teachers going through READ Act PD next year.

Our early adopters of the new math resource are also making gains with student thinking. The focus of the new math standards is on conceptual understanding of math, and our new resource is allowing our students to learn, grow, and think about math differently. It is really fun to see in action, and if a board member is interested in joining us to see either of these resources in action, we would welcome your presence! Believe it or not, we are gearing up for testing that happens in the second half of the year because the amount of time and work that goes into getting systems in place is significant. The addition of Owatonna Online, although extremely beneficial, adds another layer of testing logistics. I am grateful for my team for leading the way from their area with all of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into Teaching and Learning!

- Monday-Friday, November 17-21: Wit & Wisdom guided observations (7:30-3:00)
- Thursday, November 20: DCAC (3:15-5:15)
- Monday, November 24: Illustrative Math guided observations
- Monday, December 1: AIPAC (American Indian Parent Advisory Committee) Meeting (4:45-6:00)
- Thursday, December 4: JA Breakfast @ Torey's 7:00-8:15am

Special Services

Shari Mensink, Director

- Making progress on department goals:
 - High Quality Teaching & Learning/Equity
 - Our goal is to identify strengths & gaps in our English and math interventions, E-12, with the long-term goal to provide approved research-based interventions.
 - High Quality Teaching & Learning/21st Century Learners

- Through our identified action steps & accountability processes, we will update our departmental procedures and streamline staff access, moving key procedures to a SharePoint site.
- Safe & Caring Community/Equity
 - Through our identified action steps & accountability processes, we will create clarity around Conscious Discipline, Ukeru, Safety Care, LSCI & PTS, and assist buildings with implementation.
- Shari attended the fall MASE (MN Administrators for Special Education) Conference
- Special Education Advisory Council meeting
- SPERO collaborative meeting
- Region 10 DAPE conference held in Owatonna
- 11/3 EC/Elem PD
- published quarterly newsletter
- Shari attended OHS Student Council advisory meeting
- Shari submitted Phase 1 of the Special Services fiscal audit

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

Important Dates

- 11/5 & 11/6 Let's Smile Dental Clinic at Lincoln
- 11/6 PTO Open Gym Night at Lincoln
- 11/10-11/14 United Way Coin War
- 11/10, 11/13 and 11/14 Lincoln conferences
- 11/10-11/14 PTO Book Fair open during conferences
- 11/13 Healthy Husky Challenge Kick Off
- 11/17-11/21 American Education Week
- 11/18 Lincoln PTO meeting in the Art Room
- 11/20 K-2 Author visit by Thomas Kingslet
- 11/20 Lincoln Fall Concert at 7:00 pm at OHS
- 11/24 Healthy Husky Challenge Event in PE and Lincoln Staff Meeting at 2:50 in the Art Room
- 11/25 Turkey Bingo

Lincoln Updates

- Wit & Wisdom collaboration meetings continue for the teaching staff. We had our first round of Wit & Wisdom Walk Throughs on 11/21 where we observed in 4 different classrooms. Thank you to those teachers who invited us in. It can be scary to have a group of adults come observe you in the first year of implementation! They rocked it for sure!
- The PTO Open Gym Night was well attended by Lincoln students and their parents.

- Lincoln students brought in coins in support of the United Way. The top three classrooms will win a prize of their choice.
- Turkey Bingo is a Lincoln tradition and student favorite event. If a student wins at bingo they “gobble” down the hall to claim their prize.
- During American Education Week, Mr. Lang has a fun week planned for staff to celebrate the importance of education and to recognize their dedication to student success.

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

- We are leveling up kindness with the help of our student leadership teams (Kindness Crew and Student Council).
- Our PTO held a fun family bingo event!
- Washington students are leveling up their writing this year with our new Wit and Wisdom resource.

Wilson Elementary

Cassie Mitchell, Principal

On Thursday, November 6, we had a fantastic Family Night featuring Greg the Great, the magician, who captivated our audience with his humor and incredible tricks while emphasizing the critical importance of reading and learning. We were thrilled to see over 260 attendees enjoying the evening together! The vibrant energy in the room was a testament to our wonderful community, and it was delightful to witness families actively engaging with one another.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- Nov. 24 - Pastries with the Principal
- Nov. 25 - 2 hour early release - Staff Development
- Nov. 26-28 - No School - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 4 - Pastries with the Principal
- Dec. 4 - CoGAT Testing
- Dec. 5 - PTO Donuts in December @ 7:00 am

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

Greetings! It is HUSKIES GIVE Week at OHS! We are excited to kick off a week of commitment to our school and great community. Students began the week with a pepfest where we celebrated

our school community learning about student groups and community organizations that we can support as a school. We are excited to benefit Relay For Life, Community Pathways, Toys for Tots and many more worthy groups! Our students will also have options on COMPASS DAY to support the community through service projects. Our OHS Huskies are always giving back.

Students are busy with their coursework and have definitely found routines and connections in 2nd quarter. We hosted our annual College and Career Fair the first week of November with over 66 booths in our gym. We also invited all of our 10th graders to a learning session on each of the Career Pathways and the many ways they can use the guidance office to support their journey.

Staff are focused on their PLC work and are collaborating on ways to further connect students to their learning. We are also hosting an all staff carousel on effective communication tools for students and families to increase engagement.

Winter activities have started and we look forward to watching our Huskies on stage, the court, the dance floor, mat and the ice! Please join us by looking at the Big 9 events on our website!

Area Learning Center

Martina Wagner, Principal

- The Area Learning Center had a strong start to the year with several notable successes in Quarter 1. We hosted Achievement Day, where 76 of our 82 students were recognized for either academic achievement or strong attendance—an important celebration of student progress and commitment.
- Students also engaged in expanded college and career readiness opportunities. ALC learners participated in Mayo Career Day as well as the OHS College and Career Fair, gaining exposure to a wide range of post-secondary pathways and hands-on career information.
- As we transitioned into Quarter 2, the ALC welcomed 10 new student enrollments, reflecting continued community need for alternative pathways and our team's readiness to support students through individualized programming.
- Overall, the ALC continues to build momentum in student achievement, engagement, and career-readiness experiences.

Owatonna Online

Martina Wagner, Principal

- Owatonna Online is pleased to welcome Kasson-Mantorville as our newest district partnership, expanding the reach of our online programming and strengthening collaborative opportunities across Minnesota.
- Looking ahead to the 2026–27 school year, the Owatonna Online team is engaging in targeted professional learning to continue growing as educators of online learners. As part of this work, our staff will attend the Edina Online Learning Summit on February 17, where they will network with other online educators and explore best practices in virtual instruction.

- As our program continues to expand, our focus remains on deepening instructional expertise, strengthening engagement strategies, and improving both attendance and student engagement across grade levels.
- Additionally, Owatonna Online is now collaborating with the MN Online Learning Alliance, South Washington County Online, and Brainerd Online—all recognized as distinguished and rapidly growing online providers in Minnesota. These partnerships will help us stay aligned with statewide innovations, enhance program quality, and ensure we continue to serve students with excellence.