



## BALANCING ACT: DISTRICT GROWTH AND THE OLENTANGY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Over the last three decades, Delaware County has grown from a rural community to what it is today. Looking back at 1990 census data, the population in our community was reported at just 66,929. Today, the population is 226,296 — a 238% increase!

In this same time, Olentangy Schools has grown into Ohio's fourth-largest school district, serving more than 24,000 pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade

students in 28 school buildings.

Residential growth in Delaware County is not slowing down, and recent projections have shown student enrollment is expected to increase by nearly 20% or 5,000 students over the next ten years. National studies show that the quality of schools can play a determining factor in where new families might settle, and as a five-star district with a track record for educational excellence, Olentangy Schools often checks that box.

Previous community support through successful levies — 2016 and 2020 — have allowed Olentangy Schools to remain proactive addressing growth with the opening of Berlin High School, Shale Meadows Elementary School, Berlin Middle School, and Peachblow Crossing Elementary School. These schools have helped the District balance enrollment, keep class sizes manageable, and deliver the student experience families expect.

“When our student population is at or closer to capacity, the overall learning environment improves noticeably. Smaller class sizes allow teachers to provide more personalized attention, greatly enhancing instruction,” said Carla Baker, principal of Berkshire Middle School.

Berkshire was one of several Olentangy schools that have navigated overcrowding, with its enrollment reaching as high as 1,320 students; the opening of Berlin Middle School has given Principal Baker and staff a more ideal and manageable enrollment of 900 students.

[See ENROLLMENT GROWTH, Page 2](#)

## OLENTANGY RECEIVES TOP SCORES ON STATE REPORT EDUCATION RATING

The state of Ohio has released 2023-24 school district report cards, and Olentangy Schools has earned a top overall rating of five stars.

### Ohio School Report Card Results



**5 stars**

Only 68 out of 607 school districts in the state received five stars

“Receiving an overall five-star rating as a district for the second consecutive year is something to be proud of,” shared

Superintendent Todd R. Meyer. “The state report card is just one indication of Olentangy’s educational excellence and student learning experience, and our staff will continue to facilitate maximum learning for every student, both within and outside of tested areas.”

The Ohio School Report Cards include performance information provided by schools and districts including academic, financial, and opportunity data. The five-star ratings that Olentangy received indicate that the district significantly exceeds state standards in academic achievement, early literacy standards, closing educational gaps, and graduation rates. Olentangy Schools also earned a four-star rating in progress, indicating

there is significant evidence that the district exceeded student growth expectations.

“We are pleased that the state report card reflects Olentangy’s commitment to academic excellence,” stated Dr. Michelle Blackley, Chief Academic Officer for Olentangy Schools. “Olentangy is one of just two districts in the state of Ohio with over 10,000 students to earn five stars overall, and the only district over 10,000 students to receive five stars in the achievement component. This is a testament to the personalized learning environments our principals, teachers and support staff create every day for students.”

# DISTRICT TAX DOLLARS AT WORK: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION



Our Olentangy community values educational excellence at an exceptional value. Stakeholder's investment in our district assets — our facilities — provide the spaces for our growing student population to learn.

## 2020 Levy Impact

The passage of the spring 2020 levy provided essential funding to relieve overcrowding, enhance facilities, and improve safety. The addition of Shale Meadows Elementary School, Berlin Middle School, and Peachblow Crossing Elementary School addressed the district's need for more classrooms and the staff to teach the growing student enrollment. All elementary playgrounds received soft surfaces and ADA accessible play structures, ensuring safe, inclusive play.

The levy also funded updates to media centers at elementary, middle, and high schools, which replaced furniture and technology, and added new instructional software and learning stations for elementary students. A few high schools were renovated to incorporate dedicated collaboration spaces for small group work, and Olentangy High School, Berlin High School, and Liberty High School broadcast journalism students are better prepared for postsecondary programs and the workforce with access to industry-standard equipment in dedicated news production suites. The Olentangy Academy building was expanded to add seven additional classroom spaces to provide specialized accommodations for students in the Academy for Community Transition (ACT), a program to prepare students with special needs for life after graduation.

Student and staff safety remains a top priority. The levy funded the installation of visitor management systems, panic buttons, and security vestibules at all schools. These upgrades ensure that students, staff, and visitors are protected in a controlled environment.

## Annual Permanent Improvements

In addition to improvements made through recent levy funds, Olentangy maintains its facilities on a preventative maintenance schedule, with the majority of the work taking place during the summer months. Repairs to building envelopes are one example, including window, door, and roof repairs and replacements. Flooring upgrades at various schools take place each year, as well as asphalt resurfacing and concrete repairs. Continued upkeep of athletic fields and facilities is required to ensure safe and high-quality playing surfaces for student-athletes, while also replacing school buses and other vehicles to provide reliable transportation for growing student population.

## Looking Ahead

Critical projects remain unfunded without the passing of a future ballot issue. Upgrades to Shanahan Middle School remain on hold as the District evaluates which

## ENROLLMENT GROWTH *Continued*

"A smaller population enables staff to quickly identify and respond to individual student needs, ensuring timely support," Baker added. "The emotional well-being of both staff and students also improves significantly, as teachers can clearly see the positive impact they're having on students, which is both energizing and rewarding."

Beyond the classroom, extracurricular activities also benefit from balanced enrollment, with more students having opportunities to participate in athletics, the arts, and other groups and activities. In hallways and lunchrooms, reduced congestion fosters a calmer, lower stress atmosphere, allowing students to enjoy breaks and class changes without frustration.

Much like the position Berkshire Middle found itself in, many Olentangy schools have gotten creative with space for specialized instruction, flexible learning, and lunchroom rotations. Recently, Indian Springs Elementary added modular classrooms to handle the growth, while Liberty Tree Elementary added six additional classroom spaces by fully utilizing the connector between their school and Hyatts Middle.

Looking beyond its impact on classroom and facility utilization in the District, the growing enrollment will ultimately impact athletics, extracurriculars, co-curriculars, and other academic opportunities; these may become limited and more difficult for schools to provide. Overcrowding challenges the ability of a high school to offer advanced courses and electives, an elementary school to host a school-wide musical, or a middle school to allow every student interested to join the seventh-grade football team.

According to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the county could see an 80% population increase by 2050. While school districts have no direct say in zoning decisions, Olentangy Schools remains focused on working alongside residents, elected officials, and developers to meet the demands of an ever-growing student body and One Olentangy community.

Together, we can align resources and ensure a shared commitment to facilitating maximum learning for every student.

construction projects are an immediate need and the funding available. High school theater improvements and athletic stadium lighting and fencing updates fall outside the annual budget. Most urgently, Olentangy Schools cannot relieve overcrowding without building three new elementary schools, a seventh middle school, and a fifth high school over the next five years. In the meantime, the district is forecasting spending \$1.7 million from the general fund on 20 modular classrooms in that timeframe — a temporary and costly solution.

The projects funded by the 2020 levy have made a lasting impact. The District will provide updates on necessary future investments that allow Olentangy students to flourish.

OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES COST-SAVINGS (Highlights from FY2020-23)

| Total Savings | Category                               | Description  |
|---------------|--|--|
| \$6,959,578   | School Construction and Design Savings | The business department replicates school designs and footprints, and partners with reputable architectural and construction vendors.  |
| \$3,500,000   | Energy Savings Program                 | The operations team has participated in two energy savings initiatives — monitoring the use of mechanical and equipment to save electricity in buildings and implementing energy upgrades.     |
| \$715,000     | Bus Route Efficiency                   | Transportation reduced the number of bus routes from 165 to 154 routes by increasing walk zones and impractical transportation determinations, despite an increase of almost 1,000 bus riders. |
| \$536,395     | Procurement Practices                  | Through a systematic bidding and quoting process, the operations team has avoided and reduced costs.   |

BUILDING BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITY

Explosive growth in Central Ohio has not been limited to its fourth-largest school district. The Olentangy community finds itself situated in one of the fastest-growing regions in the Midwest and the entire country. It's not just new families moving to the area; nearly 900,000 jobs are also expected to be created in Central Ohio by 2050, and those jobs equal opportunity for the Olentangy Schools students of today and in the future.

“The growth we’re witnessing in our community, especially in our business community, creates so many exciting new opportunities for our students and BridgED program,” said Molly Preston, Olentangy’s assistant director of strategic partnerships. “Central Ohio is an attractive destination for employers because it continues to be recognized for the top talent it contributes to the workforce; some of those highly sought-after candidates got their start right here in Olentangy Schools.”

Since 2022, the Olentangy:BridgED initiative has worked to “bridge the gap” between the schools and an ever-evolving career field. The program was birthed through collaboration between Olentangy Schools, the regional K-12 BridgED organization, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and other local industry leaders. Today, the

growing partnership now includes names such as Robertson Construction, JPMorgan Chase, Accenture, M/I Homes, Honda Motor Company, Intel and more!

“We are grateful for our incredible BridgED partners, and their belief in the District’s mission is evident through their continued investments in our students and teachers,” Preston added. “Many of these partners are devoted parents, alumni, and residents who are committed to fostering student curiosity, growth, and success through graduation.”

The BridgED program is just one piece of career exploration in Olentangy Schools. At each of the four high schools and Olentangy Academy, students gain invaluable experiences through mentorship opportunities. Early exposure to potential careers provides access, awareness, and understanding of the pathways available to students after high school graduation.

“Students don’t always know which field they should pursue in college, and they sometimes have three to four interests,” said Jasmine Reilly, Orange High School mentorship teacher. “[Mentorship] allows them opportunities to learn from professionals and network. These types of hands-on experiences are truly paramount to their education.”

Career connections are becoming an integral part of the student experience; gone are the days of waiting until high school to begin college or career path discussions. Helping Olentangy students see themselves in various careers earlier has the potential to open many doors and allow them to leave their classrooms with a clearer picture of their path to a successful future.



Preston, teachers, and district leaders say the goals of the initiatives are the same at every stage of learning — preparing students to flourish in Olentangy and beyond.

“The future of education includes work-based learning, and Olentangy Schools is ready to lead the way, preparing students to excel in real-world challenges and opportunities.”





Olentangy Schools  
7840 Graphics Way  
Lewis Center, OH 43035  
T: 740-657-4050  
F: 740-657-4099



[www.olentangy.k12.oh.us](http://www.olentangy.k12.oh.us)

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Olentangy is now on Nextdoor!  
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Olentangy Schools residents that do not have children in our district can receive periodic email updates by registering for our digital Community Connections:



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### MR. BRANDON LESTER PRESIDENT

(740) 657-4091  
[brandon\\_lester@olsd.us](mailto:brandon_lester@olsd.us)

### DR. KEVIN DABERKOW VICE PRESIDENT

(740) 657-4150  
[kevin\\_daberkow@olsd.us](mailto:kevin_daberkow@olsd.us)

### MR. KEVIN O'BRIEN BOARD MEMBER

(740) 657-4090  
[kevin\\_obrien@olsd.us](mailto:kevin_obrien@olsd.us)

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(740) 657-4093  
[lizett\\_schreiber@olsd.us](mailto:lizett_schreiber@olsd.us)

### DR. LIBBY WALLICK BOARD MEMBER

(740) 657-4092  
[elizabeth\\_wallick@olsd.us](mailto:elizabeth_wallick@olsd.us)

Visit [www.olentangy.k12.oh.us/board-of-education/board-meetings](http://www.olentangy.k12.oh.us/board-of-education/board-meetings) for information on board meetings.

## DISTRICT DATES

### CLASSIFIED INTERVIEW DATES

November 19, 2024  
December 17, 2024  
January 29, 2025  
February 26, 2025  
March 17, 2025

### THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 27–December 2, 2024

### END OF 2ND SEMESTER

December 20, 2024

### WINTER BREAK

December 23, 2024–January 3, 2025

### STATE OF THE SCHOOLS

February 26, 2025

### END OF THIRD QUARTER

March 13, 2025

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION FAIR

March 15, 2025

### SPRING BREAK

March 24–28, 2025

## Attention all Olentangy alumni



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