

# OLENTANGY SCHOOLS

## ALUMNI CONNECTION

FALL 2024



## 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.”

# NOTABLE ALUMNI

**Did you know that these notable names are Olentangy Schools alumni?**

## BUSINESS AND EDUCATION

**Dan Alexander**, Senior Editor at Forbes

**Mariah F. Hazlett**, Ph.D., Harvard Catalyst

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Beth Lear**, member of the Ohio House of Representatives

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Mia DeWeese**, Broadway dancer

**Ian Harrison**, The Voice singer

**Gary LeVox**, Rascal Flatts singer

**Beth Nicely**, Broadway dancer/ Rockette and business owner

## SPORTS

**Kenny Anunike**, former NFL football player

**Zach Harrison**, NFL player

**Joshua Perry**, former NFL player and current football commentator

**Know of an Olentangy alum that would be a great interview feature for our next digital newsletter? Send suggestions to [Amanda\\_Beeman@olsd.us](mailto:Amanda_Beeman@olsd.us).**

**Alum that are local business leaders are invited to participate in Olentangy's Business Advisory Council. If you are interested in learning more, contact [Amanda\\_Beeman@olsd.us](mailto:Amanda_Beeman@olsd.us).**

# 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.

# ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL ACCOLADES

**Submit accolades & milestones to:**  
**[OLENTANGY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWS](#)**

## CLASS OF 2009

**Meghan Feasel (OHS)** received her masters in school counseling in 2023 and is now a middle school counselor in Las Vegas.

## CLASS OF 2016

**Brianne McCague (OOHS)** recently completed her masters from WGU in curriculum and instruction and has returned to Olentangy Schools to teach third grade.

## CLASS OF 2020

**Lukas Patel (OHS)** graduated from Otterbein University with a BA and BFA and is working as an artist in residence at Otterbein.

## CLASS OF 2023

**Gianna Tassinari (OBHS)** joined the military and has lived in Texas and Florida during the past year.







# 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."



The Olen tangy Education Foundation (OEF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the education experience for the students in Olen tangy Schools.

The foundation does this through a variety of programs, with the primary focus on providing classroom grants for innovative programs and learning opportunities that fall outside school budgets.

In 2023-2024, OEF awarded more than \$68,000 in grants to classrooms across the district. These grants provide a wide range of opportunities for Olen tangy Students ranging from a middle school robotics team, to instruments and equipment for an elementary music program.

For a full listing of the grants awarded, more information on other OEF initiatives, or how to get involved, visit the OEF website:

[olentangyeducationfoundation.org](https://olentangyeducationfoundation.org)

## NEW FOR 2025!

### Nominate a Deserving Alum as a Legend of Olen tangy.

Learn about the Legends of Olen tangy Awards and how you can nominate a deserving alum or community member.



**Deadline for submissions is June 1, 2025.**

## RECONNECT AT YOUR CLASS REUNION

### Holding a class reunion?

Make sure to register your events to be shared through the Olen tangy Alumni Association by sending reunion details to [alumni@olentangyef.org](mailto:alumni@olentangyef.org).

## 2024 ALUMNI GATHERINGS



## LET'S STAY IN TOUCH



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[www.olentangyeducationfoundation.org/alumni](https://www.olentangyeducationfoundation.org/alumni)



[alumni@olentangyef.org](mailto:alumni@olentangyef.org)



[Olen tangy Schools District Website](https://www.olentangyef.org)