



Olathe Public Schools  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2024-2025



**Olathe**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Dr. Stacey Yurkovich  
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# Reflections from the Board of Education

Our district theme, “Make Today Count,” served as a powerful and timely reminder of the daily impact educators and staff members have on students’ lives. It encouraged every individual in our school community to show up every day and approach their time with purpose and presence, whether through innovative learning, listening to one another, or by being kind and supportive to those around them.

By embracing this theme, we cultivated school environments grounded in intention, kindness, and mutual respect where all felt seen, supported, and inspired to succeed.

## Strengthening Our Learning Environment

One of the most significant actions taken this year was the Board’s approval of Policy JTC – Personal Electronic Devices, developed in response to feedback from students, families, and staff about classroom distractions. The policy aims to support student focus and well-being by setting clear limits on device use during the school day.

## Tackling Chronic Absenteeism

Another key focus area was reducing chronic absenteeism. The district

employed a more accurate and intentional approach to data reporting, alongside proactive communication with families and students. We emphasized the impact that consistent attendance has on learning outcomes and worked collaboratively with school teams to remove barriers and re-engage students.

## Championing Educator Voice

This year, we prioritized open dialogue with staff through District Dialogues held at every school, where representatives from Olathe NEA, district leadership, and the Board engaged directly with educators. These sessions focused on key themes such as mental health, professional development, and the public perception of the teaching profession. We shared updates on actions taken and invited continued input to help shape future efforts to strengthen support and retention.

## Celebrating Excellence

The Board was proud to recognize Andrew Taylor, science and engineering teacher at Olathe Northwest High School, who was named a 2025 Kansas Master Teacher. Selected by a committee of statewide education organizations,

Taylor’s dedication to his students, innovative instruction, and leadership within the school community made him a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor.

## Opening Santa Fe Trail Middle School

One of the year’s most memorable milestones was the grand opening of the new Santa Fe Trail Middle School building — a celebration of both tradition and progress attended by students, families, staff, and community members. The new facility, made possible by the 2022 bond, was designed to honor the school’s legacy while introducing modern, student-centered learning spaces. We are deeply grateful to the patrons and partners who made this project a reality.

As we closed the 2024-25 school year, the Board of Education remained committed to listening, learning, and leading in service of our students and staff. Thank you to every teacher, administrator, student, family, and community partner who made this year meaningful. Together, we made each day count.

# New Personal Electronic Device Policy Strengthens Learning Environment

At the Aug. 1, 2024, regular Board of Education meeting, the Board approved Policy JTC – Personal Electronic Devices.

This policy was written in response to student, parent, and staff member feedback regarding the distractions and disruptions that personal electronic devices caused during instructional time. As an academic institution, our No. 1 goal was to educate students while maintaining a safe learning environment. Personal electronic devices had been identified as sources of interruption in the classroom and were found to potentially impact students' mental and emotional health negatively. With personal electronic devices out of sight, student learning was able to take place in a more engaged and connected environment.

## **The policy states:**

“The board is committed to having an environment in all schools that is conducive to learning; orderly; free from unnecessary distractions, and promotes the responsible use of technology by all individuals.

Recognizing that student use of personal electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, headphones, etc.) while in school can hinder or disrupt student learning, the board has established the following guidelines:

Student use of personal electronic devices during the school day must be consistent with all board policies, including policy JCDA (Behavior Code), JTB (Student Acceptable Use of Technologies Policy), and the Code of Student Conduct as adopted by the board.

Students may have personal electronic devices in their backpacks, lockers, or on their person as long as such devices are not visible during the school day.

Student use of personal electronic devices is not allowed during the scheduled school day for early childhood through eighth grade students.

Student use at the high school level of personal electronic devices is prohibited during class time unless being utilized for instruction as directed by the teacher. Student use of personal electronic devices by high school students during non-instructional activities (i.e. lunch, passing periods, as authorized pass, etc.), is allowed.

Students may use personal electronic devices during the scheduled school day in emergency situations, or if necessary for the student's physical

health.

Violation of this policy will result in a student receiving age-appropriate discipline as determined by building administration and as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Such discipline may include the temporary or permanent forfeiture of a student's right to possess or use personal electronic devices in school.”

We recognized that in today's digital world, personal electronic devices were a part of everyday life. But as a school district, we remained focused on removing distractions from the classroom so students could stay engaged in learning. District administration and the Board of Education understood that this change might bring questions or concerns, and a list of anticipated frequently asked questions was provided to help guide families and students.



## Olathe Northwest Educator Named 2025 Kansas Master Teacher

Olathe Northwest High School science and engineering teacher Andrew Taylor was named a 2025 Kansas Master Teacher on Feb. 12.

The Kansas Master Teacher awards, established by Emporia State University in 1954, recognize educators who demonstrate exceptional teaching qualities. A committee including representatives from the Kansas Association of Principals, Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas State Board of Education, Kansas Parent Teacher Organization, Kansas National Education Association, United School Administrators, ESU's Kappa Delta Pi student organization, and the 2023 Master Teacher class selected the recipients.

Taylor learned of the honor through a phone call from Dr. Sara Schwerdtfeger, interim dean of ESU's Teachers College, while at home on an inclement weather day.

"We are incredibly proud that Andrew Taylor was named an ESU Master Teacher,"

said Dr. Brent Yeager, superintendent of Olathe School District. "This is a huge accomplishment for a teacher in our state, and we want to congratulate Andrew on this achievement! It is clear he is not only a role model in education for his students and colleagues at Olathe Northwest but in the state of Kansas."

Taylor teaches in the Engineering Academy at Olathe Northwest, a four-year, STEM-focused program. The program

"...the strategies learned and utilized in my classroom **help every student** engage their curiosity as they seek to understand the world around them."

**ANDREW TAYLOR**  
OLATHE NORTHWEST BIOLOGY TEACHER

admits students through an application process, and they take science and engineering courses with the same cohort each year. He also coaches the FIRST Robotics Team 1710, the Ravonics, which regularly excels at the state competition. Taylor is known for promoting student curiosity and empowering students to be problem-solvers.

“Learning in my classroom always starts with student questions as they observe phenomena such as infectious disease, cancer, and trendy workout regimens,” Taylor said. “As I guided students through questioning strategies, I witnessed their thinking evolve, as they made deeper observations, formulated their own questions, and developed explanations. While not all students will pursue science, the strategies learned and utilized in my classroom help every student engage their curiosity as they seek to understand the world around them.”

Olathe Northwest Principal Chris Zuck expressed pride in Taylor’s achievement, noting that this is the first time a teacher from the school has received the Kansas Master Teacher honor.

“We are so proud of Mr. Taylor and this major accomplishment,” Zuck said. “Mr. Taylor spends countless hours at Olathe Northwest to lead and support

student learning. Every day, he shows up with a commitment to excellence and a visionary approach that make him an incredible educator and uniquely qualified for this distinguished honor. Our school community and the greater Olathe community should take great pride in Mr. Taylor’s contributions to our students.”

Colleagues, administrators, and students wrote letters of nomination to support Taylor’s selection. Hudson Hurtig, a 2022 Olathe Northwest graduate and former Robotics team member, wrote that Taylor had a profound impact on his life.

“By virtue of ingenuity in Mr. Taylor’s classroom, there was seldom the question, ‘When or how am I going to use this?’” Hurtig said. “In every unit, there was a real-world problem we could point to and apply fundamental concepts to, and imagine ourselves toward a better future. This fundamental strategy carried me far beyond high school and high school robotics. Less than two years later, I was giving my final presentation and was offered a full-time job at Tesla at 18 years old.”

Through the support of the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Taylor received a \$1,000 check. The 2025 Master Teachers was honored on Master Teacher Day on April 2 at Emporia State University.



# District: At a Glance

## Enrollment: 28,245

- Second-largest district in Kansas
- Largest district in Kansas City metro on either side of the Kansas-Missouri state line

## Number of Staff: 4,631

- 2,772 Certified staff
- 1,859 Classified support staff
- Average experience of classroom teachers: 13 years
- 8 Kansas Teachers of the Year
- 20 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching - more than any other district in the state.
- Olathe Public Schools is the fourth-largest employer and the third-largest public employer in the KC metro area.

## Schools and Programs

- 36 Elementary schools (Grades K-5)
- 10 Middle schools (Grades 6-8)
- 5 High schools (Grades 9-12)
- eAcademy
- Claire Learning Center
- Harmony and Heartland early childhood centers and Head Start Program
- Mill Creek Campus
- Olathe Advanced Technical Center
- Prairie Learning Center
- West Dennis Learning Center

## Learning Results

- ACT Superscore Average: 21.02
  - Kansas Average: 19.9
  - National Average: 19.4
- 12 National Merit finalists in spring 2025

## Accreditation

- All schools accredited by the state of Kansas

## Graduation Rate

- 95.5%





## **Programs**

- Tiered math instruction at the middle level, including advanced classes
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) for increasing college readiness at all high schools
- 21st Century Academies
- Two-year Career and Technical Education programs at the Olathe Advanced Technical Center

- College-level classes – Advanced Placement and College Now courses (dual-enrollment for college credit)
- eAcademy online education
- Physical fitness offerings at all levels
- Fine arts offerings at all levels – visual arts, general music, choral, orchestra, band and theater

## **College level courses**

- 23 Advanced Placement courses

- 46 College Now courses
- 5 College Board College Level Equivalency Program (CLEP) Assessments offered

## **Activities and Athletics**

- 61.12% percent of students in grades 5-12 are involved in one or more activity or athletic opportunity
- Olathe's rich activity and athletic programs create a well-rounded student population



# Outstanding Staff



**Bev Vanderslice**  
Manchester Park Elementary School



**Andrew Taylor**  
Olathe Northwest High School

- 2025 Outstanding Biology Teacher Awardee for the state of Kansas, as presented by the National Association of Biology Teachers — Robin Dennis, Olathe South High School
- School Nurse of the Year, as named by the Kansas School Nurse Organization — Bev Vanderslice, Manchester Park Elementary School
- Magazine Award of Excellence in the National School Public Relations Association Publication and Digital Media Awards — Communications Department
- Marketing Award of Merit in the National School Public Relations Association Publication and Digital Media Awards — Communications Department
- Annual Report Award of Merit in the National School Public Relations Association Publication and Digital Media Awards — Communications Department
- Photography Honorable Mention in the National School Public Relations Association Publication and Digital Media Awards — Communications Department
- Dr. George I. Sanchez Award from the National Education Association — Dr. Marta Silva, Olathe North High School
- 2025 Elementary School Principal of the Year - Area 1 winner announced by the Kansas Principals Association — Brandi Leggett, Central Elementary School
- 2025 Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year - Area 1 winner announced by the Kansas Principals Association — Krista Dueringer, Chisholm Trail Middle School
- 2025 Science Teacher of the Year award presented by Kansas State University — Emily Myers, Olathe West High School
- Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in Kansas — Sarah Evans, Olathe South High School

- Kansas Certificate in Child Nutrition Management from the Kansas State Department of Education — Margeryann Erckert, Food Services
- 2025 Kansas Master Teacher — Andrew Taylor, Olathe Northwest High School
- “Get on the Bus” Outstanding Leadership Award from Real World Learning — Dr. Sean DeMaree, Olathe South High School
- Certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards — Kayla Rasmussen, Ravenwood Elementary; Meg Shadid, Olathe Northwest High School; Julia Wenzel-Huguley, Olathe North High School
- Elementary / Middle School Teacher of the Year from the Kansas Council of History Education — Winston Heilman, Prairie Trail Middle School
- Kansas Horizon Award from the Kansas State Department of Education — Dr. Steve Murray, Olathe West High School
- Kansas Horizon Award from the Kansas State Department of Education — Marie Jones, Scarborough Elementary School
- 2024 Liberty Bell Award from the Johnson County Bar Association — Julie Fishburn, Instructional Resource Center
- Kansas School Psychologist of the Year as named by the Kansas Association of School Psychologists — Tyler Kitson, Fairview and Washington elementary schools
- 2024 Assistant Coach of the Year (throws category) as named by the Kansas Cross-Country and Track and Field Coaches Association — Lucas Yarnell, Olathe Northwest High School



**Brandi Leggett**  
Central Elementary School



**Dr. Sean DeMaree**  
Olathe South High School



**Olathe East High School**  
Performing Arts School of Excellence



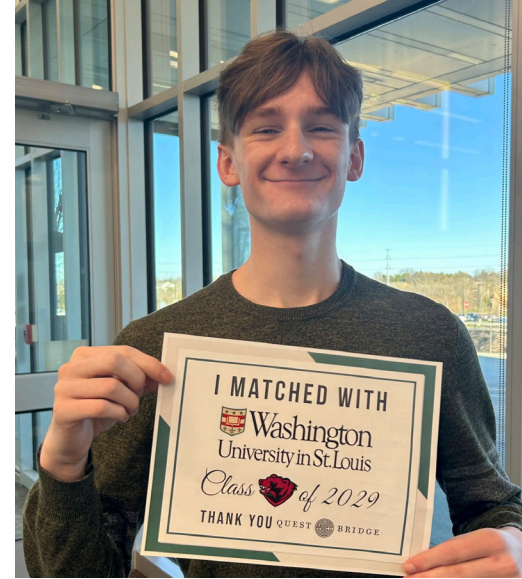
**Ridgeview and Westview  
Elementary Schools**  
2025 Challenge Award

# Outstanding District and Schools

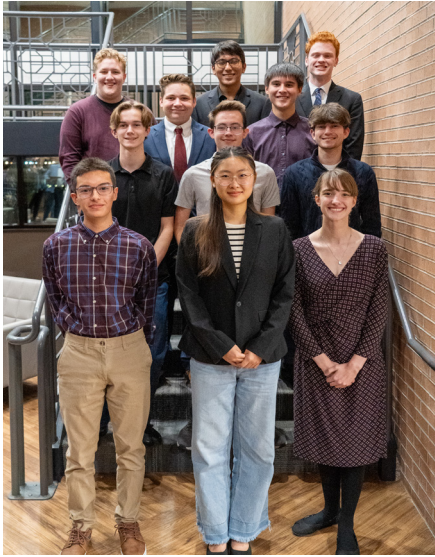
- 2025 Best Community for Music Education, as named by the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation
- 2025 Kansas All Star High Schools as named by Apply Kansas — Olathe East, Olathe North, Olathe Northwest and Olathe South high schools
- 2025 Challenge Award recipients from the Confidence in Kansas Public Education Task Force — Ridgeview and Westview elementary schools
- Performing Arts School of Excellence as named by the Kansas State High School Activities Association — Olathe East High School
- No. 7 Best In-State Employer in Kansas, as named by Forbes Magazine (2024)

# Outstanding Students

- Kansas SkillsUSA Champions — Emily Echeverry, Wyatt Ellsworth, Matthew Jonas, Charlie Studier and Tucker Wright, Olathe Advanced Technical Center
- Kansas Speech and Drama Champions — Piper Doyle and Calista Wanjiku of Olathe East High School; Connor Chaffin and Bridget Simmons of Olathe Northwest High School
- Kansas State Technology Student Association winners advancing to nationals — seven first-place honors for Olathe West High School students; seven first-place honors for Olathe Northwest High School students; six first-place honors for Olathe East High School students
- Forty-four seniors named 2025 Kansas Career and Technical Education Scholars by the Kansas State Department of Education
- Eight Blue Ribbon Division winners, 22 gold ribbons for meeting “full accomplishment” criteria, eight silver ribbons, and 20 special awards at the Greater Kansas City Science and Engineering Fair — Distinguished Scholars Science and Geoscience academies at Olathe North High School
- State champions in the Kansas Future Business Leaders of America leadership conference — Lily Long, Anya Maheshwari (three championships), Beatriz Miranda and Malik Njuguna, Olathe South High School
- First place in the state on the National German Exam — Neil Patrao, Olathe East High School
- Rudd Foundation Scholar with \$80,000 scholarship — Kenyang Deng, Olathe North High School
- State officers for Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) — president Mame Saye Drame, Eastern Region vice president Kriti Kumar, state treasurer Hrithik Rangnathan, all of Olathe North High School



ABOVE: ISAIAH POGNOZZI  
BELOW: OLATHE NORTHWEST  
SPEECH AND DRAMA  
CHAMPIONS



ABOVE: NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

BELOW: CLAIRE SULLIVAN



- National Merit finalists — Wesley Janssen, Olathe East High School; Micah Augustine, Connor Chaffin, Ava Evans, Eston Garcia, Eugenie Kim, Alexander Pannier, Braden Pickard, Elijah Tamano, Olathe Northwest High School; Cody Schwindt, Olathe South High School; Aidric Smith, Ethan Wolf, Olathe West High School
- National dance champions in large varsity team category and large varsity team performance category — Olathe Northwest High School Dance Team
- Gatorade Kansas Boys' Cross-Country Player of the Year — Braxton Theel, Olathe West High School
- KC First Lego League regional champions and world qualifiers — Golden Seals team from California Trail and Chisholm Trail middle schools
- One of only 2,267 students nationwide matched in the QuestBridge scholarship program — Isaiah Pagnozzi, Olathe West High School
- Kenneth Smith Award for golf — Claire Sullivan, Olathe Northwest High School
- State champions in the Night at the Lab research-based competition — Arielle Li, Garret Li and Arshika Kanna, Olathe North High School
- First place honors at the Educators Rising regional conference — Sam Cowick (Educators Rising Moment category); Khloe Lucky (Exploring Non-Core Teaching Careers JV); Halle Brus (Public Speaking); Hailey France (Lesson Planning and Design in the Humanities category)
- Second in the Teacher Recruitment category of Educators Rising national competition — Colt Hughey and Hailey France, Olathe East High School
- National semi-finalist in the Educators Rising national competition — Abigail Vandaveer, Olathe East High School
- National Merit Semifinalists — Wesley Janssen of Olathe East High School; Micah Augustine, Connor Chaffin, Ana Evans, Eston Garcia, Eugenie Kim, Alexander Pannier, Braden Pickard and Elijah Tamano of Olathe Northwest High School; Cody Schwindt of Olathe South High School; Aidric Smith and Ethan Wolf of Olathe West High School
- Walsworth Gallery of Excellence Award from Walsworth Yearbooks — Olathe East and Olathe South high school yearbook staffs

# Outstanding Student Athletes

## Fall

- Olathe East High School's Jenny Sun and Addie Mckenna placed fifth and 10th respectively at the 6A State Golf Tournament.
- Avery Hearshman from Olathe Northwest High School took seventh.
- Olathe West won the state title for the fifth consecutive year.
- Olathe North High School placed fifth overall.
- Olathe Northwest High School placed ninth.
- First Place: Braxton Theel (Olathe West High School).
- Second Place: Dylan Plath (Olathe South High School).
- Fourth Place: Gunnar Hornung (Olathe West High School).
- Seventh Place: Luke Swearingin (Olathe South High School).
- Olathe West High School placed third in the 6A state championship.
- The Olathe Northwest High School girls' tennis team won the 6A state championship.
- Singles Champion: Mithila Dixit (Olathe Northwest High School).
- Doubles Champions: Riley Terhune and Hannah Carney (Olathe Northwest High School).
- The Olathe North High School gymnastics team won the 6A state championship.
- Olathe Northwest High School took second, Olathe East High School placed fourth, and Olathe South High School came away with fifth place.
- Olathe Northwest High School's Sophia Beaumont was the state champion in Vault, Bars, Beam, and All-Around, plus tied for first in Floor with her teammate Emmy Keller.



MICHENAINDA ARITUS



ABOVE: KIRA JACOBS

BELOW: BRAXTON THEEL



### Winter

- Olathe East High School won the 200-yard Medley Relay, consisting of Corbin Bradwell, Skylar Jones, Adam Hagan, and Charlie Ross.
- Olathe West High School's Hayden Renoux won the 500-yard Freestyle state title.
- Olathe South High School's Jovani Caudill won the 6A state championship in the 165-pound weight class in wrestling.
- Olathe North High School's Makenzie Sharp won the 6A state title in the 140-pound weight class in wrestling.
- Olathe East's Audrey Lennard won the 6A state championship in the 145-pound division in wrestling.
- Olathe South's Justice Thomas won the state championship in the 170-pound weight class in wrestling.
- The Raven Dance Team from Olathe Northwest High School earned three national titles at the National Dance Competition: National Champion in Game Day, National Champion in Team Performance, and Grand National Champion title.

### Spring

- The Olathe West High School boys' track team won the 6A state championship.
- The Olathe West softball team won the 6A state championship.
- Olathe East High School's Irene Gettya won first place in diving.
- Olathe South High School's Kira Jacobs won first place in 200 Freestyle and 100 Backstroke.
- Teyvn Gasaway won first place in the 200M.
- Dylan Plath won first place in the 800M.
- Olathe West High School students Brayden Johnson, Bryce Austin, Caden Richardson and Teyvn Gasaway won the 4 X 100 state championship.
- Olathe Northwest High School students Carson Madsen, Benjamin Herbst, Tyler Palangi and Dexter Favreau won the 4 X 800 state championship.
- Olathe Northwest's Jaalan Watson won first place in triple jump.
- Olathe South's Peter Mac Swaney won first place in discus.
- Olathe West's Cade Zimmerman won first place in javelin.
- Olathe South's Jeremy Gracia won first place in shot put.
- Olathe Northwest's Michenainda Aritus won first place in the 100M hurdles.
- Olathe West High School students McKenna Taldo, Liz Browning, Laynie Clements and Jasmine Stiede won the 4 X 800 state championship.
- Olathe Northwest's Michenainda Aritus won first place in long jump.

# Financial Statement - Percentage of Budget

## Mill Levy

General Fund	20.000
Supplemental General	15.189
Capital Outlay	8.000
Special Liability	0.284
Extraordinary Growth	1.367
Cost of Living	3.511
Bond & Interest	14.519
Special Assessments	0.328
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.198</b>

## Sources Of Revenue (Operating Funds)

Local & County Taxes	63,483,883
State Funds	270,844,883
Federal	8,672,311
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$343,000,351</b>

## Assessed Valuation

\$3,299,403,528

## Base State Aid Per Pupil

2023-24	\$5,088
2024-25	\$5,378
An increase of 5.70%	

## Operating Fund Expenditures By Function Area

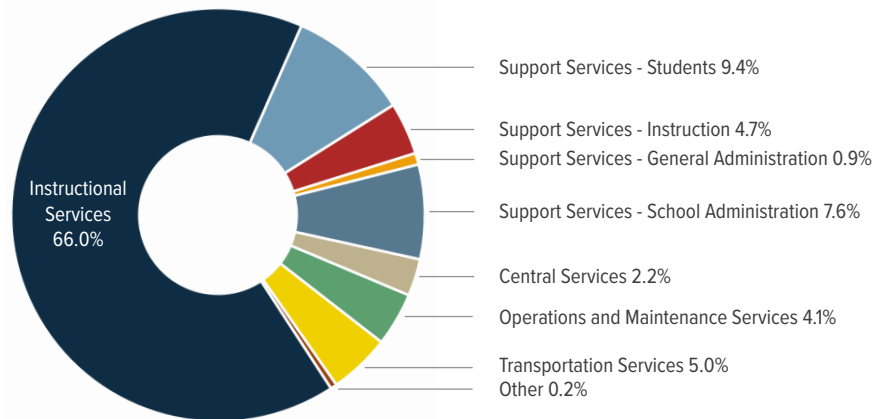
Instructional Services	228,310,585
Support Services - Students	32,551,450
Support Services - Instruction	16,201,079
Support Services - General Administration	3,455,364
Support Services - School Administration	26,304,374
Central Services	7,641,786
Operations & Maintenance Services	14,239,664
Transportation Services	17,127,846
Other	61,364
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$345,893,509</b>

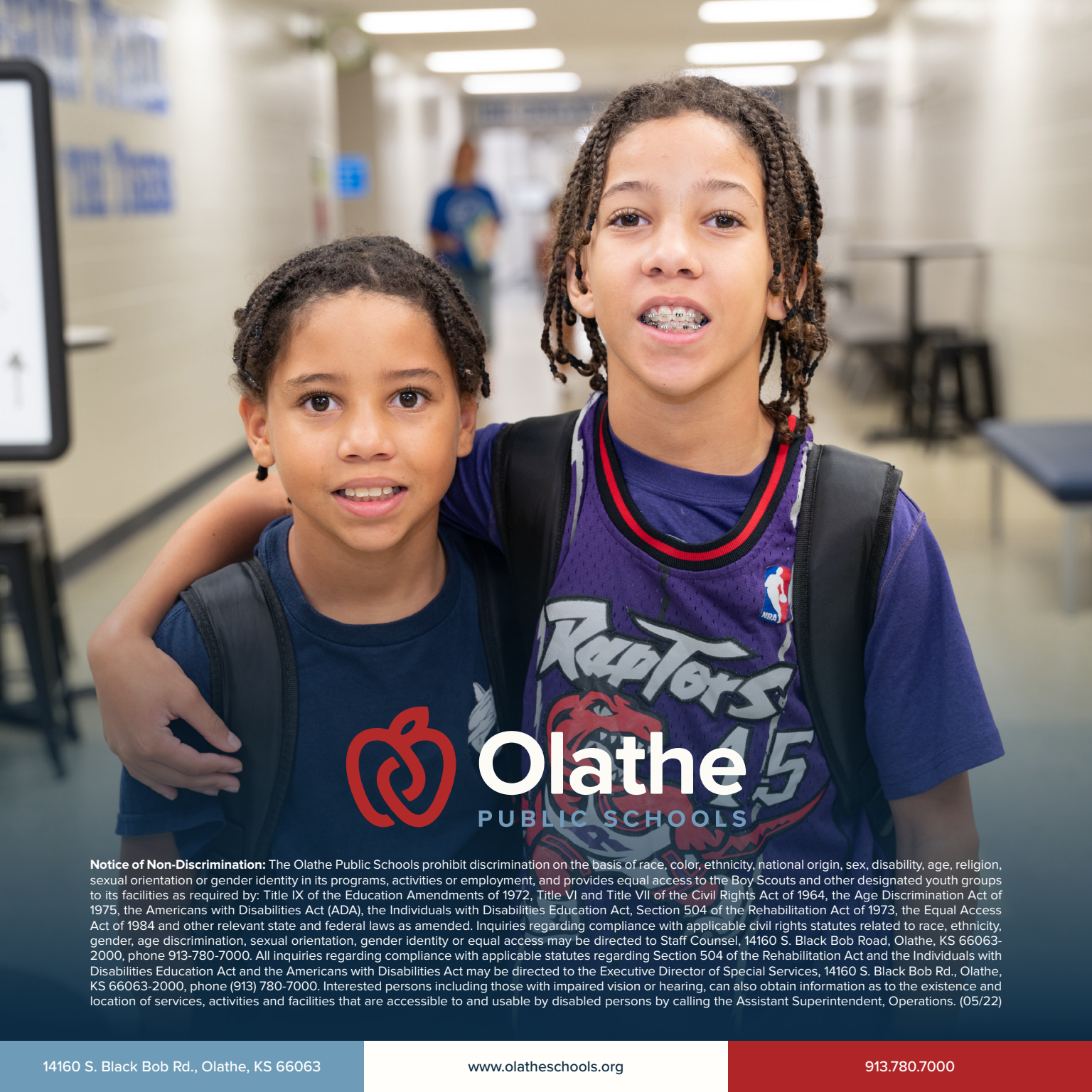
## Operating Fund Expenditures By Object Area

Salaries & Benefits	302,209,732
Professional & Technical Services	5,368,965
Purchased Property Services	377,012
Other Purchased Services	4,909,048
Supplies & Materials	14,745,985
Equipment/Property	318,859
Utilities	1,303,256
Transportation	16,660,652
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$345,893,509</b>

## Operating Budget Per Pupil

Operating Total	\$345,893,509
Student Enrollment 2023-24	28,454
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,156.23</b>





# Olathe

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Notice of Non-Discrimination:** The Olathe Public Schools prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity in its programs, activities or employment, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups to its facilities as required by: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Access Act of 1984 and other relevant state and federal laws as amended. Inquiries regarding compliance with applicable civil rights statutes related to race, ethnicity, gender, age discrimination, sexual orientation, gender identity or equal access may be directed to Staff Counsel, 14160 S. Black Bob Road, Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone 913-780-7000. All inquiries regarding compliance with applicable statutes regarding Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act may be directed to the Executive Director of Special Services, 14160 S. Black Bob Rd., Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone (913) 780-7000. Interested persons including those with impaired vision or hearing, can also obtain information as to the existence and location of services, activities and facilities that are accessible to and usable by disabled persons by calling the Assistant Superintendent, Operations. (05/22)