

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 17 GROUND BREAKING, BERLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL OPENING

Olentangy Schools has begun construction on Elementary School 17. The yet-to-be named elementary school will be built at the intersection of Peachblow and Piatt Roads in Berlin Township on land donated by Evans Farm.

“During my time as Superintendent, we have broken ground on four schools - Berlin High School, Shale Meadows Elementary, Berlin Middle School, and now Elementary School 17, which have changed the landscape in the northeast area of our district,” said Olentangy Schools Superintendent Mark T. Raiff prior to his retirement. “These schools are not only needed to address the growth in that immediate area but have been imperative to relieving overcrowding at all schools across our district. The immense support of our community to fund these school buildings allows our staff to continue to facilitate maximum learning for every student.”

The approximate \$31.6 million project was made possible by voter approval of a combined \$134.7 million no-new-millage bond issue, a 0.5-mill permanent improvement levy and 7.4-mill operating levy which passed on the March 17, 2020, primary ballot. The bond issue portion of

the ballot request funded the construction of Shale Meadows Elementary, Berlin Middle, and Elementary School 17.

Berlin Middle School will welcome 784 students in August. There will be a grand opening celebration for the school community that will take place August 13, 2023.

New schools address Olentangy’s continued enrollment growth. Since opening Shale Meadows Elementary in 2021, the district’s preschool through 5th grade enrollment has grown by over 500 students. The district was forced to close enrollment at three elementary schools this academic year and shift students for the 2023-2024 school year to alleviate overcrowding. Current enrollment forecasts indicate the district will have around 12,841 elementary students by the 2032-2033 school year, an increase from 10,264 elementary students this academic school year.

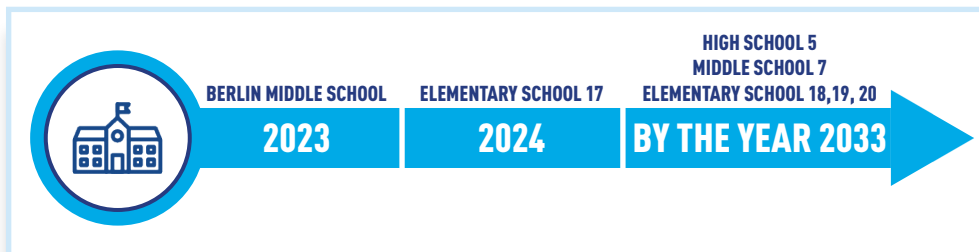
The facilities committee’s 10-year enrollment projections reflect the need for Elementary Schools 18, 19, and 20, Middle School 7 and High School 5 by the 2032-2033 school year.

SUPERINTENDENT RAIFF TO RETIRE AFTER 20 YEARS IN OLENTANGY

Olentangy Schools Superintendent Mark T. Raiff announced his retirement plans at the January 26, 2023 board meeting. Mr. Raiff will officially retire on July 31, 2023, marking 20 years serving the students of Olentangy and a 34-year career in education.

Since assuming the role of Superintendent, Mr. Raiff has overseen the passing of two district levies, the building of three schools (Berlin High School, Shale Meadows Elementary, and Berlin Middle School), Olentangy growing to the fourth largest school district in the state, and led the district’s largest restructuring with the addition of Olentangy Academy and the Olentangy Administrative Offices to open additional space for building classrooms. He established the district departments of Student Well-Being, Equity and Inclusion, as well as Safety, Security and Preparedness, while also growing the district’s robust specialized student support services. Other highlights include maintaining strong relationships with Olentangy’s labor associations, meeting with state legislators to advocate for fair school funding, and, his favorite, connecting with thousands of Olentangy parents, students, and staff.

Mr. Raiff, along with his district leadership team, led Olentangy Schools through the Covid-19 pandemic. This included instituting a Committed Distance Learning remote program for over 5,000 students for the 2020-2021 school year and implementing health and prevention guidance that ensured students and staff were learning in the building with no pandemic-related closures since August 2020.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ZACH JOSEPH

Meet Zach Joseph, graduate of Olentangy Orange High School, Galena resident, and owner of JOCO Growers; a local nursery with a mission to support student schools and organizations.

Q: What schools did you attend at Olentangy, and when did you graduate?

A: I had the pleasure of being the first graduating class (2010) of Olentangy Orange High School. When I was a Junior, we had no seniors. We had a unique opportunity to be the leaders of the school for 2 years. Before Olentangy Orange, I attended Worthington Christian Schools. I moved over to Orange the year it opened.

Q: Is there a staff member from your time at Olentangy that impacted your professional path?

A: The staff member that most impacted me was my basketball coach, John Betz. Coach Betz was an intense, passionate basketball coach. His energy matched my will to win. Under Coach Betz we won two OCC championships, and he taught us how to compete. You can even find my plaque in the hallway for being 1st team all-state. Great memories!

Q: What experiences contributed to your career path?

A: I believe that high school sports teach young people to work hard, deny themselves when your body wants to quit, compete at a high level, and learn to work as a team. All these skills translate into business ownership every single day. I did not necessarily set out to “start a nursery”, but instead to start a fundraising company. I grew up in a family of six, so paying for extracurricular activities and class trips was always a struggle. There never seemed to be fundraising opportunities that were not “embarrassing”. During my last two years of college, I worked at a greenhouse, and it was during this time that I knew I wanted to start a business and JOCO Growers was born!

Q: Can you give us a summary of your life since high school.

A: After graduating from Orange, I played basketball at Ohio Dominican and studied to be a teacher. I realized I wanted my impact on young families to be different and started JOCO

Growers with the goal of having a “fundraising greenhouse.” I got married in 2014, and I live with my wife and three kids (fourth on the way!) in Galena. We have very deep roots in Columbus. This is a great place to raise a family, and run a business.

Q: Tell us more about JOCO Growers!

A: JOCO Growers is a fundraising company. Our space is 100% dedicated to growing flowers for school fundraisers. We do not have a retail front, we do not sell to landscapers, and we do not wholesale to big box stores. We pride ourselves on growing and offering high quality products as an alternative to flooding parents and students with overpriced, low quality items. Flowers are a product people actually WANT to buy, not to mention, a product they will most likely be buying anyway! We help the school through the entire process with an extremely organized process.

Q: Can you share about how and why you give back to the community?

A: We work with principals, PTO/PTA, class trips, music programs, sports teams, clubs, and more. In the Lewis Center area, we have worked with multiple elementary schools (Alum Creek, Cheshire), Olentangy Orange Marching Band, and countless clubs, cheer gyms, and sports teams. This year, for the first time, we have expanded to three growing locations. We service the entire state of Ohio, and every

surrounding state. This fall we will be shipping fall mums to 200+ schools. Supporting communities with high quality flower fundraising options is my life’s work.

Q: What is the greatest challenge of being a business owner, or more specifically, owning a nursery?

A: The greatest challenge in the horticulture industry is always projecting. Since we sell living things (flowers), we spend lots and lots of time on market analysis, sales history data, and future growth projections. Now that we have past sales data under our belt, we have it down to a science of exactly how many of each color and SKU to grow. The second greatest challenge is logistics! During the delivery season, we can have up to 12 trucks on the road at the same time.



OLENTANGY: BRIDGED CONNECTING SCHOOLS WITH INDUSTRY

Olentangy Schools and BridgED, a consulting company developed to “bridge the gap” between K-12 school districts and the business community, have announced their continued partnership in driving business engagement across schools through May 2024. “Olentangy is proud to focus on the strategic-plan goal of expanding community involvement and partnerships by piloting a program that creates opportunities for impact in workforce development, internships and hiring, philanthropic giving and scholarships,” stated Olentangy Schools Superintendent Mark T. Raiff, prior to his retirement. “These opportunities ultimately aid in student success and define paths forward.”

In this joint venture, Olentangy Schools has deepened their commitment to maximizing student opportunities through corporate partnerships with ten businesses: Honda Motor Company, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical

Center, Elford Construction, Worthington Industries, JPMorgan Chase, Forge Biologics, Kokosing, Accenture, Nationwide Insurance and MI Homes.

Examples of the partnership and engagements in the Olentangy: BridgED program include OSU Wexner Medical Center Radiology presenting a hands-on station rotation demonstration to 60 Shanahan Middle School students, Worthington Industries employees speaking to Berlin High School business students about college accounting majors and career paths, and Elford Construction employees sharing opportunities in construction with Liberty High School classes.

Olentangy: BridgED was formed through an inaugural partnership between BridgED, the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO) and Olentangy Schools.



The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Radiology staff demonstrate medical imaging technology to middle school students.

SUPERINTENDENT RETIRING FROM PAGE 1

The Board of Education contracted with the ESC of Central Ohio to spearhead the process to replace Superintendent Raiff. They collected input through a community-wide survey, targeted focus groups, and a text message survey question. The board selected Mr. Todd R. Meyer, Olentangy’s Chief Operations Officer, as the new Superintendent of Olentangy Schools. Mr. Meyer joined Olentangy in 2007 as the principal to open Olentangy Orange High School, and has overseen the district’s human resources department, the transportation team, and the business and facilities group that includes custodial, maintenance, food service and building management. Learn more about Mr. Meyer on our [Meet the Superintendent page](#) of the district website.



Mr. Raiff congratulates students receiving academic, arts and extracurricular achievement awards at Orange High School.



The Olentangy Education Foundation (OEF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the education experience for the students in Olentangy Schools.

The foundation does this through a variety of programs, with the primary focus on providing classroom grants for innovative programs and learning opportunities that fall outside school budgets.

In 2022, OEF awarded more than \$53,000 in grants to classrooms across the district. These grants will provide a wide range of opportunities for Olentangy Students ranging from a middle school robotics team, to instruments and equipment for an elementary music program.

For a full listing of the grants awarded, more information on other OEF initiatives, or how to get involved, visit the OEF website:

olentangyeducationfoundation.org

ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL ACCOLADES

CLASS OF 2016

Nicholas Boggess (OHS) Graduated from Ohio University and is currently working for the Finance Chairman in the Ohio House of Representatives.

CLASS OF 2017

Kristen Koehrsen (OHS) Graduated with Bachelor's of Science in Child and Family Studies in May 2021 from Ohio University, and graduated Magna Cum Laude with Masters of Science in Child and Family Studies in April 2022 from OU as well. Completed a Practicum at Akron Children's Hospital in 2021 in the Child Life Department.

CLASS OF 2020

Nitish Dashora (OLHS) is a Goldwater Scholar, Astronaut Scholar, and a First-author at ICRA 2022. Currently interning with NASA and Amazon.

CLASS OF 2021

Abigail Turner (OLHS) Awarded the 2023 American University White House Correspondents' Association Investigative Journalism Scholarship; the second Liberty graduate to receive this award, a testament to Liberty's journalism department. [Read more here.](#)

Natalie Stimmel (OHS) Pursuing a BFA in musical theater at Marymount Manhattan College in NYC and performed at the Broadway Green Alliance in Times Square.

Marissa Johnson (OHS) received the Girl Scout Gold award - the highest award a Girl Scout can earn. She received the award for her project Pawdemic Support responding to need for more pet care resources in rural communities.

Submit accolades & milestones to: [OLENTANGY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWS](#)

ALUMNI GATHERINGS

FALL 2023

ORANGE HIGH SCHOOL

October 13

BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL

September 22

OLENTANGY HIGH SCHOOL

September 29

LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL

September 29



UPCOMING EVENTS

The OHS Class of 1983 is planning its 40th reunion, to be held on Saturday, August 5, 2023 starting at 5 p.m. The class has a Facebook page - Oleontangy Braves Class of '83 - where details will be shared. Those without Facebook can send an email to ohsdelawareclassof83@gmail.com.

Reconnect At Your Class Reunion

Holding a class reunion? Make sure to register the reunion to be shared through the Oleontangy Alumni Association by sending the reunion details to alumni@olentangyef.org. We will feature class reunions on our Oleontangy Alumni Association social media sites, webpage and in the Oleontangy Schools Alumni Connection!

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH



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