

## **School News**

### **Olathe Public Schools USD 233**

Winter 2018

Students Help Build Their Own Classroom

Women's Giving Circle Empowers Women and District

Ridgeview Teachers Bring Tokyo to Olathe

Career and Technical Education: Preparing Students for Their Future

### **Link Grant Provides Opportunities to Look at Literacy in New Ways<sup>1</sup>**

Literacy Lessons, like phonological awareness, make a tremendous impact on our learners.

Olathe teachers are thinking differently about literacy thanks to a Literacy Network of Kansas (LiNK) grant to advance literacy from birth through grade 12. The district will receive federal funds in the amount of \$3,225,500 over the next three years to work on professional development and project implementation geared toward creating and strengthening literacy networks in Kansas.

“Our student population is changing and when we look at the types of learners we have now, we are exploring how to best fit their needs, engage them in authentic learning opportunities, and relate their experiences in education to the real world. Student voice and choice is a priority. We also want to empower teachers with knowledge in different areas of literacy and this grant is helping accomplish this vision,” K-5 English/Language Arts/Title 1 Coordinator Linda Boxberger said.

One large focus of the LiNK grant is providing more exposure and experiences to children birth to age 5. Through the grant funding, the district is partnering with community preschools and daycare centers by supplying books and building community bookshelves.

“The goal is to fill the bookshelves of our classrooms, community daycare centers, and homes of our youngest learners. This helps our kids to enter school already with that love of reading,” Early Childhood Special Services Administrator Kim Hawkins said.

Additionally, early childhood staff from the Olathe Public Schools will be able to share resources and collaborate with community preschools and daycares to help start the conversation and exposure of literacy to our youngest learners.

Teachers across the district from early childhood through high school will receive intensive literacy training and use a consistent reading level system to make sure that students can be assessed in literacy consistently as they move through the system.

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<sup>1</sup> *LiNK grant provides opportunities to look at literacy in new ways.* (2018, Winter). Olathe School News. Retrieved February 26, 2021 from <https://www.olatheschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=19101&dataid=23437&FileName=SchoolNewsDecember2018.pdf>

Staff will also be working in literacy Professional Learning Communities to share best practices and truly hone their literacy teaching and learning skills.

“Our teachers are able to receive vital foundational training that we wouldn't have been able to afford without the grant. This grant has opened the door and allowed opportunities we might not have had without these monies,” Boxberger said. “With these new systems in place, everyone is talking the same language and it is our goal to sustain all of these initiatives after the grant money is done. We are building teacher knowledge and capacity throughout the district.”

District Secondary English/ Language Arts Coordinator Kim Dahl is thrilled with the potential impact these literacy programs and initiatives can have on the district.

“Literacy isn't really a subject, it's a skill you need in life,” Dahl said. “It might look different in each subject. We are trying to build up our teachers' capacity in all subjects in the area of literacy. We are strengthening and enhancing how we build the foundation for reading in Olathe.”