



THE BLUE DEVIL BULLETIN



The official newsletter of the Oconto Unified School District

INSIDE THIS MONTH'S **ISSUE:**

- New OES Learning Spaces in Action
- Spectrum Award for Excellence in Communications
- Guest Article by Mayor Panetti
- OUSD received \$20,000 for STEAM upgrades



YEAR IN REVIEW: FULL STEAM AHEAD TO STRENGTHEN OUR SCHOOLS

By Superintendent Emily Miller

A school district cannot run without everyone working together. Addressing the learning and extracurricular needs of our students is not a one-person job. From parents to teachers and the community, it's a group effort to help all find success.

This is something we at OUSD can completely agree with. The Oconto Unified School District is proud, and it is not seen only when you are a student but as alumni, a resident, or an organization supporting our efforts. In this community, we understand it takes a village to continue to expect excellence and receive it.

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This expectation of excellence does not come without its challenges. We are asked as a school district to work within a strict federal and state budget. We constantly need to pivot and change with the current curriculum updates and societal expectations. These come with hurdles in the areas of teacher development, student outcomes, and increased demands with less income.

However, we know that we need to take these hurdles as they come and strategically come together to get over them. We would not be able to do this without knowing that we have an extended community supporting our system. The appreciation we feel for those who say yes to education and give our students the best learning environments is beyond words.

Our referendum projects have been completed. You gave our students the tools to be successful for the time being. As time goes on and our student and building needs change again, we will continue to need your support, and I am confident you will be there for OUSD again. Being a Blue Devil is something to be proud of today and tomorrow. Sharing our positive stories with all who will listen will continue to make us stronger as a school district and a community.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of what Oconto stands for!



Completed referendum projects at OMS

COMMUNITY PRIDE: OCONTO PAYS IT FORWARD



Homecoming Game moments: Making our community proud!



John R. Panetti
"Proud of Oconto" Mayor
Guest Article

Since Oconto's organization as a lumbering community in the 1850s, we have always placed high importance on fostering and advancing our school system. Its taken consistent community commitment and sacrifice to get where we are today. And while it may be tempting to pat ourselves on the back, regarding our motives as philanthropic, we might more honestly reflect on the more pragmatic, selfish, reasons citizens place huge amounts of their money in the community's schools. Where's the payoff? Why do we take such satisfaction and pride in educational system excellence?

Simple facts motivate us. We love our children, and, Return On Investment. ROI in business language. A prominently successful school system is a universally proclaimed requirement in any prospering community. Good schools attract better citizens, who make better employees, which attracts better businesses, and the entire synergistic dynamo energizes. We smile with a warm flood of pride in the resulting community and don't mind a bit bragging up our town, knowing we've invested well in our endeavors, including that big investment in schools.

Regarding the schools, citizens of our community are the stockholders in a significant investment. Stockholders like to see short-term performance indicators that validate their trust. While long-range success might arguably be the goal, people need to cite tangible examples of their school's performance. And these pride-inspiring examples are in the direct control of students and teachers.

Students' general good and upright conduct are evident in the community. Young people who carry themselves with maturity and dignity are noteworthy. Young people who step up to challenges, entering debate teams, library clubs, and other extracurricular activities are a source of pride. Young people who commit to hours of practice and then march in the band in every parade make hearts warm and adult eyes teary.

Marching in train is the most significant salute to veterans our schools can offer.

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GUEST COLUMN

Others commit hours to sports teams, knowing the community thrills in their energy and sportsmanship examples. These are visible examples of young people who work hard, play hard and focus on a result for effort. The best students show good stewardship in the community. Maybe ask dad to put that old truck out of sight, lead a cleanup effort, or decide to adopt an area of town to personally beautify. Students (and their mentors) should be mindful that they are always ambassadors of themselves, their families, the city, and their schools. Therein lies the opportunity for schools to visibly say thank you, celebrate, and participate in community pride.



“Students’ general good and upright conduct are evident in the community. Young people who carry themselves with maturity and dignity are noteworthy.”

I challenge young people and teachers alike, to regard their neighbors as investors and customers. Students: Take pride now in Oconto alongside those who’ve done so in adult life. In and out of the classroom be mindful of your community. Your community is proud of you. Envision what you can do for Oconto and “get after it”. I pray for God’s blessings on you and wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2023!

Make Us #GoOconto Proud!



NEW OES LEARNING SPACES IN ACTION



Mrs. Kim Baker
Title I Director/Instructional Coach

Energy, laughter and creativity are all brought to life with the addition of our new learning environments at Oconto Elementary School. Whether this is in the smaller breakout and sensory rooms, or the large STEAM labs and open learning commons, you are sure to see an abundance of engaged learning taking place at OES across all grade levels.

Located between classrooms, comfortably furnished and visibly convenient for both learners and teachers, small glass enclosed break out rooms are available for students to occupy for collaborating with classmates, partner work, independent workspace, while also providing options for sensory breaks from the classroom. Having space to interact in this manner develops important social and communication skills among our learners.

The STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) labs have been a valuable addition to our grade level neighborhoods by housing such activities as science experiments, food and baking related activities, messy crafts, and STEM challenges. This active engagement assists both students and teachers in a learning format that is future ready and creates a love of learning.

The large open learning commons equipped with interactive technology, flexible seating, tables, and floor to ceiling dry erase boards, provide the optimal space for guest presenters to engage with whole grade levels, large group Zoom presentations, grade level nutrition classes, professional development and curriculum work for teachers, and flexible environments for intervention groups to meet. This space also serves as a place where students can interact with their peers in Book Clubs and partner work. The advantage of this space is the ease of adjusting and moving the furnishings to specific learning needs.



Large common areas open up space for creativity and imagination.

Being an elementary student at Oconto Elementary means that your learning journey is not limited by walls or only focused in an assigned classroom. Rather it means you are free to move, collaborate, engage and enrich your learning everyday.

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This space also serves as a place where students can interact with their peers in Book Clubs and partner work.

OMS GOES BIG ON STEAM



Ms. Nicole Anderson
ART & STEAM Lab Educator

The beginning of the school year brought beautiful, innovative, and new learning spaces to the middle school. As the teachers have settled into the new year, our unique spaces are seeing increased usage. Two areas in the building, the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Lab and Tech Ed shop, have been designed to impact the 21st-century learning environment and prepare our students for life beyond the classroom.

Ms. Anderson and Ms. Hermesen have been busy preparing their spaces for students, designing curricula to meet their student's needs, and guiding them through innovative, creative, and challenging project-based learning experiences.

Ms. Anderson's STEAM students built wooden gingerbread houses for the holiday season. The students were challenged to create a house out of popsicle sticks that could be displayed in a Christmas Village or a cookie display. The students were encouraged to choose a design to fit their personalities or interest. To further help their creations along, the students were introduced to multi-angle miter cutters, t-squares, and several styles of cutting instruments.

Tech Ed students in Ms. Hermesen's classes are having fun exploring a variety of new technologies donated by the Leon H. and Clymene M. Bond Foundation. Fifth-grade students are learning a 3-D modeling program that enables them to design and create their projects on a 3-D printer. Sixth-grade students are busy using vertical farming techniques to grow fresh lettuce and herbs hydroponically.



Seventh and eighth-grade students are currently putting their measuring skills to the test as they continue building several different woodworking projects in their new woodshop.

"I love to know how things work and the STEAM lab space gives me the freedom to be creative while learning," says a tech-ed student from OMS.

"I like making gingerbread houses here. It is fun." says Cole Last, another middle-schooler.

Mr. Boucher (IT Dept) was the winner of a \$20,000 Green Bay Packer/US Cellular grant. The funding will be used to supply the STEAM labs with Miller Virtual Welders giving the middle school students a very realistic welding experience in a safe environment. The goal is to spark interest in these studies prior to high school. We will also be purchasing additional 3D printers for the middle and high school levels and additional STEAM lab materials.

We thank the Green Bay Packers and US Cellular for choosing the Oconto School District to receive this grant award.





USCELLULAR AND GREEN BAY PACKERS OUTFIT OUSD WITH \$20,000 DOLLAR TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE

UScellular and the Green Bay Packers announced the winner of a \$20,000 technology makeover through the inaugural Leap for Learning program. The Oconto Unified School District was awarded the prize during a celebration at the high school.

Earlier this fall, educators, administrators, and parents across Wisconsin were invited to nominate a Wisconsin-based K-12 school or school district through the [Leap for Learning program](#). Nominations required a summary describing why the school deserved a technology makeover and how it would make a difference to the students in the district.

OUSD was nominated by Scott Boucher, IT Director/Network Engineer at the district. Scott has worked for the district for 15 years. His role is to collaborate with the teaching staff on their classroom ideas and provide the technology hardware and or software to implement those ideas. "As educators, we want to prepare our students for a robust career path and future, and we know technology education and access is a key part of that. The funding will be used to supply the STEAM labs with Miller Virtual Welders giving middle students a very realistic welding experience in a safe environment. The goal is to spark interest in these studies prior to high school. We will also be purchasing additional 3D printers for the middle and high school levels and additional STEAM lab materials.," said Boucher.

He adds, "Thanks to UScellular, the Green Bay Packers and the Leap for Learning program, this technology upgrade will give us the opportunity to provide our students with state-of-the-art equipment that will facilitate team building and collaboration among students while teaching the skills of problem solving, critical thinking and innovation."

OUSD plans to use the money to outfit a STEAM Lab at the schools and classrooms where students will receive hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, art, and math. The collaborative space will allow teachers to give students real-world, interactive experiences in these sought-after fields.

"Technology is a vital part of the educational experience for students, providing them with easy-to-access information, accelerated learning and fun opportunities to practice what they learn," says Christine Paulsen director of sales for UScellular.

We would like to thank the Green Bay Packers and US Cellular for choosing the Oconto School District to receive this grant award.



ATHLETIC UPDATES

THE POWER & BENEFITS OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



By Mr. Adam Timm,
Athletic Director

When we think about high school extracurricular activities, the first thing that comes to mind is traditional athletic activities such as volleyball, football, basketball, baseball, softball, and others. The Oconto Unified School District would like to give a huge “shout out” to our students who participate in the “other” activities. These are the offerings that allow your child to participate in something that could stay with them for a lifetime, boost academic performance, broaden social groups and skills, improve time management, and look great on a resume.

- **The Fall Play:** 46 cast members and 12 techs who began practicing in October for the December 19th performance.
- **Art Club:** 30 OHS students who participate in open studios and complete portfolios for future employment and educational opportunities.
- **Pep Band:** 25+ OHS and OMS students who perform in the parades and concerts, participate in a jazz band that meets before school and entertain us at home athletic events.
- **Hi-Q:** 7 OHS students who compete in a competition among area high schools in fourteen subject areas.
- **LifeSmarts:** 5 OHS students who are developing real-world education about core consumer topics and critical thinking.
- **Student Council:** 65+ OHS and OMS students who help raise funds for schoolwide activities, including social events, community projects, helping people in need, and participating in school reform.
- **FBLA:** 15 OHS students who are preparing to be community-minded business leaders through school leadership experiences.
- **Trap Shooting:** 16 OHS students who participate in a weekly competition in the Wisconsin State High School Clay Target League.

In the past year, the school play was revived and a trap team was formed based on student interest. If you have any activities that you think our students would be interested in, please reach out as we work to mold well-rounded, involved students who perform better academically and have larger social circles.



OUSD EARNs 2022 SPECTRUM AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE AND MERIT IN SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS



Superintendent Miller with the awards



Mrs. Andy Anaam
OUSD Communications Specialist

The Oconto Unified School District was recently honored by the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association (WSPRA) with 2 Spectrum Awards of Excellence and 1 Spectrum Award of Merit (Best in Category- social media campaign, newsletter communication, and PR and outreach)] for its work in school communications.

WSPRA presented the Spectrum Awards at its annual conference held November 16-18. OUSD earned two coveted Awards of Excellence for social media ROCKSTAR campaign and newsletter publication(Blue Devils Bulletin) and one Award of Merit for high-quality PR for community outreach as Best in the awards Category.

Spectrum Awards recognize high-quality public relations efforts produced by or on behalf of Wisconsin school districts. This year, this statewide competition honored over 40 school districts with awards.

"The example of EXCELLENCE is shown in the work done through our communications. It is essential for the community to celebrate and be proud of our school district. Being able to tell our story helps solidify the good work that is being done at Oconto Unified School District. We are extremely proud to be Spectrum Award Winners.", says Superintendent Emily Miller.

It is indeed a moment of pride to see the impact we continue to make in establishing trust and transparency between us and the community.

OUSD STUDENT SUCCESS PLAN



Hope Squad at OHS



Hygiene Drive: Student Success Closet



By Brook Youngs
Resource Specialist & Social Media Specialist

As a District, Oconto strives for excellence in student achievement, culture, and climate, in addition to the collaboration. OUSD is looking to provide more opportunities for students to learn about the dangers and effects vaping and drugs have on the body and mental health, suicide prevention, and body changes, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring and meeting the needs of our underprivileged student population through a Student Success Closet.

When taking a closer look at our data here at the District, roughly 48% of our student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. With this in mind, OUSD has made progress in branching the gaps between home life, school, and community by hiring a Resource Specialist. Developing resources and programming to meet individual and family needs as well as connecting students and families to outside resources.

Student Success Closet serves as a place of resources to further help Oconto Unified School District students. By providing these resources, OUSD believes every student should have the basic necessities regardless of any barrier. Promoting the student so that the focus is on their education and not on any financial struggles a family may be facing.

Fostering a mindset of growth and staff support in health and wellness through a mental health focus. With clothing items donated and bought, the closet has already served students at all three buildings. The closet provides new and gently used clothing for everyday use, interview clothes, and prom/homecoming attire.

The closet provides life skills to students as well. As donations come in, OUSD high school students are taught how to wash, dry, hang, and fold clothes.



Students using the closet at OUSD



High-School Mentors at work!

Hygiene Drive: One objective the closet provides for underprivileged students is giving out personal hygiene items. Good hygiene is an important role not only in health but also to build confidence at school. All students are at crucial growing stages and it is important to educate them on healthy habits. To help these efforts, the district has put on a hygiene drive to get the closet started. With the community's help, the OUSD hygiene drive received over 650 items!

5th and 6th Grade Body Talk: OUSD middle school students will learn about body changes, physical and emotional during their growth and development while experiencing stages of puberty. In a safe environment, girls will be shown a demonstration of how to properly use a pad and how to manage their periods by the school's RN. The goal is for students to understand personal hygiene and how to stay confident and healthy providing students with a positive learning experience. All 133 students will be given a hygiene bag and for the females, feminine hygiene products will be included to take home. Providing items to students and educating students on additional resources that are available will break the stigma of asking for help when needing items at school.

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OUSD is committed to providing opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring and meeting the needs of our students through various programs.

Vaping and Mental Health: The district is looking to bring an award-winning speaker and author to Oconto. At the high school level, the speaker will focus on vaping while mental health will be the focus at the middle school. Nicotine in any form is not safe. OUSD believes education on the dangers of tobacco and vaping will bring awareness to youth's common misperceptions about using the products.

Looking at the power of influence and perception but also building prevention that is also student lead through our HOPE squad. At the middle school level, youth empowerment, self-image, and problem-solving will be targeted. Educating students on healthy conversations and what it means to be resilient through adversity to help break any negative views for asking a safe person for help. The opportunity to connect the students of our district with the author/speaker will help lay the groundwork for these monthly conversations students will be having in their advisory group on mental health and drug awareness at the high school.

Hope Squad: Oconto High School has adopted the Hope Squad program which is based on peer-to-peer suicide prevention. As this program progresses, members of Hope Squad will learn about the pillars of the curriculum and in turn provide education to the student body through activities, and advisory discussions. OHS Hope Squad knows the importance of community and the effects on teens when they can make a meaningful difference.



Hope Squad in action!

High School Mentors: A part of the Student Success Plan, is to promote peer-to-peer mentorship with all three buildings in the district. As we are in the beginning stages of this mentor program, we currently have high school students that dedicate time after school to go down to the middle school and tutor the middle school students. Building a relationship with other students through school, OUSD is utilizing high school students as positive influential leaders.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION! 

We're doing more with your support!

- **Kiwanis Club** - Student Success Plan: Check towards hygiene items
- **Main Street Insurance** - Student Success Plan: Snacks towards after-school tutoring
- **Lions Club - Student Success Plan:** Check towards hygiene kits for 5th and 6th graders
- **Bond Foundation** - Student Success Plan: Speaker on vaping and mental health
- **Oconto Elks Lodge #887** - Student Success Plan: Supplies for the Student Success Closet
- **Margie Daul** - Check towards the Student Success Plan
- **Olive & Birch** - Student Success Plan: Clothing towards the Student Success Closet
- **Delta Dental** - Student Success Plan: Toothbrushes and floss for 5th and 6th graders

!!!!PARTY TIME!!!!

**Made Easy~ Surprise or Traditional
CELEBRATE IN THE CLASSROOM OR CAFETERIA!**

Fresh Made in Our Kitchen

Party Treats

Chocolate Chip Cookies

STAR Sugar Cookies

Brownie

Rice Krispy Bar

\$1.00 each

Cupcakes \$1.75

Add a Beverage:

Punch, Milk or Lemonade for \$.50



Make an Experience into a Memory!



PIZZA PARTY



16" Round or 12"x16" Rectangle~ 8 slices per Pizza

Cheese pizza \$11.00 Sausage or Pepperoni Pizza \$13.00

Sausage and Pepperoni \$15.00

Includes: Plates, Plastic ware, Napkins, and Clean Up

In the Cafeteria minimum 10 guest or Take and Bake at Home

The Food Service will make the items and deliver them to your child's classroom or set up in the cafeteria. You can contact Laura Charlier, Food Service Director at (920)834-7814 Ext 2111 or food.service@Oconto.k12.wi.us.

1 Week Notice Needed, Please.



TAHER

A promotional graphic for OUSD Summer School. The background is a photograph of several children sitting at a wooden picnic table under a yellow wooden gazebo. The children are smiling and raising their hands. Overlaid on the image are several text elements: a logo with a blue and yellow sunburst and a blue devil head inside a yellow circle; the text 'OUSD SUMMER SCHOOL' in large, bold, black, red, and blue letters; a dark blue banner with 'SAVE THE DATES' in white; a yellow banner with 'JUNE 13- 23' in black; and a white banner with 'Stay tuned for more details!' in red and black. At the bottom is a yellow banner with 'OCONTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT' in black.

 **OUSD
SUMMER
SCHOOL**

SAVE THE DATES

JUNE 13- 23

Stay tuned for more details!

OCONTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

JOIN OUR OUSD FAMILY!

We're hiring for multiple positions!



We're hiring for a diverse team of dynamic, dedicated and collaborative Paraprofessionals and Substitute Teachers with an unyielding belief that every child will succeed!!

The District has recently increased the Substitute Teacher and Substitute Paraprofessional pay rate! Substitute Teachers will now receive \$110 per day, PLUS once the substitute has worked ten full days in the District, they will receive a one-time \$250 BONUS. Substitute Paraprofessionals receive \$12 per hour.

To become a Substitute Teacher:

1. You must have either a Teaching License OR a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree and a Short-term Substitute Teacher License issued through the WI Department of Public Instruction.
2. To become a Substitute Paraprofessional, you must have a High School Diploma or GED.

APPLY TODAY!

If you would like more information, please contact **Brenda Walkowiak** at (920) 834-7814 ext. 4103 or brenda.walkowiak@oconto.k12.wi.us.

Special Education Paraprofessional Position OES

- Candidates must have a high school diploma or GED
- Part-Time (4 days a week for partial days)
- Paid Time Off (7 sick days of which 2 can be used for personal days as well as paid holidays)
- Pay \$13.75/hr
- Assist students with disabilities under the direction of a Special Ed Teacher.

If interested, please contact **Megan Mills-Koehler**, Director of Student Services at 920-834-7814 or megan.mills-koehler@oconto.k12.wi.us





Photos provided by District Photographer - Caroline Laurin Young (LY Photography LLC), Andy Anaam, Nicole Anderson, Mayor Panetti & Brook Youngs

Design by: Andy Anaam (OUSD Office of Communications)



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