

Catch the WAVE

Monthly updates from Superintendent Chambers

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OCSD Spotlight

Spreading Christmas Cheer

The Okaloosa County School District is a special group of students, educators, staff, parents, and community members. Here are some samples of Christmas cheer being spread throughout the OCSD family!

The **Fort Walton Beach High School Leadership** Students organize the FWBHS Christmas Connection. They raised over \$20,000 to assist families in the South Okaloosa County School District area that are in need during the Holiday Season. They purchased holiday gifts for children and provide both perishable and non-perishable food to the families to assist while students are out on holiday break. The program is completely funded by the fundraising efforts of FWBHS students.



We're All Valued Employees

OCS D Spotlight

Students Throughout the District Give Back

The **Niceville High School Leadership** students raised \$15,000 to purchase Christmas gifts and meals for over 45 families and 100 students! The students will shop for and wrap all of the presents and create a hand crafted ornament for each of the recipients!



Each year **Pryor Middle School** organizes an Angel Tree to provide Christmas for students who would not have one otherwise. This year, thanks to Community sponsors, they will provide gifts such as beds, bikes, toiletries, clothing, shoes, books and games for 150 students!

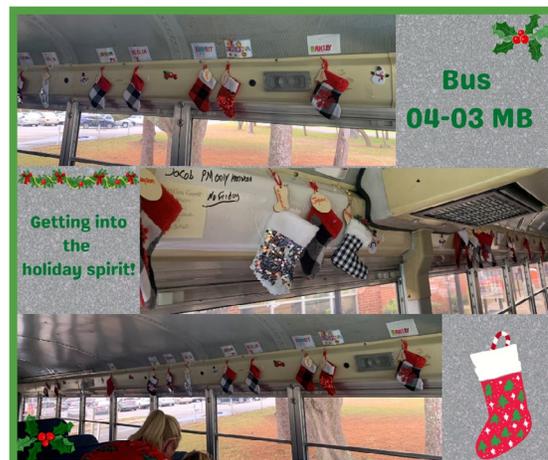


Crestview High School Projects:

- **Theatre students** made Christmas cards for the elderly that are living at The Manor in Crestview.
- **Cosmetology** partnered with Reyouvenate Beauty Outreach by providing free hair washes, makeovers, beauty and toiletry products to the homeless in our community.
- **and more!**



On **Bus #043-MB** Mr. Al (Bus Driver) and Ms. Suzanne (Bus Aide) decorate the bus with stockings for each student with their name on it. Students will find a surprise in their stocking on their last ride before Winter Break. "Our goal is for our students to know how much they mean to us. Yes our job has its ups and downs, but the smiles on our students' faces let us know we are doing a good job." -Al Keenan



School Safety

The tragic school shooting in Michigan reinforces the continued need to focus on school safety. Keeping students safe requires non-stop vigilance. I want our parents to know that it is our top priority and to reassure them that we take all threats of violence seriously.

- Our partnership with the Sheriff's Office and our School Resource Officers is the best in America. Our school leaders, teachers, and ed support staff all play a critical role in keeping students safe.
- Communication is key. I am very proud that we live in a community where our students and staff look out for each other, and students tell someone if they see or hear something that could be a potential threat.
- I believe we have some of the safest schools anywhere. Secure single points of entry during the school day and perimeter fencing have been completed in most schools with the last schools to finish this summer. Staff and students are trained to know how to respond to potential threats. School teams meet regularly to discuss students and provide supports where needed. We have added Mental Health Counselors each of the past few years, and they play a critical role in addressing the needs of students who may be distressed. School teams work to develop plans that help students become successful.
- We will be holding a Roundtable session with Sheriff Aiden and his staff in January to review all we are doing in the area of safety and to look to see if there are areas we can do even better. I appreciate the Sheriff's partnership in keeping our schools among the safest anywhere.

-Marcus Chambers

Human Resources

Teacher of the Year Finalists

Congratulations to this year's Teacher of the Year Finalists for Okaloosa County School District!



Amy Saxer
Bruner Middle



Brittany Tate
Pryor Middle



Alecia Drake
Walker Elementary

The winner will be announced at the Teacher of the Year Banquet on January 25, 2022 at the Destin- Fort Walton Beach Convention Center!

Human Resources

December Milestones!

The following employees are enjoying a milestone this month based on their continuous service date. Congratulations and thank you for your loyal service and commitment to excellence!

Hired in the OCSD 5 years ago...

- Mr. Cleek, Transportation- North
- Ms. Garner, Destin Elementary
- Ms. Orchard, Destin Elementary
- Mr. Rexroad, Transportation- North
- Ms. Saffo, Eglin Elementary

Hired in the OCSD 15 years ago...

- Ms. Brown, Destin Elementary
- Ms. Dermody, Edge Elementary
- Ms. Lane-Pitts, Shalimar Elementary

Hired in the OCSD 25 years ago...

- Ms. Millhouse, Mary Esther Elementary
- Ms. Solyntjes, Student Intervention Serv
- Ms. Tew, Shoal River Middle School
- Ms. Wingo, Okaloosa Technical College

Hired in the OCSD 35 years ago...

- Ms. Sasser, Kenwood Elementary

Mental Health Minute

The holidays can be a stressful time but here are tips to remember.

- Be kind to your mind – Manage expectations and keep it realistic.
- Take a break – Hang in your pajamas one day and enjoy family.
- Don't be afraid to say no – Know your stressors and make a plan.
- Stay Active – Exercise produces endorphins and reduces stress levels.
- Sleep! - Relax and rest.



Maintenance

Prepare Your Space for the Holidays

Before you leave for your much deserved holiday vacation, please take a few minutes to secure your classroom and/or office.

- Set your thermostat at a reasonable temperature
- Turn off all computers and other electronic devices
- Lock up all personal belongings
- Throw out any old food items
- If you can't stay away, make sure you secure the doors as you leave!

General Safety Reminders

- Be aware of electrical cords. Make sure electrical cords are not running through high-traffic areas, walkways, or doorways.
- No 2-prong extension cords. 3-prong extension cords are okay for temporary use.
- Do not plug power strips into each other, plug them directly into the wall.
- Christmas lights are allowed for the holiday season. No candles.
- Do not block exit door pathways, emergency egress windows, fire extinguishers, fire pull stations, or intercom buttons.
- Continue good housekeeping- keep floors and walkways clutter free to prevent tripping hazards
- No flammable or hazardous chemicals stored in classrooms.

Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation Awards Grants!

The Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation recently awarded 26 grants to teachers who applied this fall. A total of \$53,599.67 was distributed to 15 different schools! 15 of these teachers are first time recipients of an Okaloosa Public Schools Teacher Grant. Congratulations to this year's recipients! To support grant programs like this and many other activities promoted by the Foundation through tax-exempt donation, please visit www.okaloosaschools.com/opsf/

Recipient	School	Grant Amount
Gena Miller	Baker School	\$2,500
Tiffany Plunkett	Baker School	\$2,417.83
Amy Bowden	Baker School	2, 499.30
Claire Erk & Lauren Brown	Bluewater Elementary	\$550.00
Gary Gibbons	Laurel Hill School	\$1,148.34
Meredith Ness	Laurel Hill School	\$820.96
Meredith Ness	Laurel Hill School	\$2412.68
Angelica Espeseth	Riverside Elementary	\$1,250.00
Laure Allen	Shoal River Middle	\$2,500
Joanna Welch	Crestview High	\$2,500
LaTavia Deliford	Destin Middle	\$2,500
Sandra Robinson	Walker Elementary	\$500
Greg Rynearson	Pryor Middle	\$2,500
Casey Mills Murray, Brittany Tate & Michael Lightbourne	Pryor Middle	\$2,500
Pia Chedraui	Pryor Middle	\$2,500
Brittany Sands	Pryor Middle	\$2,500
Michael Lightbourne	Pryor Middle	\$2,500
Stefanie Jasinski	Choctaw High	\$2,500
Kelly Axt & Marian Gilmore	Silver Sands	\$2,500
Michelle Cottrell	Fort Walton Beach	\$1,550
Megan Mueller	Fort Walton Beach	\$2,500
Shannon DeBerry	Elliot Point	\$1,275.68
Laura Way	Antioch Elementary	\$2,465.93
Tanya Demara	Antioch Elementary	\$2,373
Kim Luellen	Longwood Elementary	\$2,500
Kim McLaughlin	Longwood Elementary	\$1,835.95



Curriculum & Instruction

Emerald Coast Music Alliance

Concert Opportunities for K-12 Classrooms January 6-14, 2022

The Emerald Coast Music Alliance (ECMA) continues to invest in promoting Fine Arts initiatives in the Okaloosa County School District. The ECMA will sponsor globally recognized musicians for live or virtual school-based concerts between January 6-14.

The ECMA is the brainchild of Alon Goldstein, an Israeli-born pianist who has played all over the world. In 2017, Goldstein formed the group in the hopes of keeping the magic of the arts, specifically the art of classical music, alive. The ECMA works in partnership with the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra.

The ECMA will sponsor globally recognized musicians for live or virtual school-based concerts between January 6-14.

Registration Information:

To register, school administrators or designated teachers may sign-up by emailing Regina Tanujaya at regina.tanujaya@gmail.com.

Please include the following in your email:

- Preferred day and time between January 6-14
- Specify Virtual or Live Concert
- School Name / Contact Name / Class Size
- **The deadline to register is Friday, December 17.**

Registration confirmation will be provided by Regina Tanujaya, ECMA.

Please contact Lisa.Tucker@Okaloosaschools.com if you have questions about this opportunity.

Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Contests



The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee proudly announces the theme for the year 2022, **“STAND ACT UNITE”**. The Oratorical and Poster Contests hosted by the Sigma Omicron Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® will be held **Saturday, January 8, 2022, from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM virtually via Zoom.**

The contests were open to Okaloosa County students in the following categories:

- Elementary Grades K-3
- Elementary Grades 4-5
- Middle School Grades 6-8
- High School Grades 9-12

Contact Dr. Cheryl Seals for information:

SealsCR@Okaloosaschools.com

Curriculum & Instruction

January 4, 2022 District-Wide Professional Development

The Okaloosa County School District's Curriculum and Instruction Department is delighted to announce an employee engagement and learning experience for selected teachers. Our mission is to provide the resources, strategies, and opportunities necessary to equip teachers to be their best. Whether you hope to enhance content area knowledge, develop new classroom management strategies, or connect with fellow teachers focused on growth, our conference-style sessions will help you achieve those goals. We can't wait to engage, connect, and collaborate with you!

January 4 Professional Development Meeting Locations

- **Elementary ELA:** Northwest Florida State College, Niceville
- **Elementary Math:** Crosspoint Church, Niceville
- **Secondary ELA and Social Studies:** Shoal River Middle School
- **Secondary Math and Science:** Beachside Community Church, Fort Walton Beach
- **PE:** Lewis School (all PE teachers)
- **MTSS PD:** Edge multi-purpose room. MTSS coordinators, school psychologists, staffing specialists, and behavior analysts will be invited.
- **ESE PD:**
 - PRE-KD: CSI room at STEMM
 - Elementary ACCESS teachers: Silver Sands multi-purpose room
 - MS & HS ACCESS teachers: Northwood multi-purpose room
 - All ESE teachers that teach general education standards will go to the general education PD.
- **Fine Arts and World Languages:** Teachers will have the option to attend a collaborative session from 8 a.m. – Noon or may choose to remain at their school site for planning. Lisa Tucker will email details about the optional district collaborative sessions to administrators and teachers.
- **CTE:** Zoom

Any course not listed above will have school site planning.

In the coming days, School Administrators and Secondary Content Area Department Heads will be receiving specific information related to each content area.

Curriculum & Instruction

Early Dismissal Schedule- Winter Break

We will follow an early dismissal schedule on Friday, December 12, 2021, for Winter Break Holidays. Lunch will be served.

North OCSD

Antioch Elementary	2:30pm
Baker School	1:10am
Bob Sikes	12:45pm
Crestview High	11:30pm
Davidson Middle	11:15pm
Best Chance	*
Laurel Hill	1:10pm
Northwood Elementary	2:10pm
Richbourg School	12:45pm
Riverside Elementary	2:30pm
Shoal River Middle	2:00pm
Southside Primary	11:00am
Walker Elementary	2:25pm

Central OCSD

Bluewater Elementary	2:40pm
Eglin Elementary	1:55pm
Edge Elementary	2:00pm
Lewis School	1:10pm
Longwood Elementary	2:40pm
Niceville High	11:30am
Plew Elementary	2:00pm
Ruckel Middle	1:30pm
STEMM	1:00pm

South OCSD

Bruner Middle	1:30pm
Choctawhatchee High	11:40am
Destin Elementary	1:55pm
Destin Middle	2:40pm
Edwins Elementary	1:55pm
Elliott Point Elementary	1:30pm
Florosa Elementary	2:30pm
Fort Walton Beach High	11:30am
Kenwood Elementary	2:20pm
Mary Esther Elementary	2:00pm
Meigs Middle	12:55pm
OTC and CHOICE	*
Pryor Middle	1:30pm
Shalimar Elementary	1:20pm
Silver Sands School	1:15pm
Wright Elementary	2:05pm

**Dismissal times will be coordinated with Transportation.*

Risk Management

Attention All Employees:

Please remember to check your December pay stub to verify that any changes you made during open enrollment are correctly reflected in your deductions, with the exception of Flexible Spending Account (FSA) elections which will not be reflected until your January paycheck.

Attention all employees with United Healthcare medical coverage:

Don't forget to choose a gift card to cash in your Rally reward dollars for calendar year 2021. The 2022 rewards (\$200 per employee and \$200 per covered spouse) start over in January.

Retirement Reminders

Are you within six months of your retirement date or your DROP entry date?

Call or email to make an appointment! No need to wait!

Carol.wright@okaloosaschools.com

850-833-5811 (65811 in-county extension)

Retirement Highlights

Under the Florida Retirement System, employees hired before 2011 are eligible for full retirement and/or DROP entry at the completion of 30 years of service or age 62, whichever comes first.

Employees hired in 2011 and later are eligible for full retirement and/or DROP entry at the completion of 32 years of service or age 65, whichever comes first.

All employees are encouraged to have an online account on frs.fl.gov where you will find information about your retirement account, including but not limited to your annual statement. If you do not yet have your own online account, visit the website to request your PIN number. You will receive your PIN number 1-2 weeks later by mail from FRS in Tallahassee.

Social Security information

If you do not already have an online account for your social security information, you can go to <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/> to create your account and have access to all of your information.

Medicare

Are you close to 65 years of age? Check out this website to make sure you know your facts and to avoid any penalties for not registering by your deadline. <https://www.medicare.gov/>

Covid-19 Update

- We continue to track COVID -19 within our schools in cooperation with the Department of Health.
- Our Dashboard is updated daily and is still reflecting very low numbers of positive cases.
- We have worked with the Department of Health and Health Hero to set up voluntary vaccination clinics at our elementary school sites, much like with did in October with middle and high schools. Parents will have to be present for their child to receive a COVID vaccination. These will be delivered in two rounds.
- We have also received home testing kits from DOE that can be provided to parents
- We will be mindful of our environment and will continue to communicate with our families and staff.

Half Cent Sales Tax Update

Citizens' Oversight Committee

We have nineteen School-Based Construction Projects Set to Begin in Early 2022!

- These agenda items continue the construction program in our schools that has been fueled by the Half-Cent sales tax approved by voters last year as well as our own 1.5 mil capital outlay budget.
- School safety projects (single point of entry and perimeter security) were the first priority and are on track and scheduled for completion next summer.
- We've also completed some critical roofing projects in the first nine months of the year.
- Now, it's time to take the next steps to continue our promise to the citizens of Okaloosa County to deliver capital improvements to our schools. Over the next three years, we will anticipate completing nineteen construction projects across fifteen school campuses. These will include classroom additions, cafeteriums, and multipurpose buildings needed in our schools.
- We'll be able to complete these nineteen projects in three years through the issuance of Certificates of Participation or COPs. COPs are mechanisms through which school districts throughout Florida and the United States can borrow funds to complete construction projects sooner, with repayment coming from revenue sources, such as half-penny sales tax revenue, later.
- The Citizens' Oversight Committee has been meeting regularly to review the work of the District, and it has unanimously endorsed moving ahead with these projects and the COP funding associated with them.

More information is available at www.okaloosaschools.com in the Capital Improvement Dashboard.



Suggestions? Feedback?

Do you have content suggestions for Catch The Wave Newsletter content? E-mail CatchTheWave@okaloosaschools.com with the details! We can't wait to hear from you!