

A new school year has begun, and all the excitement that goes with it. The return of students and staff brings the promise of new beginnings and strengthening bonds. We get to catch up on what everyone did over the summer and look forward to setting and achieving new goals in the classroom, on the field and within our community.

I want to mention some great work this summer that has helped us get ready for the school year. The Board approved our five year strategic plan and we are focusing on the four pillars within that plan: students, staff, families, and community, and the experiences we want each of those groups to have in Oldham County Schools. We unveiled our new district logo and tagline 'Ignite Passion. Experience Excellence,' which embodies the goals of our strategic plan. Next, we will dive into finalizing measures that will allow us to track our progress as a district towards each of our goals.

OCS district leaders held their annual school safety meeting with local law enforcement. Together, they reviewed the school resource officer program, Kentucky Center for School Safety audit reports, SRO schedules, and school traffic and arrival/dismissal safety. In this collaboration between OCS, Oldham County Police, La Grange Police, and the Oldham County Sheriff's office, they discussed what can be improved, and made plans for the upcoming school year, all to ensure the highest levels of student and staff safety.

Camp Literacy Live was a great success this year! This 3-week program is designed for rising 1st graders with priority literacy needs. CLL uses data to identify kindergarteners who are struggling with reading, and provides an opportunity to catch up before the start of 1st grade. Students spend time with specialized teachers as they strengthen their literacy skills. But this isn't your typical "summer school." This is camp and it includes fun activities like meeting with local authors, firefighters, ballerinas, and even members of Lou City Football Club. Students read books, make shapes with play-doh, throw water balloons at words, write on their desks (yes!), and learn with other students, community members, and heroes. These campers go home with increased confidence, unique experiences, and an excitement for learning.

This summer we began work on transitioning over to the KSBA Policy Service. By changing to this service, we will have a strong baseline to consult when implementing state and federal regulations. We will work together on updating legal and board policies and administrative procedures.

We also had a Board meeting last week that highlighted some great things happening in our district.

Interim Finance Director Dr. Tom Shelton presented the fiscal year 2023 unaudited financial report. I'm happy to say we ended our fiscal year with a strong general fund balance. Our revenues were over what we expected, and our expenses were well under budget. Dr. Shelton reported that revenues for FY23 were 2.6% over budget and expenses were under budget by 5.6%. He also reported on how OCS has increased salaries while decreasing overall cost to the district. We have gone from budgeting 84% towards salaries and benefits in FY22 (and coming

in at 82%, reflective of staffing changes at the district level), to budgeting 82% in FY23 and coming in at 80%. That equals a 4% reduction, while still giving raises each of those years. Our work is not done, but this is a giant step in the right direction.

Elementary Level Director Liz Dant presented about our focus and work on quality literacy instruction. She presented the district framework that will be used to help equip students with the knowledge and skills to be independent readers, writers, thinkers, and communicators, and will help teachers be able to meet the needs of each individual student.

Facilities Director Brent Bohannon gave an update on the many construction projects across the district, including upgrades to athletic facilities at all our high schools. I enjoy attending OCS games as often as possible, and I hope to see you in the stands as well! I hope you will cheer us on both inside and out of the classroom, supporting our academics, the arts, athletics, and other extracurricular activities this school year.

Jason Radford
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