August 2025

Owatonna Public Schools Update

Inspiring Excellence. Every Learner, Every Day.



Continuing a strong tradition

#OwatonnaProud is more than just a slogan — it's a powerful reflection of the pride, tradition, and community spirit that have been cultivated over time in Owatonna Public Schools. As someone new to the district, I've quickly come to recognize the deep respect and commitment that exist here. It's clear this is a place where people care deeply about education and invest in the success of every learner every day.

That pride and community support are why I was interested in coming to Owatonna. Throughout the area, Owatonna is known as an innovative leader in providing opportunities for all learners to discover their own way to achieving excellence in all they do.

The Career Pathways program is a shining example of this. Strong partnerships with local businesses have translated into amazing opportunities for our high school students. Classrooms with hands-on learning components provide real-world experiences and certifications that give our students a head start on finding their career path.

To maintain this excellence Owatonna is known for, additional financial assistance from local taxpayers is needed. State and federal funding has not kept up with inflation or the rising costs we are all experiencing. When funding doesn't keep pace with expenses, reductions end up affecting our students with larger class sizes and less opportunities.

This is why the school board unanimously recommended asking taxpayers for an increase to our operating levy in order to maintain the excellence the Owatonna community expects. The special election is Tuesday, November 4, with early voting beginning on September 19.

Thank you for the warm welcome to this incredible community. I am honored to serve Owatonna Public Schools, and I look forward to meeting all of you and working together to ensure every student continues to thrive.

Together, let's keep Owatonna strong — and **#OwatonnaProud**.

Dr. Tammy Champa, *Superintendent*

Career Pathways

Preparing students for the future

Construction Technology





Students in Construction Technology have the opportunity to build a house with local nonprofit Habitat for Humanity for community members and veterans.

Nursing Assistant





Students in the Nursing Assistant Program learn a wide variety of basic nursing skills. They have the opportunity to take the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) test, and many certified students now work in healthcare facilities around the community.

Culinary





Culinary students explore menu planning, quantity planning and production, managing dietary restrictions and more. The instruction includes ServSafe Food Handlers Certification through the National Restaurant Association, preparing them to work in local kitchens.

Career Pathways *continues on page 3*



First days of school:

- Tuesday, September 2
  Grades 9-12
- Wednesday, September 3
  Grades 6-8
- Thursday, September 4
  Grades K-5
- Thursday-Friday, September 4-5
  Preschool
- Monday, September 8
  Adult Education

Classroom Connections

The beginning of school includes time at the elementary schools for classroom teachers to meet with students and families. These have traditionally been called Before School Interviews; however, the language is changing to Classroom Connections to emphasize the importance of building a strong connection between students, family, and the classroom. Families will still meet with their child's/ children's classroom teacher at the beginning of the year as they have in the past!

Classroom Connections dates:

- Thursday, August 28
  Pre-kindergarten - fifth grade
- Tuesday, September 2
  Pre-kindergarten - fifth grade
- Wednesday, September 3
  Pre-kindergarten, first-fifth grade

School Contact Information

Owatonna Public Schools

District Office: 507-444-8600
Nutrition Services: 507-444-8616
Enrollment Office: 507-444-8650
Community Ed: 507-444-7900
Student Technology Assistance: 507-444-8630

Website: isd761.org

Owatonna Bus Company: 507-451-5262

Lincoln Elementary

507-444-8100
Attendance Line: 507-444-8105
School Hours: 8:10am - 2:40pm

McKinley Elementary

507-444-8200
Attendance Line: 507-444-8205
School Hours: 8:10am - 2:40pm

Washington Elementary

507-444-8300
Attendance Line: 507-444-8305
School Hours: 8:10am - 2:40pm

Wilson Elementary

507-444-8400
Attendance Line: 507-444-8405
School Hours: 8:10am - 2:40pm

Middle School

507-444-8700
Attendance Line: 507-444-8705
Activities/Kids First: 507-444-8714
School Hours: 7:50am - 2:20pm

High School

507-444-8800
Attendance Line: 507-444-8805
Activities Office: 507-444-8988
School Hours: 8:20am - 2:50pm

ALC

507-444-8000
Attendance Line: 507-444-8000
School Hours: 8:20am - 2:50pm

Owatonna Online

507-444-8008
Attendance Line: 507-444-8012
School Hours: 8:10am - 2:40pm

Preschool/ECSE

507-444-8040
School Hours: 8:15-10:45 am & 12:15-2:45 pm

ECFE

507-444-7900
School Hours: 8:15-10:45 am & 12:15-2:45 pm

isd761.org/back-to-school



Owatonna Online Continues to Grow

Currently one of Minnesota's fastest-growing online schools, Owatonna Online is the accredited online public school for grades 4-12 offered through Owatonna Public Schools.

This past school year, over 400 students were enrolled.

Owatonna Online does a great job of providing support services to meet individualized student needs, including social workers, counselors, English language learner teachers, and special education teachers. The care, attention and communication the entire staff gives to their students makes a huge difference to these families.

While students may choose to open enroll in Owatonna Online and are considered Owatonna students, partnerships with some school districts in Minnesota allow students to attend Owatonna Online while maintaining enrollment in their local district. The partner district students graduate with a diploma from their home district.

The dollars provided through open enrollment and partnership districts to Owatonna Online means additional revenue for Owatonna Public Schools.

Internships and More





Students may participate in job shadows, internships, work experiences and business tours, allowing them to gain hands-on experience while determining the best career path for them.

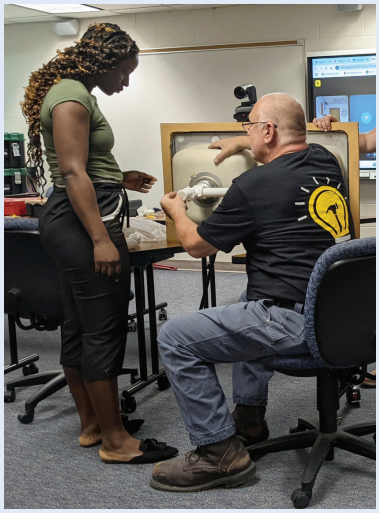
Forensics

Owatonna Middle School students in Forensics 2 class explore opportunities at Hamline University, the only Minnesota college to offer a bachelor's degree in forensics. Students participate in lab activities and demonstrations, hear about program experiences, and tour the university's crime scene house.



Adult Learning





Adult learners have the opportunity to expand their horizons through GED and English Language Learning classes as well as learning labs, where they tackle everything from entrepreneurship or automotive repair to construction and home repair.

Levy 2025 Facts

On November 4, 2025, Owatonna School District residents will be asked to vote on an increase in the operating levy of $700 per student.



Current situation

Owatonna Public Schools is known for its excellent staff, programming and opportunities, thanks to the strong support of the community. In challenging times for public school funding, it is difficult to maintain that high standard.

An increase in the operating levy was last approved in 2013. Since that time, costs have risen dramatically. At the same time, state funding has not kept pace with inflation. Both federal and state governments have added mandates for local school districts without funding them.

District cuts

To address the situation, the school district made cuts to the 2025-2026 budget which included:

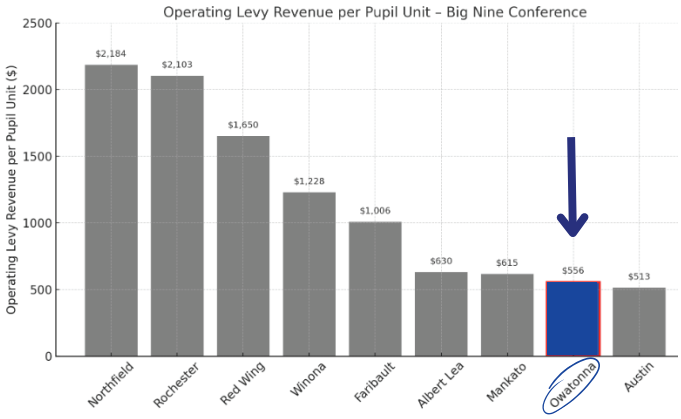
- Administrative and instructional positions with retirements that were not filled
- Staff reductions in elementary, secondary and special education

Operating levy referendum

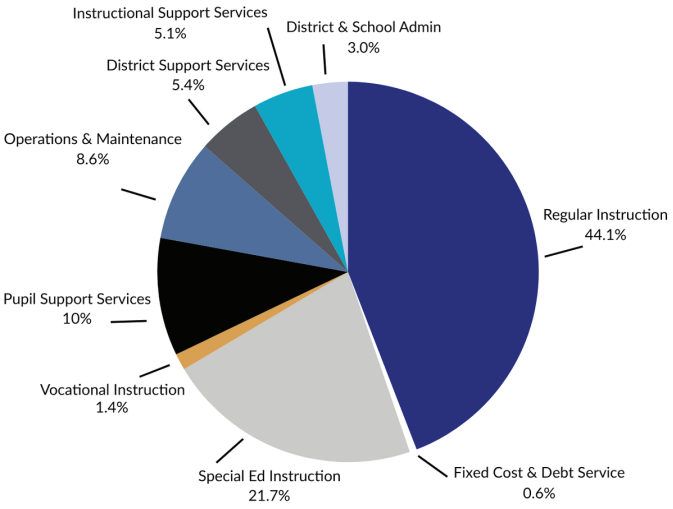
In collaboration with the district cuts, the Owatonna School Board unanimously approved a resolution to ask voters to approve an increase in the operating levy during a special election on November 4, 2025.

Finance facts

- State funding has not kept up with the pace of inflation. If it had, Owatonna Public Schools would receive an additional $9,000,000 in state funding per year, and no levy referendum would be needed.
- Owatonna is second to the bottom of the Big 9 Conference for operating levies.



- 81% of the school district's budget is for salaries and benefits.
- Only 3% of the school district budget is spent on school and district administration.



2024-2025 Owatonna Public Schools Expenditures



Bonds are for buildings, levies are for learning

The Owatonna community graciously supported much-needed updates for safety, security and 21st century learning through bond approvals in the past. Those bond dollars may only be used for buildings, not for salaries, supplies or other operating costs.

Unlike bonds, agricultural land is not taxed on an operating levy question—only the house, garage and one acre.

Levy approval

The increased community investment will allow Owatonna Public Schools to maintain educational excellence by:

- Sustaining class sizes
- Retaining high-quality staff
- Continuing valuable programs such as Career Pathways
- Preserving strong fine arts and athletics

Continued budget cuts if levy is not approved

- class size increases through teacher layoffs
- cuts to academics, activities, athletic and music programs
- cuts to school and district support services

Tax impact

If approved, the estimated tax impact would be about $23 per month on a home valued at $275,000 or $25 per month on a home valued at $300,000.

Use the tax calculator at isd761.org/levy to estimate the tax impact on your home.

VOTE

Voting information

Tuesday, November 4, 2025
Polls open: 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Early voting begins September 19:

- Vote early at the Steele County Property Tax & Elections Office, 630 Florence Avenue
- Request an absentee ballot by completing the application - find a link at isd761.org/levy

Learn more about where and how to vote at isd761.org/levy.



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333 East School Street
Owatonna, MN 55060
isd761.org

Learn more

Visit: isd761.org/levy
Email: levy@isd761.org
Call: 507.444.8680

This publication was prepared and paid for by Owatonna Public Schools and is not circulated on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.

Breakfast and Lunch are FREE to all students!



Again this year, students may receive one breakfast meal and one lunch meal each in-person academic day absolutely FREE! We encourage families to take advantage of this benefit available to all students.

Managing Your Student's Meal Account



All a la carte purchases must be prepaid before meal service begins. Make payments online through your Infinite Campus Parent Portal account under the "Food Services" tab. Cash or check payments may be brought to the District Office at 333 East School Street. You may also make meal payments at your child's school.

School Supply Lists

Owatonna Public Schools uses TeacherLists as a way to share school supply lists with families to make back-to-school shopping easier and save time. Visit isd761.org/back-to-school for links to school supply lists and more information.

Apply for Educational Benefits

Although all students receive free meals, families are still encouraged to complete an Application for Educational Benefits for possible additional benefits, such as reduced fees for sports and activities. The application also helps determine state education funding for your children's schools. Families may fill out the application online via their Infinite Campus Parent Portal account.

For more information, visit isd761.org/district-services/nutrition-services and click the "Application for Educational Benefits" tab.



Stay Connected

E-Newsletter

OPS News is an email update on district happenings that is sent to Owatonna Public Schools parents and community members. Visit isd761.org/our-district/news to sign up for the e-newsletter.

Social Media

Celebrate our students, our staff, and our schools by following us on Facebook and Instagram. If you like what you see, be sure to share it with others. Together, we are #OwatonnaProud!

OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2025 - 2026 Calendar

July

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

August

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September

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28	29	30				

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26	27	28	29	30	31	

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30						

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28	29	30	31			

January

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March

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29	30	31				

April

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26	27	28	29	30		

May

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June

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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

August
- 18-21 -New Teacher Workshop
- 25-28 - Teacher Work Days
- 28 -Parent / Student Information Day at OMS
- 28 - Gr. PK-5 Classroom Connections

September
- 1 - Labor Day / District Closed
- 2 - Gr. 9-12 1st Day of School
- 2 - Gr. 6 Orientation
- 2 - Gr. PK-5 Classroom Connections
- 3 -Gr. PK, 1-5 Classroom Connections
- 3 - Gr. 6-8 1st Day of School
- 4 - Gr. K-5 1st Day of School
- 19 - Homecoming / 2-Hr Early Release

October
- 16 - No School / MEA
- 17 - No School / MEA
- 20 - No School / Staff Development
- 31 - End of 1st Quarter

November
- 3 - No School / Teacher Work Day / PD
- 14 - No School, Gr. PK-5 Conferences
- 26 - No School
- 27 - Thanksgiving Day / District Closed
- 28 - District Closed

December
- 24-31 - Winter Break / No School

January
- 1-2 - Winter Break / No School
- 16 - End of 2nd Quarter
- 19 - No School / Teacher Work Day
- 20 - No School / Staff Development

February
- 13 - No School, Gr. K-5 Conferences
- 16 - No School / Staff Development

March
- 26 - End of 3rd Quarter
- 27 - No School / Teacher Work Day
- 30-31 - Spring Break / No School

April
- 1-2 - Spring Break / No School
- 3 - No School / District Closed

May
- 25 - Memorial Day / District Closed

June
- 4 - Last Day of School
- 5 - Graduation
- 5 - Teacher Work Day
- 8 - PLC / Staff Development Day
- 9 - PLC / Staff Development Day
- 19 - District Closed

School Not in Session
No School, Gr. K-8
No School, Gr. K-5
District Closed, Designated Holiday
2-Hour Early Release
First/Last Day of School

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Supporting Community Pathways

Owatonna Public Schools has a strong partnership with Community Pathways of Steele County, our local food shelf and thrift store.

From elementary students collecting food and coins and creating birthday boxes to high schoolers sorting contributions, donating 590 cereal boxes, and learning about real-world math skills, students are learning the value of giving back.

It's learning with purpose... and heart.