



Back-to-School Edition – August 2026

Dedicated to keeping families informed about Open World Learning Community events & volunteer opportunities

Principal Welcome

Dear OWL Families,

I am thrilled to welcome all of our families back for the 2026–2027 school year, with an especially warm welcome to the 85 new students joining our community! As we prepare for the year ahead, I encourage everyone to note our upcoming opportunities for connection on their calendars. These events are vital to building the strong relationships that define our school, and I am eager to see us grow together as a community. I would like to call your immediate attention to three dates on the calendar to the right: the Open House, Fall Retreats, and the Fall Family Gathering at Harriet Island.

The Power of High-Quality Work (HQW): As an EL Education school, one of our three dimensions of student achievement is high-quality student work. This has been a major focus at OWL for the past couple of years. As you walk through our hallways, HQW covers our walls and permeates our classrooms. As we know, high-quality work rarely occurs on a first attempt. Students at OWL often redo and revise their products multiple times before arriving at a final version. Sometimes this process can be frustrating for students who want to complete a task on the first try and submit it for a grade. However, real learning occurs when students work toward mastery by improving upon a first draft.

OWL Chosen for National EL Education Seminar: Because of our community's dedication to excellence, OWL has been asked by our partner organization, EL Education, to host a prestigious three-day seminar in March focusing on high-quality student work. (see news blurb on page 12)

Developing Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs): Finally, as we embark on this new school year, it is important to remember that the habits leading to high-quality work are developed right away in the fall. When your student comes to goal-setting conferences on September 3rd, we will focus on goals connected directly to these habits, rather than standard outcomes like “I want to get all A’s.” We know that strong daily habits naturally lead to positive academic outcomes and empower students to become the “leaders of their own learning.” (see the list of HOWLs on page 12)

Next Steps: There is a wealth of important information included in the rest of this back-to-school newsletter, including details on fall sports and our upcoming fall retreats. Please review those materials carefully. Thank you for your partnership. I look forward to seeing you all on September 3rd for our goal-setting conferences!

In Crew,

David Gundale

Principal, OWL

Family calendar

While much of our calendar is finalized for the school year, consider bookmarking our school website (open.spps.org) to look at our calendar tab on a weekly or monthly basis. Occasionally, events will be added or need to be changed throughout the year. We do our best to highlight any additions or changes in the Weekly Family email that will be emailed out each Sunday.

Quarter 1 - September 8-November 12

September 3: Goal-Setting 12 - 8

September 8: First Day of School

September 14: Middle School Sports Start

September 15: School Picture Day

September 15: Open House 6 - 8

September 15: Senior Family Meeting 8 - 9

September 21: No School (Yom Kippur)

September 22 to 25: Fall Retreat Week

September 28 to October 1: Grade 12 Service Trip

October 5: College Fair Grade 11 and 12

October 13: Comm Goup/PTO mtg. 6:30 - 8

October 15 to 16: No School (MEA)

October 19 to 23: Fall School Spirit Week

October 19: Flipside and EDL begin

October 20: PSAT - Grade 11 (Grade 10 optional)

October 22: Fall Family Gathering 5:30 - 8

October 23: MS Homecoming Dance 5:30 - 7

October 23: HS Homecoming Dance 7:30 - 9:30

October 24: Ultimate Frisbee Homecoming 4

October 29: Latinx Family Culture Night 6 - 8

November 4: Picture Retake Day (a.m. only)

November 12: Family Showcase #1 6:30 - 8

November 12: Last Day of Quarter 1

November 13: No School (Staff Development Day)



Fall sports 2026

Humboldt/OWL Fall Sports Registration is open!

All high school fall sports start on **Monday, August 17** (with the exception of adapted soccer and pom squad).

We offer the following sports in the fall, listed are the times, locations, and where they will begin practicing. Practices begin on Monday, August 17th, unless otherwise indicated.

PI Adapted Soccer (starts the week of 9/14)

CI Adapted Soccer (starts the week of 9/14)

POM Squad (starts Tuesday 8/18) 10:00am - 12:00pm at Humboldt Turf Field. Meet at door #26

Boys and Girls Cross Country - 9:00am – 11:00am Outside Door #26

Girls Tennis - 12:00pm - 2:00pm at Humboldt Tennis Courts

Football - (co-op with Harding)- 12:00 - 6:30pm at Harding. Meet at door #4

Girls Swimming - 8:00am - 10:30am at Humboldt pool. Enter door #23

Boys Soccer- 5:00pm – 7:00pm at Humboldt Turf Field. Meet at door #26 near the turf field

Girls Soccer- 6:30pm - 8:30pm at Humboldt Turf Field. Meet at door #26 near the turf field

Girls Volleyball - 4:00pm - 6:00pm Humboldt Main Gym. Enter door #23



SIGN UP NOW!!

High school students can now register for athletics using Arbiter. All families will need to create a new account. The link for SPPS is: <https://students.arbitersports.com/organizations/st-paul-public-school-district>



Middle School Fall Sports

Middle School Students in grades 6-8 will have the opportunity to participate in the following activities:

- Boys Soccer
- Girls Soccer
- Girl's Volleyball
- Coed Flag Football

Middle School sports will begin September 14. We will hold an information meeting for any interested middle school students during the first week of school. Any questions contact OWL Athletics Director Andre Williams - andre.williams@spps.org.

Fall Retreat Information

Summary: OWL Fall Retreats will take place from Tuesday, September 22nd to Friday, September 25th. Our 12th graders will be doing their fall retreat on September 28th to October 1.

Purpose: This is our 15th year doing Fall Retreats. Fall Retreats serve as an entry point into a student's grade level work for the year. Below is a grade level plan for Fall Retreats, 2026.

6th Grade, Mississippi River: Canoeing on the Mississippi River with Outward Bound, visiting Minnehaha Falls, and participating in in-build team-building activities. (No overnight)

7th Grade, Community: Environmental education at Belwin, service projects at Lake Phalen, and trip to Osprey Wilds. (Overnight)

8th Grade, Justice: Capitol tour, George Floyd Memorial tour, trip to Phillippo Scout Camp. (Overnight)

9th Grade, Service: Service learning launch and high school preparation, featuring overnight service work at Camp St. Croix in Hudson, WI. (Overnight)

10th Grade, College Visits: Day trips to a variety of institutions (2-year, 4-year, public, private, large, small, and trade union training programs). Sessions will cover the college admission process and financial aid. (No overnight)

11th Grade, Service Trip: A 4-day service trip to Camp Widjiwagan in Ely, MN (September 22–25). Please note: During the week of October 6–10, 11th graders will engage in follow-up College/Career Prep work. (Overnight)

12th Grade, Senior Retreat: Service Week-Camp Du Nord in Ely, MN (September 28th to October 1). The week of September 22nd to 26th, Grade 12 will be working on senior portfolio and college applications. (Overnight)

Medication requirements: If your student requires medication during their retreat, the medication must be delivered to the school nurse in its original prescription container no later than Friday, September 11th.

- Email jennifer.mcfarlane@spps.org with questions or concerns.

Key action items for families

- FALL RETREAT FORMS

A huge shout-out to the families who completed their fall retreat and health forms last spring—we have already processed over 90% of them! **If you have not completed your forms yet**, we will need to collect them from you during our goal-setting conferences on September 3rd.

- FALL RETREAT FEES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Unfortunately, our standard school budget cannot fully cover the cost of these retreats. We rely on family support to ensure every student can participate in these transformative experiences.

- To Pay Online: If you did not contribute last spring, please use the QR code provided below to make your payment.
- To Pay by Check: Checks can be dropped off at the main office during goal-setting conferences, or mailed to Open World Learning Community Attn: Tammy 640 Humboldt Ave. St. Paul, MN 55107
- Scholarships & Donations: If your family needs a partial scholarship, please contact dave.gundale@spps.org. Conversely, if you are in a position to contribute an additional amount above your fee, your donation will directly fund scholarships for other OWL students.

Call for chaperones!!!

To provide our students with enriching Fall Retreat experiences, we rely on the support of our parents, guardians, and families! Please use the QR code below to express your interest in chaperoning. We are looking for chaperones for the following trips: **Grade 6: September 22–25** (Day chaperones), **Grades 7, 8, & 9: September 22–25** (Day and overnight chaperones), **Grade 11: September 22–25** (Overnight chaperones only), **Grade 12: September 28–October 1** (Overnight chaperones only). Grade-level staff leads will contact you to confirm specific dates and details after you submit your availability. We couldn't host these wonderful fall retreats without our amazing family community—thank you for your support!



[Chaperone interest form](#)



[Link to fall retreat fees](#)



Open World Learning Community School Supplies List 2026-2027

Personal items for students:

- Backpack (to be kept in lockers during the day)
- Headphones for iPad—straight jack (the 90 degree elbow jack does not work with iPads)
- Personal planner (OWL will provide a planner, but if you would like your own that is fine)
- Pens and pencils (get enough for the entire year)
- Highlighters
- 6 to 8 Pocket folders and 2 to 3 lined notebooks OR a multiple folder/binder that zips
- Physical Education: Tennis shoes, deodorant

Community items:

Please consider buying a few of these items and bring them with you to your goal-setting conferences for your crew leader. We do not expect families to buy all of these items. We very much appreciate it if you can bring some of the items listed below. Thank you!

- Multi-packs of facial tissues
- Scotch tape/masking tape/double-sided tape
- Blue painters tape
- Scissors
- Post in notes
- Cardstock (8.5 x 11 multiple colors)
- Poster paper (24 x 36)
- Pack(s) of markers
- Pack(s) of colored pencils
- Highlighters
- Paper clips
- Dry-Erase markers (dark colors)
- Dry-Erase board erasers
- Dry-Erase board cleaner spray
- Sharpies (black and various colors/thin and thick tipped)
- Hot glue gun sticks - variety of sizes (also glue guns)
- 3M Command strips - quick release tabs
- Disinfectant wipes (ex. Clorox Wipes)
- Paper Towels
- Paper Plates / Bowls / Napkins / Utensils
- Kickballs for Four Square use or outside time
- Staplers
- Menstrual products
- Ziplock: Gallon/Quart/Sandwich

Consider buying more for those who cannot afford as much. Donations can be given to your crew leader or drop it at the office with Tammy. THANK YOU!

Calling all 10th Graders!!!

Hahn Leadership Opportunity

One of the highest forms of student leadership at OWL is when our older students step up to support, mentor, and tutor our younger students. This year, our Kurt Hahn Student Leaders will mentor and support 6th through 8th-grade students during our Thursday academic day in Crew.

Why Join the Kurt Hahn Leadership Program?

- Outdoor Leadership Training: In addition to tutoring, Hahn leaders will participate in six full-day outdoor leadership experiences with the Voyageur Outward Bound staff at various beautiful locations around the Twin Cities.
- Earn Graduation Hours: Hours spent in this program count directly toward your required high school graduation service hours.
- Build Your Resume: This is an incredible opportunity to strengthen your leadership and service resume, which will be highly valuable for future job and college applications.

How to Apply

Send an email expressing your interest directly to Principal Gundale at dave.gundale@spps.org (Deadline is August 31st)



Goal Setting Conference Overview:

One of the longest-standing traditions at Open World Learning Community, dating back to 1971, is our student-parent/guardian-crew leader goal-setting conferences. Dedicating significant time to meet with you and your student before the school year officially begins is intentional and purposeful. We know that when students build the habit of setting goals, working toward them, and reflecting on their achievements, their academic and social growth dramatically improves. Furthermore, these pre-school conferences ensure that every student knows from day one that they have a caring adult at OWL who is ready to help them navigate challenges and celebrate their accomplishments.

Mark Your Calendar

- What to Expect: Parents/guardians will receive a dedicated goal-setting letter and an electronic calendar invitation during the week of August 10th.
- Action Item: We ask that you sign up for a timeslot as soon as possible after receiving the invitation so we can ensure every student secures a time that works best for their family.

We look forward to partnering with you on September 3rd to help your student become the leader of their own learning!

Fall Open House Information

On Tuesday, September 15th from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. OWL will hold its annual Open House. Students will be able to walk parents/guardians around the building and stop in to connect briefly with their teachers. Additionally, there will be a scheduled grade level overview in the OWL Auditorium. This schedule will be published at Fall Goal Setting Conferences. Student activities such as groups and clubs and after school opportunities will be available in the OWL cafeteria throughout the event. We look forward to seeing you on the evening of September 15.

12th Grade Family Meeting (Required!!)

At 8:00 p.m. on September 15th (at the end of the Open House), 12th grade families and students are asked to attend a very important 12th grade meeting in the OWL auditorium. During this meeting, Dave, Tim, Jolene, and Katie will go through all the important dates and events for 12th graders. Important information includes: college application process and deadlines, FAFSA, mentor support, College March, senior portfolio completion, Senior Project, Senior Meeting, Donut Declaration, and graduation details (if available at that time), etc. We look forward to launching another successful senior year for our 2027 graduating class!

OWL History Day competes at Nationals!

In June, five OWL students competed at National History Day at the University of Maryland. Competing with a senior individual website, senior group performance, and junior individual exhibit, the students showcased months of original research, analytical skills, and creative craftsmanship. Abby, Beatrice, and Charley's performance on the Ladies Home Journal Sit-In, and Alice's exhibit on the 1963 Community Mental Health Act both earned honorable mentions in their categories, placing them in the top 20 in the country. It was another strong History Day year for OWL's students.



Policy Highlight: Electronic Devices

Recent research demonstrates that cell phone use in the classroom severely hinders academic performance, diminishes student mental health, and disrupts the overall learning environment. Studies show that phone-based multitasking directly impairs information retention, while constant connectivity is linked to increased student anxiety, stress, and social isolation. Furthermore, the presence of cell phones leads to higher rates of cheating, reduced participation in discussions, and classroom management challenges for educators. Ultimately, evidence supports restricting cell phone use during class, as limiting these devices fosters face-to-face interaction, creates a more focused learning environment, and empowers teachers to instruct more effectively. (These rules were developed based on Saint Paul Public Schools Cellular Phone and Personal Electronic Devices policy 550.00.)

Students are encouraged not to bring cell phones or other electronic devices including smart watches, and earbuds/air pods to school.

If students choose to bring a cell phone/device to school the expectations are as follows:

- Cell phones, electronic devices (including smart watches) and earbuds/headphones will remain in student backpacks/ lockers during the academic school day, hallways, and lunch time.
- No phones are allowed from the first academic bell (8:30am) to the last academic bell (3:00pm).
- Students who need to be in contact with their family during the academic day are to ask permission to use one of the school phones. Parents are welcome and encouraged to contact our main office if there is a message that needs to be relayed. (651-293-8670)
- Students assume the risk of damage, theft, or loss when choosing to bring a phone/device to school.
- Students may use their cell phone, smart watches, and earbuds/headphones before and after the school day.

The following uses of electronics are not allowed during the school day:

- Checking in or responding to family members.
- Sending and receiving appropriate communication with friends.
- Sharing school-appropriate material with friends.
- Cell phone use of any kind in locker rooms or bathrooms.
- Earbuds/headphones may be allowed at designated times for instructional purposes on school approved devices.
- Phone usage during lockdown and fire drills.
- Using a cell phone to record or take photos of staff members or other students without permission.
- Recording or taking photos of classmates with the intent to bully or harass.
- Using social media, apps, or any other function of a cell phone/device to spread rumors, bully, make fun of, exclude, or create a disruption in school or outside of school.*
- Sharing or asking other students for inappropriate content.
- Cell Phone Guidelines for off-campus school activities (i.e. extracurricular activities, outdoor and service trips, school field trips) will be individualized depending on the specific trip and activities. These expectations will be addressed at pre-trip meetings and/or on trip-specific permission slips.

Extenuating Circumstances:

- Students who use their cell phone to monitor a medical condition (i.e. diabetes, epilepsy) may have their cell phone with them at all times, but must adhere to all other expectations of the cell phone policy.
- Please contact school administration if there is an essential need for a phone.
- In the case of medical necessity or emergency, a student should have a health plan or prior approval.
- Students who must use a personal electronic device as indicated on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) may have their personal electronic device with them at all times identified on their IEP, but must adhere to all other expectations of this policy. School-issued devices must be used for IEPs whenever possible. These accommodations must be written in the student's IEP and communicated to school administration.
- Students who are parents or acting in the capacity of a volunteer firefighter or Emergency Medical Service (EMS) worker may have their personal electronic device with them at all times but must adhere to all other expectations of this policy.

General Guidelines:

- Cell Phone Use: Students may NOT use cell phones during the academic day - first academic bell to last academic bell.
- Device Storage: It is strongly suggested that all electronic devices be kept off and in a locker during school hours.

**Using the device in a threatening, harassing, or bullying manner such as through text messages, posts on social media sites, etc. will have a separate consequence, see page 24 of the student handbook.*

Electronic Devices: Guidelines and consequences

Confiscation and Consequences:

- **Unauthorized Use:** If any electronic device, including cell phones, is seen or heard during school hours it may be confiscated by any staff member.
- **First Infraction:** The device will be taken to the office and the student will pick it up at the end of the school day.
- **Second/Third Infraction:** A parent/guardian must pick up the device, and additional consequences may be assigned.
- **Fourth Infraction:** Cell phone plan created. Phone may be held by administration during days or not allowed on site. Parents/ Guardians devise a plan together with school administration.

Specific Restrictions:

- **Locker Rooms and Bathrooms:** Devices with photo-taking capabilities are NOT allowed in locker rooms or bathrooms at any time. Confiscation and search of such devices is standard procedure if found in these areas.
- **Lockdowns and Fire Drills:** Phone usage during lockdown and fire drills is prohibited.
- **Unauthorized Recording:** Students who take pictures or videos of others without permission in any school setting, including the bus, will face disciplinary actions.
- **Smart Watches, Earbuds and Headphones:** Smart watches, earbuds and headphones may not be worn in the hallways or cafeteria.

Investigations and Inspections

- **Device Disabling:** Disabling a cell phone or computer to thwart an investigation of a disciplinary matter will result in disciplinary action.
- **Device Inspection:** The school reserves the right to inspect a student's electronic device (in adherence through rule III.E in policy 550.0), through proper legal channels, if there is reason to believe the student has violated school policies or engaged in misconduct while using the device.

School Responsibility

- **Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Devices:** The school is not responsible for, nor is it required to investigate, any lost, stolen, or damaged electronic devices brought onto school grounds or the bus.

Additional Rules

- **Recording and Posting:** Students may not use a device to record, transmit, or post photos or videos of a person or persons on school grounds or the bus without express permission of an administrator in addition to the individual or individuals that are the subjects of the recording.
- **Phone Calls:** Students are not allowed to use their phones to call or text individuals during the school day. A telephone located in the office is available for student use. Students will NOT be called to the phone during the school day except for emergencies.

By following these guidelines, students will help maintain a focused and respectful learning environment.

Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in disciplinary actions as described above.

**Per the Saint Paul Public Schools Cellular Phone and Personal Electronic Devices policy 550.00, OWL assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of a personal electronic device brought to school and will not assume responsibility for investigating loss or theft of such items.*

iPad Policy

- See iPad manual for full Saint Paul Public School District expectations.
- The iPad is the property of the school district and like a textbook is considered an item that is checked out/leased to a student. Damage to the device or lost charger/iPad, and/or case is the responsibility of the student.
- Students may use the iPad in the school only as directed by staff members.
- iPads should be closed during class transition times.
- School staff may confiscate and search a student iPad at any time for not following expectations of use of the iPad.
- If a student is found to have Apps on their iPad that have not been approved by SPPS or OWL and are not a part of Self-Service, the school has a right to delete those Apps and remove them from student's iPad. If students are found to continue to download unapproved Apps, the school administration has a right to restrict iPad use by allowing use in teacher initiated classroom activities.

EL Education’s 3 Dimensions of Student Achievement:

As an EL Education partner school, OWL holds at its core, three dimensions of student achievement:

- mastery of knowledge and skills
 - high-quality student work
 - character and culture
- Examples of each are shared below



Highlighting Math Achievement at OWL

Math achievement has been a focus at OWL for the past several years. I would like to highlight OWL’s math data as an example of positive MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) growth over time. In reading the graph below, the diagonal percentages show growth of the same cohort over three years. It shows our incoming 9th grade class moving as 6th graders three years ago from 53.5% proficient to 60.6% proficient as 8th graders. Likewise, the data shows our incoming 8th graders moving from 38.8% in 6th grade to 45.1% proficient as 7th graders (significant growth). To give an additional perspective, in 2025 (last published statewide data) Minnesota state math proficiency was 45.2% and SPPS school district was 26.2% proficient. What should be noted in the graph below is the growth of our cohorts over time as opposed to the proficiency (although the proficiency is significantly improved from 5 years ago).

6th Grade	53.5%	38.8%	54.2%
7th Grade	50.8%	55.4%	45.1%
8th Grade	43.8%	53.1%	60.6%

When we as a math faculty look at individual student data, we see a fairly large percentage of students moving close to the proficient range (something the state refers to as Partially Proficient). Like in everything, practice and work does lead to individual growth. Like in our reading goals, we ask that students and families prioritize some daily math practice so that our students continue making these significant gains. Last school year, middle school students participated in a SuccessMaker Challenge which resulted in over 32,000 minutes of additional practice at each student’s targeted needs.

Celebrate OWL student work: I encourage everyone to visit our digital gallery of high-quality student work, beautifully created and curated by math and science teacher Tom Totushek, at owlcelebrateslearning.com. This gallery features many dynamic digital products, including documentaries, podcasts, and publications.

Character and Culture

- Spotlight on Crew

There are many areas of our school model that fall under character and culture. One of our core beliefs is that Crew is the engine that drives a positive culture at OWL and serves as vehicle for character development. Many students and families remark that crew provides a school home base of sorts for students to connect with a caring and knowing staff member over many years. This results in a relationship that supports student growth and development in a very intentional way.

It is also not surprising that a focus on crew leads to less student discipline and higher attendance rates - two data points that we monitor closely. During the 2025-2026 school, OWL’s daily attendance was 94% and office referrals, school dismissals and suspensions declined over 40%.

High Quality Work

High quality student work shows up in many areas of our school. At OWL assignments are not just compliance based work that is submitted and students move quickly onto the next assessment. Instead, at OWL, there is a culture of revision, where students work toward high quality submissions, whether it be a product even on a typical assessment such as a test or paper. As you walk through the hallways of OWL, you will see many wonderful works of art, info graphics, writing assignments and other beautiful products that showcase student learning.



Service Learning: Cultivating Engaged Citizens

Service learning is a core component of the Open World Learning Community (OWL) mission. Rooted deeply in our values of stewardship and solidarity, this initiative aims to foster competence, connectedness, and compassion in our students while directly benefiting both our school environment and the broader community.

To graduate from OWL, every student is required to complete a total of 300 service hours, split evenly between two categories: school service and community service.

The Graduation Requirements

- **School Service (150 Hours):** Contributions that support our immediate campus environment. This includes valuable leadership roles like peer mentoring (such as the Kurt Hahn Leadership Program), facility maintenance, or main office assistance.
- **Community Service (150 Hours):** External engagement focused on supporting outside entities. This includes volunteering with non-profits, museums, neighborhood organizations, and hospitals.

Tips for Student Success

To get the most out of these commitments, we encourage students to keep the following strategies in mind as they plan their year:

- **Align with Personal Passions:** Select service opportunities that reflect your personal interests and skills. We encourage students to brainstorm potential placements with families, teachers, or crew leaders early in the fall.
- **Commit Long-Term:** Staying with a specific service opportunity over a longer period allows students to truly witness the impact of their work.
- **Build a Network:** Long-term commitments help students build deep, meaningful professional relationships. These connections frequently turn into vital references for jobs, scholarships, and post-secondary college applications.

Ultimately, these service-based experiences serve as a foundational launchpad for our students to become active, empathetic, and engaged citizens.



Bus & Transportation Information

School Bus Updates

- Schedules & Routes: Bus information, including precise pickup/drop-off times and locations, will be emailed to families later in August (typically before our goal-setting conferences on September 3rd).
- Early Season Delays: Please remember that buses frequently run late during the first two weeks of school for both morning pickup and afternoon drop-off. Delays occur for many reasons, including elementary routes running right before ours and drivers adjusting to new routes. We greatly appreciate your patience as schedules stabilize into the second week of school.
- Questions? If you have any immediate bussing questions, please call the main office at 651-293-8670 and we will happily help you look into it.

Parent Drop-Off & Pick-Up Guidelines

- For families driving students to and from school instead of using the bus.

Morning Drop-Off (8:15 a.m. – 8:25 a.m.)

- Location: Please drop off your student at the corner of Humboldt Ave. and Elizabeth St. (Northwest corner of our building).
- Crucial Safety Rules: * DO NOT drop off directly in front of the building on Humboldt Avenue. This area is strictly reserved as a bus-only drop-off zone.
- **DO NOT** make a U-turn on Humboldt Avenue in front of our building. This area becomes highly congested with arriving buses, and avoiding U-turns keeps our students safe.

Afternoon Pick-Up (After 3:10 p.m.)

- Timing: Student pick-up begins after all school buses have departed. Buses are usually released by 3:10 p.m. (though this may shift to 3:15/3:20 p.m. during the first week of school).
- Location: Families picking up students are asked to wait until all buses have fully left the area before pulling up in front of OWL on Humboldt Avenue.
- Waiting Area: Students who are being picked up will wait inside the cafeteria until the buses depart. Staff members will supervise the cafeteria and release students to the front of the building as soon as the bus zone is clear.

Thank you so much for your cooperation and support in following these routines! It ensures we get all of our students into and out of the building in a safe, efficient, and organized manner.

SPPS iUpdate / Back-to-School Forms

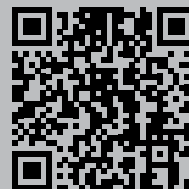
The St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) 2026–2027 back-to-school iUpdate forms will open in August 2026. Completing these forms is a requirement for all families before the start of the school year. Updating your information ensures that your student receives proper services, eligible transportation, and important communications via U.S. mail, phone, email, and text.

- Please Note: The district will send out phone calls and text message reminders starting in August to ensure all families complete these forms. You can get a head start by using the link or QR code below.

How to Access iUpdate

Please visit the [SPPS OneStop / Campus Parent Portal](#) to complete your forms.

(If you are viewing this via a printed newsletter, please scan the QR code to access the portal directly on your smartphone).



Spotlight: New OWL Staff

Elzbieta Murphy - Assistant Principal



My name is Elzbieta Murphy, and I am excited and grateful to join OWL as your Assistant Principal.

I have been an educator with Saint Paul Public Schools for nearly 25 years, serving as an English Learner and Reading teacher, Teacher on Special Assignment, district Supervisor supporting multilingual learners K–12, and most recently, Assistant Principal and Interim Principal at EXPO Elementary.

Building relationships has always been the most meaningful part of my work. I believe that when students feel known, valued, and supported, they are more likely to thrive academically and personally.

Outside of school, I enjoy spending time with my family, hiking, reading, listening to live music, cooking, and visiting my family in Poland.

Brandon Vue - Health and Physical Education



My name is Mr. Vue, and I am excited to be the new Physical Education and Health teacher this year. I have recently graduated from Concordia University with my Bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Health, and I am continuing my Education to pursue my Master's degree. My goal is to create a fun, positive, safe, and engaging environment where every student feels welcome, valued, and encouraged to participate.

Outside of school, I enjoy playing a variety of sports, going to the gym, hiking, and traveling. I love spending time with family and friends, and exploring new experiences and opportunities to learn.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and working together to make this a fun, successful, and enjoyable year.

Edmund Catlin - Special Education



Hello! My name is Edmund Catlin, and I am beyond excited to start at OWL as the new Specific Learning Disabilities teacher. I am an SPPS graduate of French Immersion, Hidden River, and Central High, and I went to college and lived in Montreal, Canada for seven years, where I got a music degree at McGill University, ultimately moving back to St. Paul to be close to family. This will be my sixth year in education, having started in reading corps, community education, and substitute teaching.

I believe in the importance of life-long learning, the inter-connectedness of people and things (an Open World, if you will), and how experiential learning brings it all together. Music taught me that anything worth learning can be translated into anything else, and I am so excited to join the OWL community.

Saroya Ireland - ELA



Hello all who have taken the time to read this. I am so excited to start my journey at OWL! This will be my 6th year teaching and my 4th year at SPPS.

I grew up in a northern suburb with two other sisters; I am the middle child. After graduating high school, I went on to study English at the University of Minnesota while also being in the U.S. Army. I graduated with my bachelor's in English and my master's in English Education. While teaching, I also went back to school for my master's in Library and Information Sciences.

Some of my interests include the ocean, the gym, and trees!

Open World Learning Community

Mission/vision and guiding principles

Open World Learning Community Mission:

A community of Joyful, curious self-directed learners engaged in the world.

School Values:

- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Perseverance
- Stewardship
- Collaboration

EL Education Design Principles:

- The primacy of self-discovery
- The having of wonderful ideas
- The responsibility for learning
- Empathy and caring
- Success and failure
- Collaboration and competition
- Diversity and inclusion
- The natural world
- Solitude and reflection
- Service and compassion

The HOWLs,

OWL's Habits of Work and Learning:

- Collaboration
- Responsibility
- Perseverance
- Integrity
- Stewardship

The school's mission, vision, and guiding principles will be on display in March, when OWL will co-host a prestigious national seminar along with our partner EL Education. Over 40 educators from across the country will converge on OWL to learn from—and alongside—our staff. This is an exciting opportunity for us to showcase our student work and collaborate with other innovative educators. We look forward to highlighting this event later in the year.



“NOBODY IS ALLOWED TO BE A PASSENGER; EVERYONE BELONGS TO THE SHIP’S CREW.”

KURT HAHN, FOUNDER OF OUTWARD BOUND

OWL says goodbye to departing staff and the class of 2026

Fond Farewells to Departing Staff Members

It is always difficult to say goodbye to members of our school family. As we enter the new school year, we have five staff members who are moving on to new adventures and opportunities. Please join me in thanking them for their dedication to the OWL community:

- Alysha Lundquist (7th & 9th–10th Grade ELA Teacher) Alysha will be moving closer to Duluth, MN, and will continue her teaching journey with the St. Paul Online School.
- Kenny Nguyen (Special Education Teacher) Kenny is planning an exciting relocation as his spouse begins their medical residency program.
- Neldin Cambronero (Special Education Teacher) Neldin will be shifting into an impactful new role within the district at Bridge View School.
- Joe Brandner (Physical Education & Health Teacher) We want to extend a massive congratulations to Joe on his retirement! Joe wraps up a long, distinguished career in education, over a decade of which was spent inspiring students here at OWL.
- Ma'lene Walker (Assistant Principal) Ms. Ma'lene will be transitioning into a new role as an Assistant Principal at Murray Middle School.

We deeply thank Alysha, Kenny, Neldin, Joe, and Ms. Ma'lene for everything they have given to Open World Learning Community. We wish each of them the absolute best as they transition into their new positions, new cities, and new chapters of life!

