



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

Superintendent Jeff Elstad's Board Report

March 2025

❖ Important Dates

- March 27: End of 3rd Quarter
- March 28: No School, Teacher Work Day
- March 31-April 4: Spring Break, No School
- April 14: School Board Work Session, 5:30 p.m. at the District Office
- April 18: No School/District Closed
- April 21: Grades PK-5 No School, Grades 6-12 E-Learning Day
- April 28: School Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Crandall Center

❖ District Updates

- At tonight's board meeting, you will be asked to consider approving the sale of bonds for our LTFM projects at OEC/McKinley and the pool project at OMS. Additionally, you will be considering approving bids for the LTFM Indoor Air Quality project at primarily OEC and McKinley. These bids came in nearly \$400,000 under budget!
- You will also be asked to consider approving the 24-25 amended budget that was presented at our work session on March 10.
- The 2025-2026 school calendar will require some revision to accommodate additional READ Act training for staff and for the new math curriculum. October 20th and February 16th will become staff development days in lieu of student contact days.
- You will be receiving a separate document indicating the staff that are not being renewed as a reflection of our budget reductions that have been discussed and approved at the school board meeting in February.
- As a Governing Board member of AASA (National Superintendents Organization) we received word that the most recent congressional budget approval will provide no fiscal change to most of the federal funding that we receive in Owatonna. IDEA, Title I, Title IV-A funding will remain intact. Title II funding (class-size reduction and professional development) funding remains in limbo. I have penned a letter to our congressional delegation urging them to keep our funding in place as any further cuts would result in reduced programming and further teacher cuts.

Human Resources

Chris Picha, Director

- 2024-2025 staffing discussions continue
- Superintendent Search
- Upcoming Job Fairs - Minneapolis, SDSU, Wisconsin Area
- Employee Relations Issues
- Policy Committee work
- Teacher Apprenticeship RTI Framework for 2nd Cohort
- GYO Student and Adult Pathway work

Finance & Operations

Mark Stotts, Director

Finance/Business Office

- Now that the 24/25 Amended Budget has been completed, work has begun on the 25/26 budget.
- Payroll & Benefits Specialist Mallory Herman is leaving the district for another opportunity. We wish her well in this new endeavor.
- 2 positions are now posted – Payroll & Benefits Specialist and Accounts Payable.
- The sale of general obligation facilities maintenance bonds is scheduled for Monday, March 24, 2025. Bids on the project funded by this bond issue came in lower than expected, so I am working with Ehlers and SiteLogiq to determine the exact amount of the bond issue.

Food & Nutrition Services

- Food & Nutrition Services is fully staffed! This will enable us to finish the last quarter of the school year in a strong position.

Roosevelt/Community Ed

Deb McDermott-Johnson, Director

- Our previous Youth Coordinator position has been reconfigured into 2 specialist positions; one for SAC and one for Youth Development. Our new SAC Program Specialist is Kayla Kummerfeldt and she will begin her leadership on March 31st. We are delighted to have her with the program. We had wonderful candidates for the position and look forward to the expertise and vision that Kayla will bring to the program.
- Our SAC sites remain full. We've grown a small wait list for 2 of our locations. We remained challenged keeping staff in place, with the Lincoln site again without a Site Supervisor, and no applicants for the posting.

- Summer program marketing has begun with a large array of programming for both youth and adults. Summer SAC begins registration on April 7th.
- The Adult Learning Center is anxiously awaiting announcement of the Integrated English Language and Civics Education grant award. The \$94,814 annual request is renewable for three-years beginning in FY'26. Funding will be used to underwrite innovative career pathway and language acquisition programming for adults acquiring English language skills and citizenship.
- Join us at The Enviro Show, a fun, free, and educational event dedicated to promoting eco-friendly practices, sustainable living, and environmental awareness! Whether you're an eco-conscious individual, a family looking to learn more about green initiatives, or someone interested in supporting local organizations and sustainable businesses, this event has something for everyone! Hosted by Steele County, Steele County Free Fair, and Owatonna Community Education.

Special Services

Dr. Sarah Knudsen, Director

- Completed the last group of Safety Care training
- Dr. Knudsen represented Owatonna Public Schools by participating in Minnesota Administrators of Special Education (MASE) Legislative Advocacy Day at the Capitol
- Planning for school social workers to begin MA billing for services provided during the school day
- Collaborating with the Teaching and Learning Department regarding MTSS/intervention systems and resource alignment
- Continue to plan for staffing next year; recruiting for open positions (primarily Speech/Language Pathologists)
- Recruiting para educators and/or Educational Assistants for our next cohort of Special Education Teacher Apprentices

Teaching & Learning

Julie Sullivan, Director

We recently made the decision on purchasing a new elementary LA resource; we are moving forward with Wit & Wisdom, one of the approved knowledge-based curricular resources through the state. We will be presenting this to the District Curriculum Advisory Committee in April. After research, looking at other resources, and doing site visits, Wit & Wisdom has the components we need to move our reading instruction forward. We are also in the midst of looking at a new math resource for the elementary as well. If we move forward with a purchase, that will be decided by the end of April. We have listened to three resource presentations and have done multiple site visits. These are important next steps for the district. We are also headed into testing season although we already wrapped up our ACCESS testing; MCA testing will be in full swing after Spring Break.

Dates/events:

- Tuesday, March 18: Math site visit to Shakopee
- Tuesday, March 25: Movie viewing, *Counted Out*, at Hill Murray High School (math documentary)
- Wednesday, March 26: Math site visit to Wayzata
- Week of April 7-11: Site visits to elementary schools to discuss Wit & Wisdom
- Thursday, April 10: Staff Development Committee
- Tuesday, April 15: Math Committee Meeting--resource adoption discussion
- Monday, April 21: Final *Anxious Generation* community discussion
- Thursday, April 24: DCAC @ 3:15

Lincoln Elementary

Justin Lang, Principal

Important Dates

- March 4th-All District Art Show at the Owatonna Arts Center from 4:30-7:00
- March 6th-Lincoln Science Fair
- March 11th-PTO meeting 6:00 in the Art Room
- March 14th-PTO Glow Dance/Food Drive from 5:30-7:00 in the Lincoln gyms
- March 17th-1st grade music performance at 6:00pm in the new gym
- March 17th-Community Conversation "The Anxious Generation" 6:00-7:00 pm at the District Office
- March 19th-Student Council meeting at 2:45
- March 19th-Lincoln welcomes Author Laura K Murray
- March 19th-Site team meeting at 2:50
- March 20th-Lincoln Spring Concert at 7:00 pm at OHS
- March 21st-Wear your wacky socks for Down Syndrome Day
- March 24th-March 27th Jumping into Spreck Break dress up days
- March 26th-Student Council meeting 2:45 pm
- March 27th-Donuts with Adults from 8:40-10:10 in the Lincoln classrooms and End of the Quarter Celebration Stations in the afternoon.

Lincoln Updates

- We had 59 science fair projects entered in the Lincoln Science Fair with 10 students eligible for the Regional Science Fair in Mankato.
- The February I Love to Read Month door decorating contest winners are Mrs. Scheeler's class who enjoyed frozen custard donated by Culvers and Mrs. Peterson's class who enjoyed a boneless chicken wings meal donated by Buffalo Wild Wings
- We have 28 block 2 teacher candidates from Minnesota State University, Mankato joining Lincoln classrooms one week in March and April.

- Student council members hid 100 small faces of Mr Lang around the school. Students and staff then found the pictures and taped them to the office window. The day was filled with excitement as everyone came together to celebrate 100 days of learning.
- The PTO Glow Dance was well attended and the food donated was given to Community Pathways.
- Staff have continued their own professional learning through their Professional Learning Communities at grade levels and departments. For classroom teachers, this has centered around the on-going learning work through Online Language & Literacy Academy (OL&LA), the learning work we are doing through the READ act.
- March 10th, Mr. Lang, Mrs. Harmsen, Mrs. Hawe, Miss Hellerud and Mrs. Kingland presented to the school board, reflecting on the impact of Connections, Culture and Core at Lincoln.

McKinley Elementary

Justin Kiel, Principal

Lots of great things happening at McKinley!

Integration Planning for Grade Level Teams:

Over the past few weeks, our teachers have been engaged in our third round of integration meetings focused on making connections among various content areas as part of our STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiative. These collaborative sessions are aimed at breaking down silos between subjects and fostering a more interdisciplinary approach to learning. The teachers have worked together to design cross-curricular projects, while also focusing on student engagement (by showing them how the subjects they are learning about connect to one another in meaningful ways).

Washington Elementary

Libby Zeman, Principal

- Our Garden Leadership Team added a bird feeder to our outdoor learning space with bird identification information and books to learn about them on the window.
- Best Buddies did the Spread the Word (to be kind and inclusive) pledge last week schoolwide.
- Students have filled the ticket jar and earned schoolwide bowling sponsored by our PTO.

Wilson Elementary

Cassie Mitchell, Principal

As we wrap up March and celebrate the conclusion of Quarter 3, we look forward to gathering for a special movie event at OHS, which will allow us to build community and provide a much-needed moment of relaxation before Spring Break. Upon our return, we will dive into the implementation of Mindfulness as our next Social Emotional Learning skill. Mindfulness is essential in fostering emotional well-being, enhancing focus, and equipping our students with tools to manage stress and anxiety. By integrating mindfulness practices into our daily routines, we aim to create a more supportive and reflective school environment that encourages personal growth and resilience. Additionally, we will be preparing for our MCA testing, which will help us assess student progress and ensure we're meeting educational goals. We're excited to embrace these opportunities as we move forward into the final quarter of the school year.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- Mar. 27 - End of 3rd Quarter and Movie Celebration at OHS
- Mar. 28 - No School - teacher work day
- Mar. 31-Apr. 4 - No School - Spring Break

Owatonna Middle School

Christina Mattson, Principal

We are wrapping up our 3rd quarter, registration for next school year is complete, and we are getting ready to head into the spring testing season. OMS students will be taking MCA tests in Reading and Math over the course of the next 5 school weeks.

Several of our Animal Behavior elective students recently presented their animal enrichment design project to the engineers, zookeepers, and the Mn Zoo Director. Havana Halstead, Kylie Wencil, Romie Sanderson, and Lizzy Quast's design won 1st place out of 1300 projects. Their project was voted the best enrichment design out of all middle school submissions in the whole state!

Kyle DeKam Leadership Award nominations and nominee projects will begin soon. We are excited to see who emerges as our top student leaders at OMS for the 2025 award.

Overall, our students are looking forward to spring break, warm weather, and the fun and excitement of 4th quarter.

Owatonna High School

Kory Kath, Principal

Greetings! It is the last full week of 3rd quarter and students are actively preparing for the end of quarter classes as well as new courses starting after spring break. This is an important time to ensure we end on a positive note and prepare for a strong finish to the school year. Teachers

actively connect with students to support re-teaching and to help with any final supports to strengthen the best finish possible.

All students are completed with their registration for the 25/26 school year and we are busy looking at course placements to maximize teacher impact and offer all the courses we can to meet their requests.

Finally - Spring is around the corner and that means concerts, prom, spring athletics and graduation. We look forward to celebrating student success and supporting the huskies! Please join us for these events and more!

Owatonna Online

Martina Wagner, Principal

1. Onboarding of Bemidji and Pequot Lakes Public Schools:

We are excited to welcome Bemidji and Pequot Lakes Public Schools as new partners in Owatonna Online. Both districts are now onboard and will be utilizing our online learning platform for their students. This collaboration will help extend our reach and provide more students with access to a flexible, high-quality virtual education.

2. Implementation of Career Readiness & Work-Based Learning:

We are pleased to announce the implementation of a comprehensive career readiness program for our students. The first group of Owatonna Online students will engage in work-based learning opportunities, allowing them to earn valuable life skills through on-the-job experiences. This initiative is designed to equip students with practical skills and prepare them for success in the workforce, helping them connect their education with real-world careers.

3. Onboarding of Additional School Counselor & Special Service Staff:

To better support the holistic needs of our students, we are onboarding an additional school counselor and a special service staff member to provide critical support in the virtual format. These additions will help ensure we continue to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of our students, offering guidance and resources to support their success in the online learning environment.

ALC

Martina Wagner, Principal

- 1. End of Quarter & Wraparound Services:** As we approach the end of the quarter, the ALC team is working diligently to provide wraparound services to ensure all students finish the term strong. These services include personalized support for academic progress, mental health resources, and mentorship to help students achieve their goals and maintain positive momentum for the remainder of the year.

2. First ALC Basketball Tournament:

We are excited to announce that the first-ever ALC Basketball Tournament will be held in Rochester. Eight of our ALC students will be competing against teams from five other ALC schools. This event is a wonderful opportunity to showcase our students' athleticism and teamwork, while fostering school pride and community engagement.

3. **Reimagining Alternative Learning for the 2025-2026 School Year:**

Efforts are ongoing to reimagine the future of alternative learning for the 2025-2026 school year. We are exploring innovative educational models and collaborating with stakeholders to create a more dynamic and supportive learning environment. This initiative aims to better meet the needs of our students, providing them with an education that prepares them for success both academically and in life beyond school.