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OPS REFORMS

Teachers say OPS 'moonshot' is a must, plans still unclear

Fiona Bryant
managing editor

The Omaha Public Schools unveiled its "moonshot," a goal of having every student in the district reading on grade level by 2030, but a blueprint for the next five years is not established.

Superintendent Matthew Ray announced the moonshot at the faculty kickoff event on Aug. 8 at Baxter Arena.

It is part of the Strategic Plan of Action put forth by the district to prepare students for success after graduation. A board workshop on Sept. 30 and an Oct. 1 meeting of strategy groups discussed plans for achieving the goal. A budget and timeline beyond the 2030 goal are not set.

"We didn't go in having the answer, because if we had the answer, we should have done it already," Ray said in an interview. "It is about partnerships, it's about community, it's including teachers, it's including families in this discussion of how we achieve this."

During the 2022-2023 school year, 37% OPS students were reading on grade level. At Central, 35% of students met English Language Arts expectations in the 2022-2023 school year. Since less than half of OPS students read on grade level, the moonshot is a "necessity," Central Freshman Academy Lead Martha Omar said.

Teachers said being able to read on grade level not only sets students up for academic success in later years, but being literate determines confidence, quality of life and the ability to critically think as adults.

"If you spend 12 years in Omaha Public Schools, and you're leaving not able to sift through [life skills], we've failed you," Ray said.

"Our students deserve this," said Christina Warner, princi-

pal of Franklin Elementary School. "It's all about equity, giving our students access to a bright future."

Students may not be on grade level for a myriad of reasons: poverty, high mobility, being an English Learner, having an undiagnosed learning disability or being taught a style of reading instruction that is ineffective.

English Learners teacher Mary Davies said when looking at OPS's literacy rates, they must be contextualized with these factors in mind, since OPS is "nothing like any other district in the state."

No school district in the state has 100% of its students on grade level, and the state-wide average is 58% of students on grade level for English Language Arts.

Davies also said some individuals may be dissuaded by the goal of getting every student on grade level and will "tune it out."

"We should never look at a group and say, 'We'll count on 70% from them or 60%,'" Ray said. "Our expectation should be 100%. It's about the strategies we create within the upcoming school year to focus on [those] groups."

Davies said measuring EL students with little prior English knowledge by if they are on grade level "does more to frustrate [EL students]."

New teachers at Central were given a copy of "EL Excellence Every Day," and Professional Learning Communities discuss literacy techniques from the text.

"I think the intention behind [the PLC activities] is good, but we're tired and a lot of this stuff isn't integrated in a way that allows for teachers to make changes," said Tracey Menten, an English and elective teacher.

"If the organization is treating literacy as an add-on, we'll never be successful that way," Ray said. "Literacy shouldn't be

an add-on; it is the thing, it is what matters."

Menten also said teacher shortages at Central and across the district will be a factor in accomplishing the moonshot.

One hundred seventy new teachers joined OPS last year, but at Central, non-EL reading classes offered to students not reading at grade level were not offered this year due to staff shortages.

"High school teachers, most of us don't teach reading," Menten said. "That means a lot of the work is shouldered by the people teaching the younger kids, which they're already kind of overburdened."

Ray said the district is "slowly making that turn with staffing" and the moonshot aims to bring the "whole system" together to increase literacy. The whole system includes families, staff and community partners.

"It's our plan, not just some people's plan," Ray said.

OPS has worked with the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the Teacher Scholar program to hire OPS graduates as teachers. Fraternities and sororities and P4K have also been community partners in promoting literacy.

At Central, the mentorship program and Freshman Academy connect students to older students, the Omaha Public Library and public transportation.

"You're not invested in something that's just a top-down initiative," Omar said. "If it's from the bottom up, I also have some skin in the game."

Menten said the moonshot has created the same tone in OPS as a real moonshot: nebulous but reinvigorating.

"It was, I think in my 32 to 33 years [with OPS], the first time we were all on the same path, doing the same work, for the same purpose and to really build upon our community," Warner said.

OPS combats rising absenteeism

Hattie Moeller
news editor

Absenteeism has become an escalating issue in Omaha Public Schools, with chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 10% or more of the school year—reaching high levels.

According to 2023-24 OPS data, 40.2% of students across all grade levels were categorized as chronically absent last school year, a slight increase from 39.7% in the 2022-23 school year.

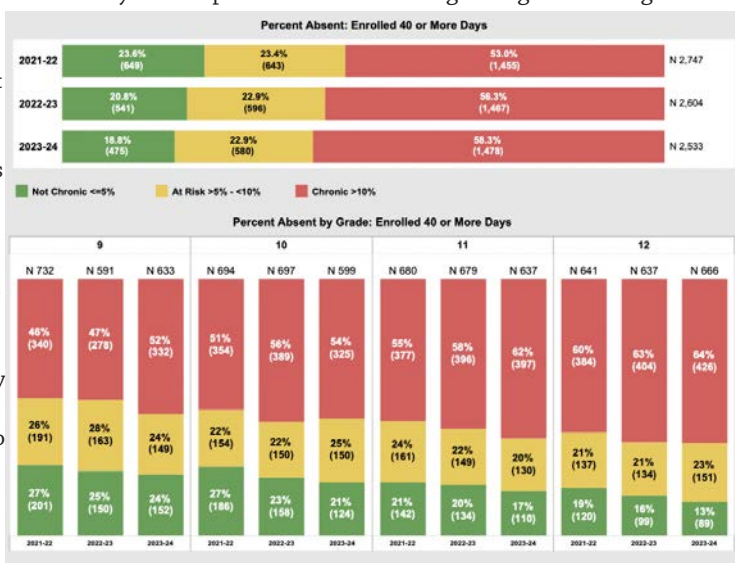
Last year at Central, 58.3% of students were labeled as "chronically absent," 22.9% were "at risk," and only 18.8% were "not chronic." This is calculated from accumulated data that includes all out of school absent time, and does not include school-sponsored activities, senior releases, or bus-related absences.

Data reveal a steady increase in the number of students missing significant portions of the school year. This is part of a concerning trend since the pandemic, which disrupted learning and worsened attendance issues.

In his first official year, Superintendent Matthew Ray identified absenteeism as a top priority for the 2024-25 academic year. His plan focuses on building stronger student-guardian relationships, offering community resources and increasing student accountability.

While absenteeism affects all students across OPS, certain demographics face disproportionate challenges. The data shows that 45% of students receiving educational benefits are chronically absent, compared to 28% of their peers who don't receive benefits.

Special education students are also particularly affected,



Chronic absenteeism is on the rise compared to previous school years. Source: OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Out of school suspensions decrease with OPS discipline changes

Steven Dickerson
sports editor

Out of school suspensions in Omaha Public Schools dropped 1.6% district wide in the 2023-24 school year, according to the recently released data. This development comes as the district looks to redefine the way discipline is enforced by moving to a strategy focused on keeping kids in school.

While out of school suspensions dropped from 6,482 to 5,638, in-school suspensions rose 0.4%, from 3,851 to 4,021 district-wide. At Central, out of school suspensions dropped 1.9%, while in school suspensions rose 0.6%, nearly matching district-wide changes.

"Schools and programs were able to rely on options keeping students in school compared to excluding them," Danielle Starkey, an Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSSB) supervisor for OPS, told the Omaha World Herald in July. She told the OPS Board of Education that the district was focusing on increasing graduation rates by decreasing absenteeism (including suspensions), which was evident in the transition to keeping kids in school even when they're being disciplined.

"We don't want to dismiss teacher, student and parent concerns," OPS Superintendent Matthew Ray said in July of concerns with keeping students who misbehave in schools. "We have to find a balance," he said.

District officials have noted that the focus on keeping kids in school is always the first step in any situation where misbehavior is found, pointing to the data on resolution types for various situations where discipline is required.

"About 73% of the time, non-exclusionary resolutions like conferences with the student and parents, detentions, referrals to a counselor, and other interventions are used," Amy Williams, executive director of student and community services, said at the July 15 OPS Board of Education meeting. This step is critical, she said, as it helps avoid discipline that takes kids out of school.

A shortfall noted was a 1,240-incident increase in unique student incidents, which went from 83,914 to 85,154. Unique student incidents are not identified by how many students were given referrals, but rather how many referrals were given, meaning the same student can be counted multiple times if given multiple referrals.

This shortfall was not visible at Central, as the total number of unique student incidents

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The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) announced that it would be closing and eliminating positions in its Office of Diversity and Inclusion on Aug. 20.

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It is hard not to notice the number of West Omaha students making their way to our campus.

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Eagles experience Peso Pluma concert p. 11

Peso Pluma entertained the crowd at the CHI Health Center on Aug. 3.

Sports

Central football looks to the future p. 13

The Central football program is looking to become a dominant team in Nebraska.

Veep candidates unlikely to impact presidential election

Grace Sunseri
opinion editor

In the weeks following Donald Trump and Kamala Harris' selection of their running mates, JD Vance and Tim Walz have been covered extensively as the country grows closer to electing one of them as the next vice president of the United States.

While the coverage has shed a lot of light on the job of vice president in general, the running mates themselves tend to have little to no sway in election results.

According to Christopher J. Devine, co-author of "Do Running Mates Matter?": "Running mates are important, but their importance is overstated at times...it can matter at the margins, but we shouldn't expect really dramatic effects," he said in an interview with the University Press of Kansas. The research shows that in recent elections, the only real change vice presidential candidates have made to a ticket were negative and hurt the front-runner.

Historically, the role of vice president has been a relatively insignificant job. Their key role was to reside over the Senate and focus on legislative matters in Congress.

Randy Adkins, senior associate dean of the social sciences and graduate education professor at University of Nebraska at Omaha, referred to a quote from the first vice president of the United States, John Adams. Adams noted that the role of vice president is "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived, or his imagination conceived."

Adkins said the role began changing in 1976 during the Jimmy Carter administra-

tion, as he gave his vice president, Walter Mondale, more of a policy position. In subsequent administrations, the role has evolved as veeps have a more active role in the executive branch of the government and serve as an important aide to the president.

On July 15, Donald Trump announced Vance as his running mate. Vance is from Middletown, Ohio. He is a former Marine and has an established career in law and venture capitalism. His most notable accomplishments are his book "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis" and being elected senator from Ohio in 2022.

Harris announced Walz as her running mate on Aug. 16. Walz was born and raised in various rural Nebraska towns. He was a member of the National Guard and had an extensive career as a high school teacher. Walz has served as a representative from Minnesota's 1st Congressional District and is currently the governor of Minnesota.



Katie Besancon | The Register

someone who is more down to Earth, if you are... a loud or an energetic person you want to balance that with somebody who is more reserved."

Boyer mentioned a few reasons why these candidates were chosen, such as Harris wanting a running mate who is more relatable to the average American, like Walz who is able to live among his constituents, and Trump wanting someone significantly younger on the ballot with him.

Vance and Walz both hail from Midwestern states, where three – Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania – of the seven swing states are located. A swing-state, or battleground state, is a state where neither candidate has a clear majority, and both could reasonably win.

Central's American Government and AP Government Teacher Jordan Boyer explained the reasoning behind how veeps are chosen. "Overall... they always want to pick someone who brings something else to the ticket," he said. "If you are a life-long politician you want

How to vote this November

Fiona Bryant
managing editor

Voting in Nebraska has changed with the new voter ID requirement, and for some high schoolers, voting in 2024 will be an entirely new opportunity. This is a presidential election year, but the ballot will also include Congressional seats, state government positions, petitions and referendums related to school choice, abortion and medical cannabis.

Any Nebraskan who is a citizen and is 18 or will be 18 by Nov. 5 is eligible to vote, unless they have a felony.

How to Register

To register to vote in November, individuals have the option of completing an online, mail-in or in-person application. Online applications are due Oct. 18 and can be accessed at the Nebraska Secretary of State website under the "Elections" tab.

Applicants need a driver's license or state-issued ID to register. Once the application has been processed, the voter will be notified. Students can receive guidance in registering online at the League of Women Voters' registration tables in the cafeteria and courtyard during lunch on Oct. 3.

To register through mail, a form under the Nebraska Secretary of State's "Elections" and then "Voter Forms" tabs must be completed and mailed to the county election official by Oct. 18. The Douglas County Election Commission is located at 12220 West Center Road.

An individual can also register to vote in person at the Douglas County Election Commission until Oct. 25 at 6 p.m. Other locations such as libraries will register prospective voters until Oct. 18. Additionally, individuals can register to vote when receiving a driver's license at the DMV.

How to Vote

Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 5. Omaha Public Schools

students have the day off this year. Polling locations will be open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. With the new voter ID law, voters must bring a photo ID such as a Nebraska driver's license, Nebraska state ID, Nebraska college ID, Nebraska state/county/city/public school ID, United States passport, military ID, tribal ID, or hospital or assisted care facility ID.

Polling locations are determined by address as each polling location's ballots cover specific district elections. For instance, all ballots will include presidential and Senate candidates, but House of Representatives, State Legislature and city candidates will differ.

A voter must go to their assigned polling location to vote. Polling stations can be determined on the Nebraska Voter Information Lookup website.

How to Register for Mail-in Voting

Mail-in ballots are another option for submitting a vote. First, the individual must request a mail-in ballot by sending in a photocopy or number of an approved ID and completed form to the Douglas County Election Commission. The form is on the Nebraska Secretary of State website under "Elections" and "Voter Forms." This can be done by mail or email, but it must be received by Oct. 25 at 6 p.m.

Then, the voter will receive a mail-in ballot to be brought back to the Douglas County Election Commission, emailed to earlyvoting@votedouglascounty.com, or dropped in a drop box. Drop box locations are listed on the Nebraska Secretary of State website under the search "drop box."

The Charles B. Washington, South Omaha, Milton R. Abrahams and Elkhorn branches of the Omaha Public Library are drop box locations.

What's on the Ballot?

This year's election has impacts on the neighborhood, city, state and national level. [Vote411](http://Vote411.com), an online resource

It is the goal of the Central High Register to represent the student body in issues affecting their lives as young people and students. If you feel that we are not covering an issue that is important to you, we welcome contributing writers who bring fresh ideas to the issues.

If you would like to write a story for your student newspaper, please contact Broderick Hilgenkamp at broderick.hilgenkamp@ops.org or come to room 029 to discuss your idea.

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from the nonpartisan League of Women Voters, compiles what will be on the ballot for each precinct and each candidate's stances on issues.

Initiatives and referendums, laws and changes to the state law that voters have worked to include on the ballot, are another part of the election. Abortion access, medical cannabis legalization, paid sick leave and tax cuts for private school donations are issues that at least 5% of Nebraska voters have "put on the ballot" by signing petitions.

On Nov. 5, voters will get to choose which way the law swings on these issues.

Voters will also get to choose whether the long-time Republican Senate seat is held by incumbent Deb Fischer or Independent Dan Osborn.

Douglas and Saunders County voters will determine whether Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District goes for Trump or Harris in the presidential election, giving the winner one electoral vote.



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Omaha Public Schools combats rising absenteeism rates

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with 47% categorized as chronically absent.

Latino students represent another group impacted by chronic absenteeism, as 41% were chronically absent, while Black and African American students have a 44% absentee rate.

Disparities represented by these demographics highlight the need for addressing the barriers that specific communities face, from economic challenges to lack of access to transportation.

OPS initiated the "Strive for 95" program, in which students were expected to be absent less than nine days per school year, or equivalent to 5% of school days.

"Daily attendance is critical to academic success as well as social and emotional well-being," OPS said.

However, rising absenteeism rates show the "Strive for 95" program requires more support. Ray has outlined a comprehensive strategy to combat absenteeism for the 2024-25 school year, with efforts centered on implementing attendance improvement programs within the individual school communities.

"Continuing to focus on attendance is always important," Ray told KMTV.

To address these challenges, Ray (and other Nebraska districts) are working closely with organizations like Attendance Works, a national nonprofit dedicated to implementing strategies to improve attendance.

Additionally, programs with Teammates Mentoring are being piloted in schools where absenteeism rates are highest, giving students personal encouragement to help keep them engaged in all levels of their education. The goal is to generate excitement in students towards

their education.

Across the district, elementary, middle and high schools are now expected to monitor attendance more rigorously. Teachers and faculty are encouraged to intervene when students begin to show patterns of missing school.

Efforts to increase parental involvement involve more communication between schools and homes. The district aims to increase participation in parent-teacher conferences, where attendance issues can be addressed collaboratively.

Students who miss large portions of the school year are at a higher risk of falling behind academically, dropping out and facing difficulties in securing future employment. The district's four-year cohort graduation rate stands at 70.4% for the class of 2023, with minority students and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds facing greater challenges.

In addition, the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC) and Executive Director Terry Haack introduced a new grant program with the initiative to reduce the Omaha metro's chronic absenteeism rate.

"It's not a correct statement to think that those that are not coming to school don't care about coming to school," Haack said. "There are many and multiple barriers for those students not attending school. If we can work with community and organizations to provide the services needed, students will come to school."

Ray is hopeful, however, that the new interventions will lead to meaningful change, emphasizing that attendance is key to educational success.

Out of school suspensions drop as discipline changes in OPS

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dropped 58% in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23.

While unique student incidents increased district-wide over the past school year, that number is significantly lower from the district's all-time high during the 2016-17 school year, in which there were 118,174 unique student incidents.

OPS School Board member Jane Erdenberger expressed concern over the fact that while yearly student referrals decreased, morale over OPS school environments from all perspectives has gone down. "The numbers tell us that there's either been fewer misbehaviors since pre-COVID and people just don't remember, or teachers aren't referring anymore out of frustration; and based on anecdotes, I'm quite worried it's the latter," Erdenberger said at the July board meeting.

Starkey countered Erdenberger's claim, saying that while the number of referrals doesn't reflect the fact that incidents post-COVID have been far more serious code of conduct violations, that the number of referrals is continually going down on all violations and that public perception has yet to catch up.

Another small improvement shown in the data is how the disproportionality of discipline in OPS continues to make progress towards proportionality.

In the 2022-23 school year, Black students made up 24% of OPS' student population. However, Black students made up 47% of out of school suspensions that year. In the 2023-24 school year, Black students made up 23% of the district's population but decreased to making up 44.5% of out of school suspensions. While nowhere near proportionality, district leaders say the data shows they're committed to making progress.

Another area that demonstrates the district's modest strides toward proportional discipline is in special education. In the 2022-23 school year, special education students accounted for

OPS Graduation Rate vs Absenteeism Rate

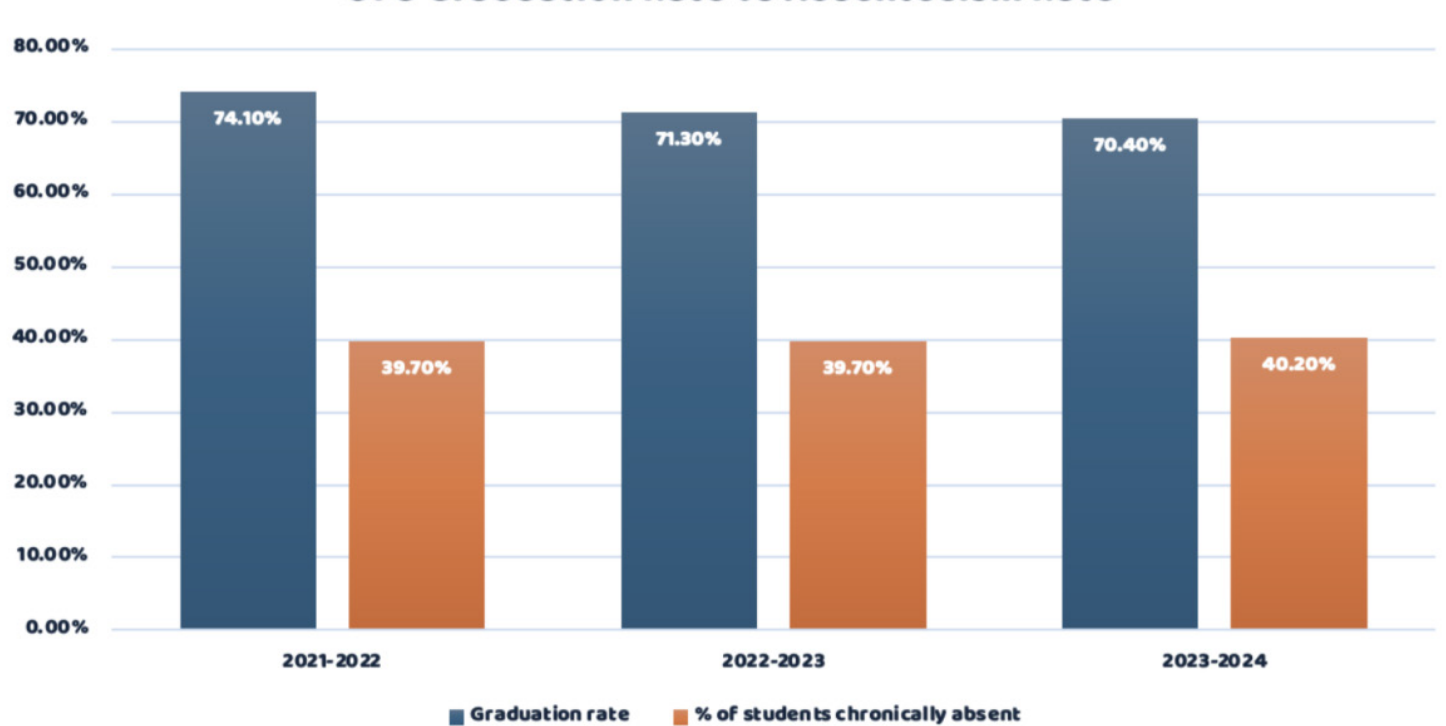


Photo Courtesy of OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

17.6% of the district, yet they made up 21.9% of out of school suspensions. In 2023-24, that number decreased to 18.9% of out of school suspensions being special education students while they made up 17.3% of the district. This data is welcome for a district that has been penalized for disproportionate special education disciplinary actions in the past.

A 2015 review done by the Nebraska Department of Education found that OPS suspended far too many Black special education students than normal in the 2011 and 12 school years. The state ruled OPS had to divert \$1.85 million of federal funds to help solve the problem.

Closing of DEI office could have harmful effects, alum says

Arisa Lattison
editor-in-chief

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) announced that it would be closing and eliminating related positions to its Office of Diversity and Inclusion on Aug. 20 due to budget cuts mandated the previous year, and for one UNL graduate, this is a concern she has, not only for UNL, but all of Nebraska.

"I am pleased with Chancellor (Rodney) Bennett's decision to close this office," Gov. Jim Pillen said in a statement released the following day.

Pillen believes that institutions should focus on "discipline, excellence and integrity" rather than "race-based DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion)," but according to DEI practitioner and UNL graduate Laura Brooks Dueland, DEI programs may have a more significant effect on communities than people think, making it necessary for places to consider long-term.

Brooks Dueland studies the intersection of diversity, equity and inclusion using data at Inclusion Analytics, a human resources firm focused on DEI and its impact on businesses and employment. She examines where barriers may exist, and works to resolve these problems.

DEI is short for diversity, equity and inclusion. The office at UNL aimed to ensure an environment where individuals live and learn in a safe space.

With the potential for some students' needs to go unmet, Dueland is concerned for the future of employment.

"We are often concerned with the brain drain in Nebraska," Dueland said. "Growth is slowing [and we have] low employment rates compared to other states, which means it's really hard to find employees... we aren't attracting new talent."

According to Dueland, researchers believe having diversity values attracts underrepresented and majority groups as well.

"[We will be] losing really valuable talents across all different identities if we continue to establish and discontinue these safety values," she said.

In a study conducted by Dueland and other researchers at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, they found that "women, people of color and those who identify as a gender minority are underrepresented, (and) have less positive experiences than their white male colleagues in surveyed Omaha workplaces." This underrepresentation may also apply to those who identify as gender non-conforming.

Advocates say this is where DEI comes in. DEI offices in universities work to eliminate these obstacles for the underrepresented minority, and to educate and engage the general public.

"[There is] a lot of evidence to show DEI offices benefit all students no matter their identity," Dueland stated.

People who engaged with the office found it valuable. In the 2023 Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) report from UNL, statistics showed that 93.26% of people in attendance at the Husker Dialogues, a foundational diversity experience for first-year students, said they would attend an event focused on diversity and inclusion in the next year and 89.52% thought learning about the subject was important. Additionally, the ODI hosted 112 education sessions, training and workshops throughout the year.

However, according to Nebraska Public Media, Bennett, as said in his announcement to students, "the centralized office is no longer right for the campus." There is not a set date for its diffusion.

Now with its close, the office's responsibilities are said to be split between the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, the Office of Business & Finance and the Office of Student Life. Dueland believes that because people used to be paid to complete these specific roles, they won't be fulfilled as well now that those responsibilities belong other individuals who already have other jobs.

"[With budget cuts, they] don't have funding, [people with other roles] don't have time," Brooks Dueland said. "[It's] less effective."

Florida, Kentucky, and North Carolina are among the other colleges that have eliminated DEI offices from their institutions or cut funding. In Texas, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in 2023 signed the DEI Ban Law for the state.

Nebraska State Sen. Dave Murman of Glenvil attempted to outlaw DEI offices and prohibit related funding across Nebraska's colleges earlier this year. This was ultimately opposed, and the Board of Regents will meet on Oct. 4 in Kearney with the purpose of addressing this topic. The future of the DEI offices at University Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), University Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) and University Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) will be discussed.

This meeting will be open to the public, and individuals will be able to speak to the Board of Regents about what they believe should happen.

Central students take science trip to Peru

Katie Besancon
staff writer

The Central science department took a trip down to Peru in early June. They explored various cities, went on adventures like white water rafting, visited the catacombs and hiked Machu Picchu, all while enjoying the sites and immersing themselves in a new culture for nine days.

The trip was intended to start on June 3, but due to a large storm in Dallas and landing lights broken in Peru, the entire group of students had to split up. These issues put them into three different groups, each group going to either Chicago, Orlando or Dallas before subsequently making it to Peru two days later than expected.

Senior Abby Cady was in the group of travelers that had a 12-hour layover on both ends of the trip, spending over 48 hours in the airport. "I personally had a great time, we tried to make the most of the time that we had while we were in the airport," Cady said.

Despite all of the travel hiccups, the rest of the trip went smoothly. The group traveled to Machu Picchu twice. The first day was to take pictures and the second day was when they could choose to either hike to the Sun Gate or go and explore the old Machu Picchu city, formerly home to the Inca.

Senior Holland Robison said her group chose to go into the old Inca city. "We explored every single thing there, and we got to make up conspiracy theories about what we thought was true," she said.

Other activities included white water rafting where some of the groups were able to get into the rapids and swim around and surf in the ocean, "It was actually my first time seeing the ocean and the locals thought that we were crazy because it was winter in Peru and we were showing up in our swimsuits and swimming for close to an hour in the cold water," Robison said.

Others on the trip experienced a rough patch due to getting sick. "Close to six or seven people got sick for 12-24 hours, nobody really knows what from, but we think sun poisoning or altitude sickness," junior Oliver Beals said.

Junior Tessa Fershee was deemed "Nurse Tessa" on this trip because she was roommates with the majority of individuals who got sick. She bought them Gatorade and anything to make



Central students pose in front of Machu Picchu for a picture. The group spent two days at the site.

Photo Courtesy of KRISTOFF BERZINS

them feel better.

Despite the challenges to get there, everyone said the trip was worth it. "I would say that it was a hundred percent worth it, because I liked how it was structured, we were always going and doing all of these activities. I wanted to do everything I could while I had the chance. I had never been out of the country before and would do it again. I want to do it now before I get old and can't do it anymore," Robison said.

Others were a bit weary, because of some of the traveling being on buses, the rides were much longer than what was disclosed in previous informational meetings. "I wish there was more clarity on how long certain things would have taken, but overall I would a hundred percent do it again," Beals said.

The food was also interesting. "We tried guinea pig, which was like even chewier pork and like this yellow sauce that tasted like egg. Definitely different from the food here," Cady said.

"While it was somewhat odd to spend that much time with my teachers, I am glad that I went on the trip and would a hundred percent do it again," Beals said.

Central students get the chance to learn history on trip to Europe

Paula Gutierrez Martinez
arts & culture editor

Central students will have the opportunity to embark on a multi-country trip across Europe to learn about World War II history in the summer of 2025. Students will travel to England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands over a period of 13 days.

The trip is organized by history teacher Scott Wilson with Education First, a company specializing in student tours.

EF Student Tours tailors each trip to the schools. Central students enrolled on the tour will visit World War I and World War II cemeteries featuring Central alumni, including Marion Crandell, a war relief volunteer at a canteen near the French front lines.

In 1918, the canteen was struck by an artillery shell, killing her, making her the first American woman to die in active service during WWI. Along the way, Wilson will tell the stories of Central graduates who served during the World Wars.

Students will walk in the footsteps of those who lived through the wars at places like the Churchill War Rooms or Normandy Beach. Additionally, the trip will include visits to notable museums like the Anne Frank House and Imperial War Museum.

Although the trip's focus is World War II history, it is not solely focused on World War II. Beyond the historical focus, students will have the opportunity to do some traditional sightseeing. They will explore iconic European landmarks

such as the Eiffel Tower. Art enthusiasts will enjoy seeing the "Mona Lisa" at the Louvre and "Sunflowers" at the Van Gogh Museum.

AP World History and IB History teacher McKenna Paintin noted that this is a great opportunity for students. "Because how often is it that anyone can go on trips like this, let alone high school students?" she said.

Wilson echoed this sentiment. "Travel really opens up students to a larger world. I think students that travel tend to be students that are explorers. They're people that set aside their fears and try new things. And traveling is about adapting. It's new languages, it's new money, it's new cultures, it's new systems, learning how to ride a subway and learning how to get from A to B in a foreign country. It's empowering," he said.

The program includes round-trip airfare, on-tour transportation, hotels with private bathrooms, breakfast and dinner, a full-time tour director, daily activities, tours and entrances to attractions. Students must cover lunch.

This is Wilson's last student trip to Europe, marking the



Scott Wilson teaches a U.S. History class on Sept. 20. MAURO GUTIERREZ | The Register

end of a decade-long tradition. He has consistently organized these tours every three years since 2015, and next June will be his fourth and final trip. Although he acknowledges the milestone, right now Wilson is focused on preparing for June.

"I'm sure when it's over, I'll probably be reflective on being able to do these kinds of trips with students, which has been a real highlight of my career, for sure," he said.

For more information, contact Wilson at scott.wilson@ops.org or stop by room 234 with any questions.

EL students go on a D.C. trip over the summer

Brianna Martinez
staff writer

English Learner students went to Washington, D.C., May 31 to June 3.

The idea came from social studies teacher Sarah Lehn, with help from EL teacher Molly Davies; Megan Kaminski-Doloto, the former ELA dept chair; and Michele Roberts with the Central High School Foundation.

They wanted to have a field trip to D.C for the ELA department where they could choose who got to go and base the trip on what the students are learning about in their classes.

The process to get this field trip put together was a journey in itself. They wrote a grant to the foundation. They assumed the request would be way too big, as they didn't want money to be an issue for students. They would have even taken a discount for the students if they could even get that. But the foundation gave them the full grant and they were able to take 20 students including gift cards for them to buy souvenirs and food.

Students had to apply by submitting a video explaining why they wanted to go and why it was important for immigrants to visit the nation's capital and learn about the history. They also had to describe something memorable they learned in U.S. history class.

This trip provided a big learning experience for all the students. They went to many places that they had talked about in class, pointing out key aspects of monuments. Students would connect everything they saw to stuff they learned in history class, like the Lincoln Memorial, where Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his most famous speech.

"It was reminding students, 'Who is this person?' Think about all these things you learned," Lehn said.

Ulises Chairez-Lopez, a senior, got the opportunity to go on this trip. Chairez-Lopez was born in Omaha but moved to Mexico for 13 years and came back to Omaha for his sophomore year at Central. Chairez-Lopez was given a green slip with the questions and requirements, and he made a video and when he found out he was chosen he was super excited and

told all the friends and family he could.

"I really enjoyed the Holocaust Museum. It's very intense, but you learn and you're able to see what really happened," Chairez-Lopez said. In D.C students got to see museums, buildings and monuments as it all ties back to their learning in class.

Students got the opportunity to have lunch with a non-profit immigration hub who are people that are working on immigration policy who are immigrants themselves, students asked questions and learned more about the U.S. government "That experience helps me right now that I'm taking an AP government, I apply everything I'm learning about right now to what I saw in Washington", Chairez-Lopez said.

students got to bond with one another make new memories and experience things they never thought they could experience. "Since I grew up Mexico I don't have as much background information as someone that grew up in the U.S., but going to these memorials and monuments I learn more about the history," Chairez-Lopez said.

Seniors reflect on pathway choices

Gaby Antúnez
staff writer

The 2025 graduating class will be the first to go through the full four years of Omaha Public School College & Career Academies and Pathway; and they have been able to reflect on it.

There are many different pathways available, and since it was chosen as freshmen, the Register wanted to understand seniors' opinions on it. The Register Staff was able to interview three seniors on how their pathway is going and their opinions on pathways. The students interviewed were seniors Eric Reyes Rodriguez, Dineldi Zavala Guevara and Roberto Campos Ortega.

Reyes' pathway is music tech, and he chose that pathway because, according to Reyes, "I want to learn how to make music. Also, how we can record music while editing other things." He is very interested in music and the making of music, and he doesn't regret taking this pathway. He isn't sure on what career to choose once he is out of high school, but pathways helped open his options to make different things.

Zavalas' pathway is business, and he chose it because he has always found interest in the business career. He doesn't regret choosing this pathway because, according to Zavala, "It helped me be more creative and think about ideas and how to present my ideas to others." He is sure that he will continue this at college, and thinks the pathway helped him be more confident in taking this career.

Campos' pathway is Global Health Science, and he chose this pathway because he is sure he is going to continue it into college. He thinks it prepared him for what to expect in college, but also was interested in many different things, and wished he had been able to see into different pathways. "I don't regret taking this pathway, but I would have liked to see the other pathways," Campos said.

They all agreed that, as freshmen, they were not really prepared to know what they want for



Senior Eric Reyes Rodriguez



Senior Roberto Campos Ortega

MAURO GUTIERREZ | The Register

the future, but agreed that it helped them think about it more. "It was a little too early, but it helped me mature more and think about the future," Reyes said.

Zavala agrees that it might be a little stressful to make this big of a choice as a freshman. "I think it might be too early, [since] coming out of middle school into high school is a hard transition," Zavala said.

Campos agreed, saying that the pathways helped the first years figure out their interests more and helped them learn many different skills since freshman year.

Freshmen walk pathway lane, assess choices for future

Brianna Martinez
staff writer

Every freshman is required to choose a pathway. Freshmen are analyzing their pathway options that will drive their future.

Pathways are classes that help you with your future goals. The experience will help students develop skills in fun and engaging ways so when they start their real-world career they aren't lost.

For example, if a student dreams of becoming a nurse, they might choose the Global

Health pathway. This pathway would place the student in elective courses focused on that.

Freshman Kamai Ford dreams of playing basketball or football, while designing his own clothing brand, inspired by his grandfather and father that played those sports. Ford thinks the pathways are a good thing, "so as I get older and develop, I'll be used to the money" Ford said. Ford will most likely choose the sports and marketing pathway.

Other kids have other dreams. Freshman Ash Homan dreams of becoming a scientist and completing lab work, inspired by her dad that she says basically has the same mindset as her. Homan also likes the idea of the pathways although is still a bit confused.

"For me I know that after high school I want to go to MIT and do a bunch of lab work," Homan said.

Homan will most likely to choose the STEM pathway and continue on with her love for science and school in general.

Freshman Jaelynn Jackson is still choosing between two pathways as she dreams of being a real estate agent or a nurse inspired by her mom.

"I think the pathways is something that's good for when I go to college so I know what I want to do," Jackson said. Jackson will most likely choose the business and finance pathway or the Global Health pathway.

Freshman students won't have to finalize their pathway decision until December, so all three of these students have time to change their minds if they wish to do so. These students have different personalities and career ideas the pathways help students express themselves and who they want to be in the future.

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Top: Michelle Sueck teaches Team Sayers freshmen in Freshmen Seminar on Sept. 17. Bottom: Freshmen students learn in Freshmen Seminar on Sept. 17.

WHITMAN RUTLEDGE | The Register

New Central dean finally reaches the Eagle Nest

Becca Rock
chief copy editor

A new Central dean is finally in a place that has been calling to him his whole life. Dean of Students Nathan TerBeest is new to the Central staff for the 2024-25 school year. He is a proud alum of Omaha Public Schools and is already “carry[ing] pride being at Central.”

“The coolest thing about Central, and I’ve known this my whole life growing up in OPS, is that Central has always been the gold standard. It is cool to be a part of the traditions and become a small part in Central’s long history,” TerBeest said.

He grew up going to different OPS schools. TerBeest graduated from Northwest High School and had connections to Central through former Principal Ed Bennet, who was an assistant principal while TerBeest was at Northwest. His connections also stretch through his wife, Belinda TerBeest, who also works at Central as a business teacher.

Twenty years ago, TerBeest began his public education career as a social studies teacher at Omaha South High School. Soon after, he began his transition into the dean program. During his time at Omaha South, he was a dean for several years before transferring to Omaha Burke to once again be a dean. After leaving Burke, he worked for one year at the district’s Teacher Administrative Center. TerBeest then left OPS for six years to be the assistant principal at Douglas County West High School.

As a dean of students, TerBeest helps manage students’ academic and personal goals, oversees student behavior, helps families, and overall supports a positive learning environment at Central.

He is a dean for students with last names J, N, R, and S and supports the Sayers Freshman Academy.

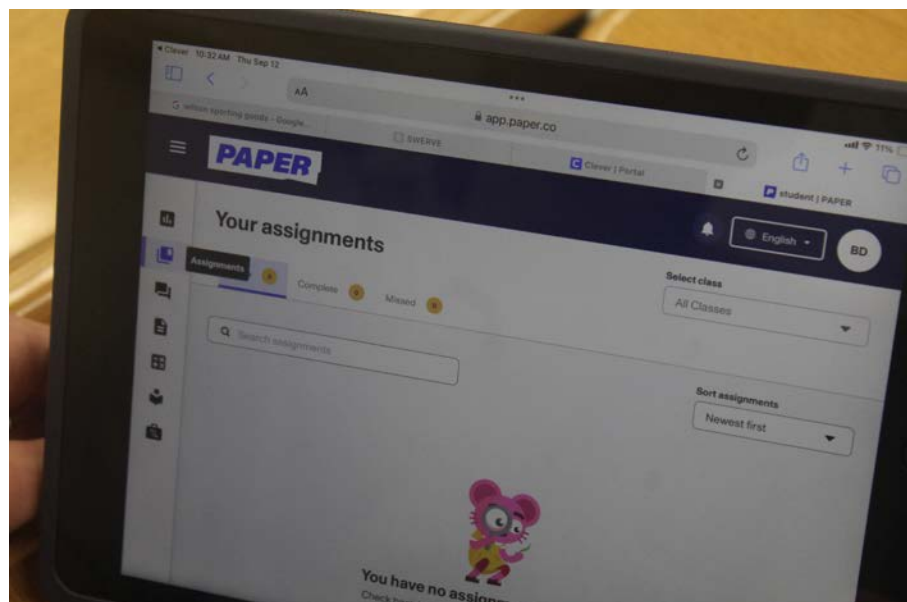
Central is where TerBeest’s family is, and he wouldn’t want it any other way. TerBeest and his family are big travelers as well; this past summer they took their RV and took a road trip through the United States, and he got to do what he loves: being outside and traveling.

As the semester continues, TerBeest has excitement for all Central’s activities and is looking forward to what this year will hold.



Dean of Students Nathan TerBeest WHITMAN RUTLEDGE | The Register

Paper tutoring app helps students around the clock



A student explores the Paper app on Sept. 12.

Chloe Schwartz
staff writer

Paper Tutoring app provides students use of the app at all hours of the day, and receive assistance on core subjects from real people.

Once logged in, students can choose to chat, send a voice recording, type, or upload files, to receive feedback from tutors. However, students are not limited to uploading assignments. Paper tutors can review college essays, and other forms of writing by fixing grammar, looking for plagiarism, leaving notes, and reviewing to see if the student followed the paper’s requirements.

Despite its growing popularity after Covid-19, many Central students are still unfamiliar with the resource.

“It’s a trend that hasn’t caught on yet” Business Education teacher Beliinda Terbeest said.

In addition, students may access PaperLive which is an after-school tutoring broadcast that is

said to be “better than streaming live television.” This televised session is designed for all grades; the show covers exciting topics like history, astronomy, financial literacy and much more. The purpose of this platform is to advance learner’s skills in an enjoyable, low-pressure atmosphere.

Parents will no longer have to worry about hiring a private tutor, Paper intends to help.

Teachers may receive help from this program as well, allowing time to attend to other classroom tasks, build relationships, and most importantly, catch their breath. Student activity is recorded, tracked, and made accessible to teachers.

For safety purposes, each tutor has undergone a criminal background check and is extensively trained to provide a comfortable, safe, and welcoming community. Overall, the Paper app provides an immensely useful and welcoming community to anyone and everyone.

WHITMAN RUTLEDGE | The Register



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opinion

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BACK TO SCHOOL

10 tips and tricks for succeeding in high school

Arisa Lattison
editor-in-chief

Underclassmen, a new year is here. Whether you are a freshman coming from middle school or a sophomore settling into high school, I want to stress the importance of building good habits now. As a senior, I have learned what has helped me over the last four years and what I believe will help you all. Here are 10 tips and tricks for succeeding this year in high school.

Be Punctual

While this may seem obvious, it is imperative that you attend class on time. Any time you miss can lead to missed instruction, which can lead to falling behind. Those minutes you are absent can also add up and prevent you from going to events like Homecoming and Winter Formal.

Stay Organized

Keep a folder or binder for each of your core classes or classes that have more material. (If you are taking Chemistry, make sure you put your binder in order as soon as possible!) Having a designated place for your assignments can make it easier to figure out what you have due and how much per course.

Get Involved with the Community

Join clubs and extracurriculars, talk to new people, and build connections with your teachers and coaches. One of the best decisions I have made at Central is to participate in all the school it has to offer. I joined student council my freshman year and have helped with events ever since. Powerlifting club and the team has also had a huge impact on me. Central is known for its diversity, and that means that there is a crowd for everyone—don't be afraid to explore!

Utilize Class Time

When I was first starting out, I didn't use class time to do my work. Instead, I would wait until I got home or until I got to my study hall to do my assignments. Use the time your teacher gives you wisely! It is way better than going home with heaps to do.

Find a Balance between work and school

While your part-time job may be important, school is too. Make sure you're not getting scheduled too often to the point where you can't get what you need to do done. Remember that as a student, what you do now in high school can be pivotal towards your future.

Find a Balance between School and Social Life

Although school is foremost, upholding personal relationships is also essential. Don't put school first to the extent that you are skipping out on social events and football games for it. We all need a moment to relax.

Study

On top of doing your assignments, do a bit of studying on your own, especially when mid-terms and finals are approaching. In addition, get ready to take the ACT your junior year by reviewing content little by little. My personal favorite tool to use is the platform Quizlet, which is good for memorizing terms and a lot of the time what you need may have been submitted by another already!

Take Chances

Whether it be running for president of a club or trying out for a sport, you should have some faith in yourself and go for it. The more people you know and the more you build a (good) name for yourself, the higher your chances are of being elected. If it's a sport or a talent show, just try your best and be passionate about it.

Do What You Like

Live your life for yourself. Instead of going with the herd, branch out and figure out what you enjoy. You'll end up regretting not having done what you wanted while you could have.

Have Fun!

Lastly, have fun. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to leave high school feeling fulfilled. Are you happy? Did you do all you wanted to do? Are you satisfied with the outcome? Sometimes things may not go as planned, but make sure you make an effort to be able to answer yes to all of these questions when it's in your power.

Why is Central used as a prop in senior photos?

Hattie Moeller
news editor

As a proud student of Omaha Central, it is hard not to notice the increasing number of West Omaha students making their way down to our campus – not for their education, but for photo shoots.

Why is this?

They call our school “ghetto,” and whisper about how “unsafe” it is. They visit our stadium and gymnasium for athletic events and are immediately concerned about the police presence. Yet, they have the courage to travel downtown to use our building as the backdrop for an ultimate milestone.

I get it. Central has one of the most beautiful, historic campuses in the nation. But as a student, it feels strange that people with no relation to Central get to use it just for aesthetics, after belittling all the institution stands for. Central is more than just a backdrop; it is a place of pride, strength and community.

Students and faculty of Central revel in our deep history, community and, yes, the beautiful architecture which we experience every day as we pass in and out of our building.

I wish Central's critics would understand that “ghetto” isn't just an insult, it is an erasure of everything we are as a school community. The word has a large, negative connotation which never slips the mind of the students and faculty that adore our institution.

So, when people from across Omaha come, snap photos and leave without any real connection to the building and its culture, it almost feels like they are borrowing something that is not theirs to take.

What stings the most is their hypocrisy. They utilize our beautiful limestone and intricate carvings to capture the charm of our institution without ever seeing the beauty within. They do not care to learn about our tradition of excellence, and generations of incredible alumni who have gone on to do amazing things. Most importantly, they do not care to hear the incredible stories of the people who walk our halls every day.

It is easy for them to come, pose and take pictures like they are part of something extraordinary, only to leave and mock the very place they used for their social media perfection.

They don't have to live with the assumptions and remarks about how “rough” and “sketchy” Central is, because their Instagram comments are overflowing with messages like “so beautiful” and “gorgeous photos.”

To me, and many other passionate students, it feels as if they are stealing our identity. They come downtown to experience the rich history, culture and pride that their own schools lack. Many of these West Omaha schools are new, shiny

buildings, without any of the character that Central has. They borrow from our legacy, our charm and then return to their insulated suburban lives, pretending for a moment that they are part of something real. But they are not.

And when they refer to students as “sketchy” or our building as “unsafe,” what they are really doing is labeling our students – many of whom are people of color or come from working-class backgrounds. There is something ugly and coded about the way they throw those words around. The West Omaha schools, generally affluent and predominantly white, don't face these assumptions.

Central is proud of our diversity, of the rich cultures, languages and stories that walk through our halls every day.

They view our downtown location and surrounding neighborhoods and see danger. We look at their large properties and clean residential areas and see privilege. And somehow, they still feel entitled to use our school as a prop.



Photo Courtesy of OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Academic overload – when school becomes life

Katie Besancon
digital editor

High school is supposed to be the last four years when students can truly be kids, the years are meant to be fun and lighthearted before the stress of post high school life and adulthood comes into the equation.

Teachers encourage students to go out, have fun and live their lives, but every year it gets increasingly harder to do so. Students today go to school for seven and a half hours a day, maybe more, then go home to continue their education with an average of 2.7 to 3.1 hours of homework each night, according to an article by Stanford Graduate School of Education. Additionally, many students today are also student-athletes or are involved with extracurricular activities that meet after school multiple times a week.

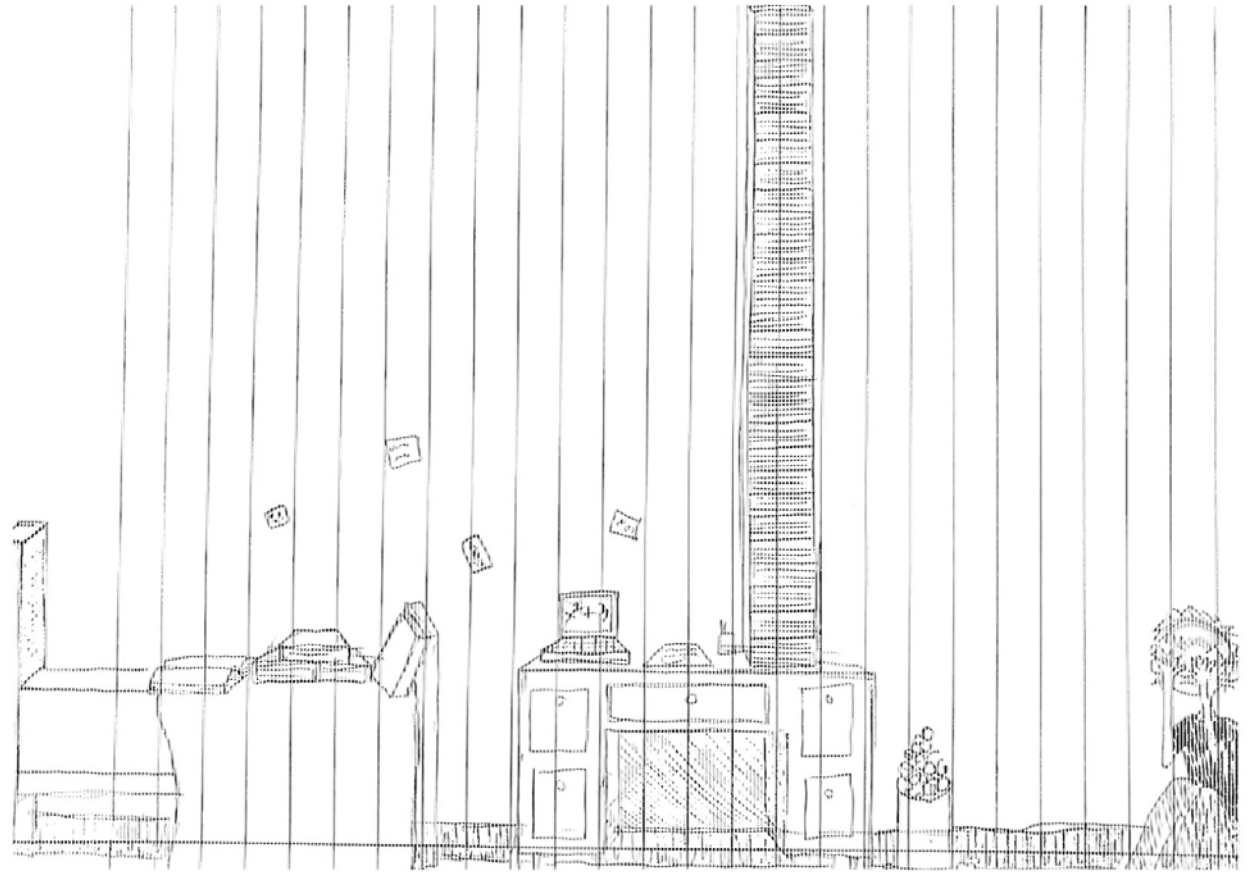
Those who are taking harder classes like Honors or Advanced Placement classes are looking at an hour of homework for each class they are taking at that level. That can be up to three to four hours of just core class homework a night.

Athletes in Omaha Public Schools practice for about two hours after school each day, meaning they don't leave their respective sports' practice until 5:30 each night. If they were to start their homework for that night the minute they got home they still would not be done until around 8 p.m. each night.

For 63% of high school students, they plan on seeking a post-high school education, more and more of those are in a rat race to get into the top schools. According to an analysis from Spark Admissions, 26 out of the top 50 universities in the United States have seen their admissions rates fall anywhere from 3.2% to 40% from 2019 to 2022.

Because of this, students are starting to take more challenging classes and loading their extracurricular activities to become more appealing to these schools. At the end of the day the reality is you are getting a similar education no matter where you go and coming out of it with a degree. It boils down to the connections you are making.

This college admissions rat race is starting to take a toll on many students. In an article from KVC Health Systems, academic stress can reduce motivation, restrict academic achievement and negatively affect mental health, with feelings of decreased well-being, and an increased likelihood of



ISAAC PERCIVAL-AIZENBERG | The Register

developing anxiety or depression.

At the end of the day, this leaves little time during the week to engage with friends outside of school and truly have the fun that high school is supposed to be.

It forces students to stay at home to do their homework in order to maintain the grades they desire. The opposite of what the high school experience is supposed to be, full of football games, friends, and enjoying the time you have left as a kid.

While there is an understanding that there is a set amount of curriculum that teachers need to get through each

year, we need to get more time back as students. It seems as if in the last several years it has been harder for teachers to get through the curriculum. It's even gotten to a point where in some classes, like AP Biology, students are required to self-teach units before coming to school in the fall.

We need to find a way to get through the same amount of curriculum while decreasing the homework load so that students who are in sports and extracurricular activities can still have a social life especially when this is students' "last ride" before adulthood truly starts.

Central should adopt stricter phone rules

Grace Sunseri
opinion editor

I have looked around countless classrooms to see the faces of my peers glued to their phones during times of instruction. Even while checking your phone for 10 seconds, according to the University of California Irvine, "it takes an average of 2 minutes and 15 seconds to get back to the task." The frustration of teachers is starting to show, and that has resulted in stricter phone policies.

Omaha Public Schools lets each school decide their own phone policy. Central's focuses not on completely removing the phone but stressing the importance of when the appropriate time to use personal devices is.

Central has implemented a "Your Tech Time, Educational Tech Time and No Tech Time" policy. "Your Tech Time" is a time of no teacher instruction when students can use their personal devices. "Educational Tech Time" is time in class when students need to use their school issued iPad. "No Tech Time" disallows all student tech. Phones are only supposed to be used during Your Tech Time, otherwise they are expected to be off and stowed away in a backpack.

If students break these rules, teachers are encouraged by the administration to take the phone, write a referral or contact guardians, depending on the level of the offense.

In my almost three years at Central, I have found these policies to be ineffective in reducing the number of students on their devices during lectures. Students either do not care and use it anyway or teachers disregard the expectations, creating inconsistencies in the building.

Studies in other schools across the world have shown significant improvement in education when strict, even no-phone policies, were put in place.

According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in its 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, there is little valuable data that shows technology has a positive impact on education.

The same report even called for a ban on smartphones at school, a claim that is bolstered by data from Spain showing reduced bullying, and data from Norway and Belgium, which found improved academic performance.

Some argue that banning phones is unsafe, especially in the U.S., and that it should be the students' responsibility to self-regulate.

In the U.S., states like Florida and Ohio have recently passed bills that totally ban the use of phones during school hours.

According to the Tallahassee Reports, "test score of students aged 16 increased by 6.4% of a standard deviation," after the bans went into effect.

Phones are used by 97% of kids over the age of 12 and serve as the main way teens connect with the world. They also allow students to communicate with loved ones during horrifying situations, like school shootings.

While students are in charge of their education and they cannot be forced to learn, it is important to try.

This ban needs to be consistent around the entire building, so students have a level of expectation in every class they step foot into. A useful way of doing this is a "phone home" or anywhere that forces students to remove their phones from arm's length.

By banning phones during instructional time at Central, it would be more possible to engage kids in class and allow them to receive the education they deserve.

Late starts do not benefit students or teachers

Jazmin Mills
staff writer

Omaha Public Schools had their first start day on Sept. 24. For students, school began two hours late. Teachers were expected to use this time to review and add improvements to their lesson plans. They also attended meetings to discuss how they can better their teaching. Oct. 29, Jan. 28 and April 1, 2025 are the other dates the district has scheduled late starts this school year.

I think late starts are useless. Yes, students are able to get more sleep, which is a pro. Students who have trouble falling asleep can use this to their advantage and get more sleep. But for students whose parents drop them off before going to work, how are they going to get to school? School buses are known to come late or earlier than they're sup-

posed to be there, so how are students supposed to know the actual right time to get there?

The same goes for students who have no transportation due to how late school starts. It also does not make sense to stay in one classroom for nearly three hours. This schedule change can be a major conflict for some people especially if schedule conflicts aren't considered an excused absence.

Junior Salemal Bulle has mixed opinions on this schedule change. "I can already tell late start days are not gonna be something I don't like because of the second period. I dislike how I have to be in that class for roughly three hours," Bulle said. Regardless, he will use this time to catch up on school work to improve his grades.

This schedule change doesn't just effect students, it also effects teachers. English teacher Jared Ganley is not look-

ing forward to late start days due to him being a believer in consistency and routine. Ganley values the time he has to collaborate with teachers during meetings, but would rather work in his own time.

"Having a consistent pattern gives many of my students who lack that in their lives outside of school something they can count on," he said. "It could just be momentary disequilibrium as I adjust to something that's new, but to sacrifice this for the sake of sending teachers to meetings does not seem like the wisest concession to make," Ganley said.

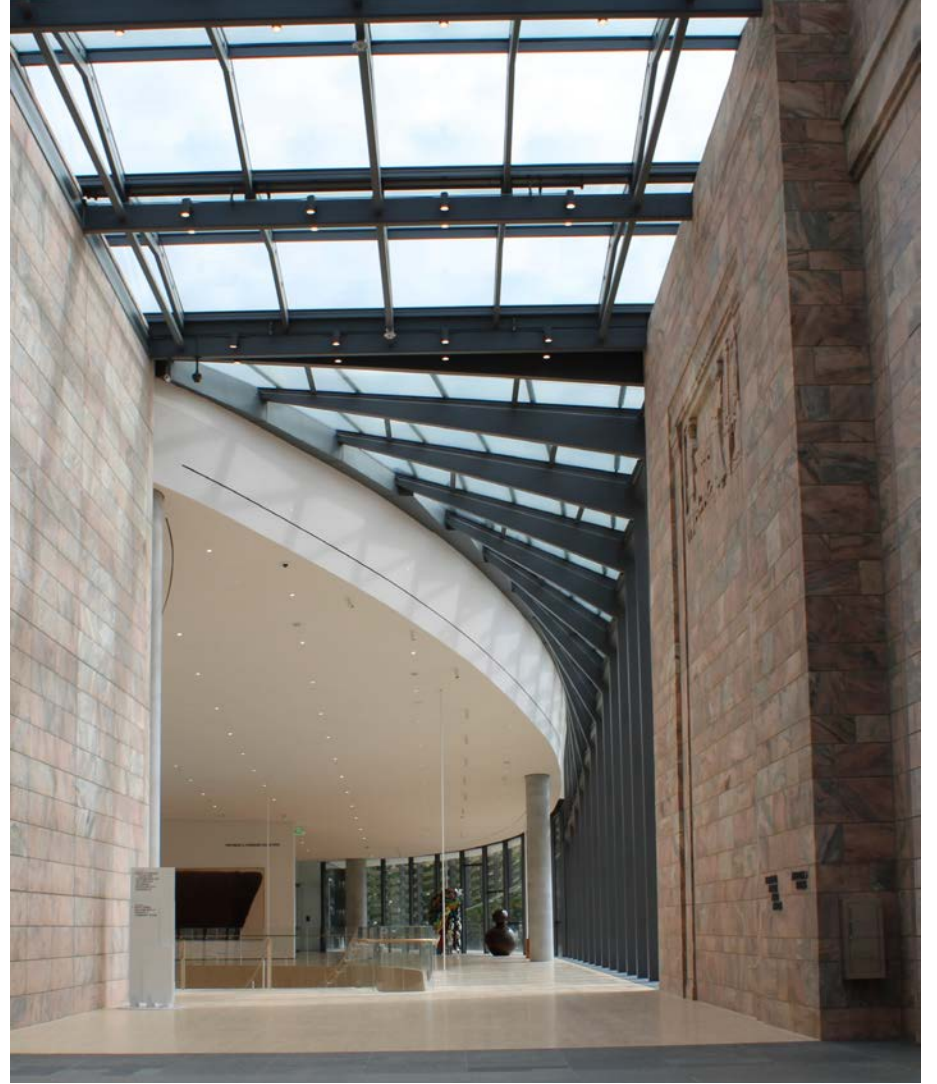
Despite these challenges, he remains optimistic. "I'm hopeful it will help some of my students who struggle with getting to school on time or being awake for class," Ganley said.

arts & culture

THE REGISTER

Vol. CCLI No. 1 | October 14, 2024

Joslyn reopens its doors



Mauro Gutierrez | The Register



Isaac Percival-Aizenberg staff writer

The Joslyn Museum re-opened its doors to the public Sept. 10, with a new focus on hospitality and making the building feel more welcoming.

Alongside these recent changes, an entirely new expansion of the building has opened, connecting the original building and the building constructed in the 1980s.

The target of the new wing is not only to display art, but to make the entire area feel more welcoming, “There’s a place to sit down everywhere you look,” said Amy Rummel, director of marketing & public relations at The Joslyn, who provided The Register with a tour of the new expansion.

Accessibility was an issue they wanted to take on with the remodel, and the building now has elevators to make higher and lower floors more accessible for everyone.

As patrons walk through the new building, right before they reach the new cafe they will

come to a spot where all three buildings intersect, and they will be able to see the marble exterior of the other buildings and compare the marble used in the original building from 1931 and the marble used in the first expansion in 1987. Comparing the weathering of the marble shows a clear difference.

When architect Snøhetta and APMA approached the design of the new building, they settled on a cloud design, in which segments of window are covered by the concrete exterior, creating a shift in visibility of the interior of the building as people walk or drive by.

In the new outdoor section, there is brand new seating, water features, and sculptures to admire, one sculpture representing the youth of Central students, another representing the growth of civil rights, depicting a hug between Martin Luther King, Jr., and his wife.

The largest step taken by The Joslyn to make art more accessible for everyone is free entry to everyone Tuesday through Sunday. This was all made possible thanks to a grant from the Holland Foundation that not only allows free entry but also paid for the new expansion along with donations from Omaha residents.

Upcoming fall events in the Omaha area

Bradley Smith staff writer

Fall is here in Nebraska, and it is time to get into the spirit. Nebraska offers many orchards and farms perfect for apple and pumpkin picking. But there is much more happening this fall.

Living History Events

1. Fort Atkinson is a former military fort active during the early 1800s, right outside Fort Calhoun. The fort was used to support pioneers moving west, fur traders and as a place for the U.S. Army to work. Now, the public can visit to learn about its history. The fort hosts living history events, where volunteers dress in period clothing and demonstrate daily tasks in the 1800s. On Nov. 2, there will be a Candlelight Tour, where groups get a 90 minute tour starting at 6 p.m., where they can experience the 1800s at night, focusing on the election of 1824. General Henry Atkinson will make an appearance.

2. Arbor Lodge is the home to the Arbor Day Holiday, a day to celebrate trees. It began in 1872, when over 1 million trees were planted in Nebraska. Arbor Lodge was a farm built by the Morton family in 1855 and is a 70-plus acre farm. In late September and throughout October, every weekend it will host different themed living history events. Some of the themes are “Celebrate Heritage,” focused on ethnic cultures and customs of early Nebraskans, and “Vintage Halloween,” displaying early Halloween customs. Arbor Day Lodge is also known for other activities including apple picking, nature trails and restaurants.

Haunted Attractions

Nebraska has lots to offer for haunted attractions, which makes it difficult to list the best ones, but these are a few highlights.

1. Scary Acres, near 168th and Giles, is a popular choice for people who want to be frightened, featuring 20 acres of haunted houses, circus arts and other attractions. It also has won the Best of Omaha award the past six years, and the Omaha’s Choice Awards 2020 through 2023. They opened Sept. 13 and operate through Nov. 2.

2. Bloodrush, in Elkhorn, is another Best of Omaha and Omaha’s Choice awards winner. Bloodrush is based inside a forest and is open Sept. 27 to Nov. 1. They also offer chances to meet celebrities related to scary movies, books, shows and more during select times throughout the Halloween season.

3. Dungeon of the Damned is for those who do not want an actor screaming in their face. It is a newer attraction to Omaha and the Old Market that offers an hour-long tour through a labyrinth of an old warehouse.

4. Museum of Shadows, near the Gene Leahy Mall, is not a typical haunted house. It is a two-story building filled with over 3,000 haunted artifacts from across the entire United States and other countries. This is the perfect place to go for the chance to experience potentially haunted activities, including disembodied voices, poltergeist activity and more.

Apples and Pumpkins

1. Nebraska City is home to many of Nebraska’s orchards, and they are perfect for apple picking. The Applejack Festival started Sept. 19 and ended Sept. 30. Events include farmers markets, bull riding, craft fairs, petting zoos and of course apple picking.

2. Kimmel Orchard, located in Nebraska City, is an orchard originating in 1925, offering a large area to pick apples or visit a barn where many products can be found.

3. Union Orchard is also in Nebraska City and is an over 100-year-old farm that is open year-round. They offer a general store and market for people to visit. They have baked goods, popcorn, apples, farm produce, donuts, cider and many other products.

Farms

1. Bellevue Berry Farm is an over 100-year-old farm found between Bellevue and Papillion. It is a well-known spot for picking pumpkins, weddings and various events throughout the year. They offer 20-acres of pumpkins and a haunted attraction.

2. Vala’s Pumpkin Patch & Apple Orchard is a well-known farm in Gretna that has operated for over 40 years and has 400 acres. Vala’s has a variety of events to take part in. They periodically host live shows and events, including stunt dog shows, pig derbies, fire juggling and tightrope walking, live music and fireworks.

Eight coffee shops you should try p. 10
Becca Rock rates popular coffee shops around the Omaha area.

It’s showtime again with ‘Beetlejuice Beetlejuice’ p. 11
Despite its flaws, the sequel to the cult classic lives up to the original.

‘Deadpool and Wolverine’ gives maximum effort p. 11
Humor is on display in Wolverine’s into to the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Central band brings spirit to annual Dundee Day parade p. 12
Omaha Central showcased its talent and spirit at the annual Dundee Day parade.

Seven coffee shops to try out

Rebecca Rock
chief copy editor

The last two weeks I have had more coffee than anyone needs to ingest. I visited coffee shops around Central High School—most of them being places I've been before—and decided on eight places everyone must try.

1. Blue Line Coffee
Address: 4924 Underwood Ave, Omaha, NE 68132

Price Point: \$3-\$6

I've gone to Blue Line Coffee for most of my life, especially the last six years. For me it has been a place of study, a place to catch up with friends, and overall, an environment that almost feels like home. They are the cheapest coffee shop on this list while still maintaining an amazing taste.

When I visited, I got a classic of mine: an iced vanilla latte with oat milk.

Overall Rating: 9/10

Environment: 3/3

Customer Service: 2.5/3

Coffee/ Drink Taste: 2.5/3

Likelihood of going back: 1/1

*Also rated higher because of the significance in price point difference.

2. Double Shot Coffee

Address: 118 N 50th St, Omaha, NE 68132

Price Point: \$5-\$9

Double Shot is another coffee shop classic in my life. They have the friendliest staff, and the espresso, chai and matcha are top tier. Double Shot has no indoor seating, but their outdoor seating is nice, on good weather days. Typically, I use their drive-through because of its convenience during the rush to school.

On my past visit I tried their maple vanilla latte with oat milk. This latte tasted like fall because of the deep, warm flavor of the maple.

Overall Rating: 9/10

Environment: 2/3

Customer Service: 3/3 (if I could give them more customer service points, I would!)

Coffee/Drink Taste: 3/3
Likelihood I'll be back: 1/1
3. Bad Seed Coffee & Supply
Address: 2452 1/2 Harney St, Omaha, NE 68131

Price Point: \$4-\$8

Bad Seed is not just a coffee shop - they are also a plant store. You can bring your own plants in and pay to have them re-potted to ensure they can grow to the best of their ability. Coffee-wise, this was the best coffee I had during my two weeks of coffee testing. The environment is very nice: natural light and positive energy. Maybe it is just the plants, but Bad Seed has something special about it. They do not have typical store-bought syrups like vanilla, but have instead use house-made syrup, such as their brown sugar syrup.

When I visited, I got an iced brown sugar latte—very good. If I were to describe it in three words: happy, smooth, flavorful.

Overall Rating: 9/10

Environment: 3/3

Customer Service: 2/3

Coffee/ Drink Taste: 3/3

Likelihood I'll be back: 1/1

4. Hardy Coffee:

Addresses:

Downtown: 1031 Jones Street

Benson: 6051 Maple Street

Chalco: 11450 Meadows Blvd

Highlander: 2112 N 30th Street

Price Point: \$4-\$7

Hardy has four locations around the metro; my favorite two must be downtown and Benson. Their Benson location gives the feeling of a coffee shop that builds up the community it is in. There are always many people working in this shop and talking and catching up with others. I would describe their downtown location as industrial and modern. Their coffee shops show the dedication of local coffee.

They roast their own coffee beans out of their roasting lab by their Highlander location and make their own pastries. I always love their

warmed vegan cinnamon roll.

I really tuned into the fall spirit this past visit and got a pumpkin spice latte.

Overall Rating: 8.5/10

Environment: 2/3

Customer Service: 2.5/3

Coffee/ Drink Taste: 3/3

Likelihood I'll be back: 1/1

5. Zen Coffee Company:

Address: 2504 Farnam

St, Omaha, NE 68131

Price Point: \$4-\$7

Zen Coffee is a solid

choice when it comes to coffee shops around Central. I've never experienced a bad drink from them, and they are always kind to their customers. The building itself is also open and bright. If you like specialty drinks, they have a lot of recommendations and new drinks to try. Additionally, if you like trying many different drinks from one place, they have "coffee flights," which are small portions of four drinks.

I was recommended the Harvest Moon latte; this was a blend of fall flavors.

Rating: 9/10

Environment: 2.5/3

Customer Service: 3/3

Coffee/ Drink Taste: 2.5/3

Likelihood I'll be back: 1/1

6. Sozo Coffeehouse:

Address: 1314 Jones St, Omaha, NE 68102

Price Point: \$4-\$7

Sozo is a great coffee shop for studying and hanging out with friends late at night. They are open until 10 p.m. most days and have a pool table and space for card games. They also have study rooms which can be rented out for \$2 an hour if you need to work with others on a project or just want a room for yourself. Their coffee and drinks are pretty good overall, and the atmosphere makes it possible to work and have fun.

When I visited, I got a blueberry pancake



A wall at Hardy Coffee.

Becca Rock | The Register

latte. This was interesting, and the flavors of espresso and blueberry ended up blending well with each other.

Overall Rating: 7.5/10

Environment: 2.5/3

Customer Service: 2/3

Coffee/ Drink Taste: 2/3

Likelihood I'll be back: 1/1

The Mill Coffee and Tea:

Address: 3105 Leavenworth St, Omaha, NE 68105

Price Point: \$5-\$9

7. The Mill is a beautiful place to work.

Someone once told me a coffee shop is built off its aesthetic, and you are more likely to come back if it is a good environment. The Mill is a place I do end up going back to because of how pretty it is inside, and because they are open until 10 p.m. But controversially, I do not enjoy the drinks that The Mill produces. Most times when I go to the Mill, their espresso is weak and their drinks watered down.

When I last visited, I got my typical vanilla latte with oat milk. While it was satisfactory, the taste was not as strong as I would have liked it.

Overall Rating: 5.25/10

Environment: 3/3

Customer Service: 2/3

Coffee Taste: 0/3

Likelihood I'll be back: .25/1

Central drama prepares for 'Beauty and the Beast'

Paula Gutierrez Martinez
arts & culture editor

Preparations for Central's musical this year, "Beauty and the Beast," are well underway.

"Beauty and the Beast" tells the story of Belle, who takes her father's place as a prisoner in the enchanted castle of the Beast, a prince cursed with a monstrous appearance. To revert back to his human appearance, the Beast must earn Belle's love before it is too late.

Rehearsals started in the first week of September under the direction of Drama Director Scott Mead. The show will premiere on Nov. 1 at 7 p.m. and will be followed by additional performances on Nov. 2 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for students and \$10 for adults.

This year's musical was decided by a student vote, and "Beauty and the Beast" won by a large margin, defeating lesser-known musicals like "Big Fish." Its widespread appeal was perfect for getting more people to see the play, one of Mead's goals for this fall.

The performing arts department has set some goals for improving this production. Each year, the department tries to get scheduling more concise, and this time around is no exception. It is also important that everyone knows their role, so when the curtains open, they can execute their roles.

This can prove to be a challenge, as it requires coordination of the 55 members on cast and crew, while students new to theater are still learning the ropes.

"We've got dance rehearsals, we've got musical rehearsals, we've got orchestra rehearsals going on. We've got staging rehearsals going on, and then combinations of all those put together. And then

we've also got our tech crew that's working behind the scenes after school to put things together," Mead said.

Junior Izzy Worden, who plays the part of Belle, is eager to see the payoff of all their hard work. This is Worden's first leading role, but she can draw from her experience performing in "The Wizard of Oz" her freshman year. Worden feels that her experience as a choir student, and a singer in the band, The Redwoods, will help her be a better performer onstage.

Senior Devon Richards III, who will be playing the role of the Beast, is looking forward to many aspects of the musical, ranging from makeup to stage combat. He is excited to see his transformation from human to beast and for his fight scenes with junior Charlie Gaillard, who plays Gaston. For Richards, the technical aspects of the musical are just as exciting as the performance itself. He loves seeing how sound, design and lighting come together.

Other students echoed Richards' sentiments. Sound crew heads senior Ash O'Brien and junior Jack Wilderman-Nielsen and stage manager senior Grace Spicka all agreed that seeing the technical aspects—and the performances—come together to form a finished product was one of their favorite parts of putting on a musical.

Mead spoke about how important an opportunity the musical was for Central students.

"I think, in general, it's providing an opportunity for Central students to go through the process. The beginning, the middle, the end, the auditions, the rehearsals, the tech week, the learning the lines and the songs and the dances and then bringing it all together to put on a big show on your stage to share with audiences," he said.

National Book Awards list highlights books about transition to adulthood

Fiona Bryant
managing editor

From Sept. 10 to 13, the National Book Award Foundation announced its longlists of 10 books that could win the National Book Award for each category: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Translated Literature and Young People's Literature. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the awards.

The National Book Awards are considered one of "the world's most prestigious literary awards" by the New York Times. The winning books are determined by a panel of judges, and winners are regarded as the best books from the past year written by Americans (excluding the Translated Literature category).

Five finalists for each category were announced Oct. 1, and the winners will be announced Nov. 20. The finalists for Young People's Literature were "Buffalo Dreamer" by Violet Duncan, "The Great Cool Ranch Dorito in the Sky" by Josh Galarza, "The First State of Being" by Erin Entrada Kelly, "Ka-reem Between" by Shifa Saltagi Safadi and "The Unboxing of a Black Girl" by Angela Shanté

I read four books on the longlist for Young People's Literature, all of which are great picks for high schoolers. The longlist features young adult (YA) and middle grade books across genres and includes both fiction and nonfiction. Four of the books are in verse, five are in prose and one is an autobiographical poetry collection.

I read "Ariel Crashes a Train" by Olivia A. Cole, "Mid-Air" by Alicia D. Williams, "Wild Dreamers" by Margarita Engle and "The Unboxing of a Black Girl" by Shanté. Other young adult titles on the list include "Everything We Never Had" by Randy Ribay.

The four qualifiers I read address transition from childhood to adolescence or from adolescence to young adulthood. The protagonists grow into their identities, as defined and challenged by grief, mental illness and social expectations.

In "The Unboxing of a Black Girl," Shanté depicts her transition out of childhood and explores how society's boxes for Black girls lead to a premature loss of girlhood. Musical and literary references and definitions join poetry to honor Shanté's younger self, her ancestors, and a future of joy,

self-care and progress. My favorite poem was "Girls and Women for Oil." I only wish the collection had been longer and gone deeper in some places. I rated the book 3.75 out of five stars.

"Wild Dreamers", by Margarita Engle, is a layered novel in verse following Cuban-American Ana, her friend Leandro, and Leandro's magical service dog who is trying to get Ana and Leandro together. They meet by chance in a beautiful California forest, the first of many ethereal descriptions of nature in the book. They then begin an environmental conservation group and heal from their pasts together. The writing gives the story a mystical feel, while still wholeheartedly portraying the effects death, anxiety, homelessness and environmental degradation have on teenagers. I gave the book 3.5 out of five stars.

"Ariel Crashes a Train" had been on my radar before the longlist, and it matches most closely with the contemporary LGBTQ+ young adult books I typically read. In a verse format that depicts the doubt and spiral that Ariel's OCD pulls her into, the protagonist navigates her worsening mental health over one summer. The story is well-rounded in Ariel's perception of how her abusive family and society's messaging about womanhood impact her identity. The ending could have been more expansive, though. The book was 4.5 out of five stars.

I was most impressed by "Mid-Air" in terms of how effectively and appropriately it handled issues that 14-year-olds should not have to encounter. This book was the only one to make me cry, although "Ariel" was close. Readers follow Isaiah as he grows dramatically over the summer before high school. When his best friend dies, he must consider what life he would like to lead and how he will survive the grief. As a Black boy, Isaiah faces pressures from his classmates and family on how to be a Black man in a racist society. There is so much contained in these 300 pages; I loved it. The novel was 4.5 out of five stars.

I always say I am growing apart from the YA genre after growing up on it, but that is yet to happen. It is books like these, capturing the bittersweet taste of finding yourself and how you fit into the world, that pull me back. All four books elevate their characters in their exploration of themselves in relation to the societal attitudes they resist or adopt.

It's showtime again with 'Beetlejuice Beetlejuice'

Charli Tobin
staff writer

Warning this article includes spoilers for "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice."

"Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" came out this month, 36 years after the first "Beetlejuice," and the juice is back. The sequel has been anticipated since its release date was announced in 2022, and it lived up to expectations.

It's been nearly four decades since Lydia Deetz moved into a new house to find out the previous owners were still there, and they want her out. Eventually, through shenanigans, Beetlejuice was able to convince Lydia to say his name three times and tried to marry her, but the Ghosts and her family put a stop to him.

The sequel stars Winona Ryder, Jenna Ortega, Catherine O'Hara and Micheal Keaton, and is directed by Tim Burton. "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" has a stacked cast, and they deliver.

The plot had me feeling nostalgic, but it's held back by two things, and they are Ortega's character and the villains. Ortega plays Astrid, Lydia's (Ryder) daughter.

They have a rocky relationship, with Astrid not believing Lydia's story about the first movie. Following the death of Lydia's father, Charles Deetz, Lydia and Delia (O'Hara) reunite, along with Lydia's new boyfriend Rory (Justin Theroux). But soon, Lydia starts seeing Beetlejuice (Keaton) again, as they are in the same house from the first movie.

But this is where my problems with Astrid begin. She doesn't have much impact in the movie, beyond being used as a plot device to get Lydia to go to Beetlejuice for help.

The villains Delores and Jeremy also can't seem to decide who is the main villain, either. At first, it's very clearly Delores, and then halfway through the movie it switches to Jeremy while Delores takes a backseat for the second act. Then in the third act it's Delores again, only for her to be immediately defeated. This was upsetting, as it made her seem like a non-threat the whole time and that she didn't matter nearly as much to the story.

Tim Burton brought the essence of the first movie to the 21st century while keeping the original feeling. The movie made the choice of using mostly practical effects, and it paid off. The effects have improved since the 80s while still feeling very Burton-esque. The effects really captured the atmosphere of the first movie without overshadowing everything else. One example is the Sandworm, having the same stop-motion feel while making the movement smoother.



Warner Bros. Pictures

The soundtrack keeps the first "Beetlejuice" movie hit by Day-o and re flavors the rest. Lots of the music feels like an evolution of the first movie, and is even used for jokes, as some the characters can hear the soundtrack.

The movie leans towards horror, but lets you know it's a comedy movie. The jokes are fast and keep coming, which leaves you shocked when something freaky shows up, but the jokes never stay past their welcome. The cinematography wasn't anything groundbreaking to me, like the effects, but it didn't leave me wanting more from it. Overall, I loved the movie, and I can't wait to watch it on Halloween and recommend it to people who like comedy and horror.

'Deadpool And Wolverine' gives maximum effort

Chloe Schwartz
staff writer

"Deadpool and Wolverine" follows Deadpool's invitation into the Marvel Cinematic Universe by the Time Variance Authority, which is an organization that monitors all timelines in the universe. But instead he embarks on a mission to find Wolverine, the only person who can save Deadpool's universe.

This was one of the only 16 films in history to reach \$600 million in domestic ticket sales. The cast was remarkably interesting. The movie starred Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman. Reynolds's whole family was cast. Blake Lively, his wife, played Lady-pool, and his children played Kid-pool and Baby-pool. Reynolds was also a producer for the film.

Jackman last played Wolverine in "Deadpool 2," back in 2018. "Deadpool and Wolverine" had great graphics and a good balance between action and plot throughout the movie to capture viewers' attention. The movie had amusing jokes, like when Dog-pool ran away from Nice-pool and Deadpool found him, picked him up, and said, "If you can't be a

responsible dog owner you don't deserve this little unicorn."

The conflict and anxiety of the problems leading up to the solutions kept me on the edge of my seat. There were points where I was close to crying because I was worried about the characters in some scenes. Good chunks of the movie had me open-mouthed.

I was engaged the entire duration of the movie, and I struggle to stay focused and entertained while watching movies. There were lots of amusing and sweet moments that made the whole movie theater laugh. There were points where Deadpool and Wolverine would do something like true best friends, and my best friend and I would look at each other and say "us" and laugh.

I loved this movie not only because of the jokes or actors but because you could see a true friendship bond build between Deadpool and Wolverine. Everyone went to see this movie when it came out, and it was talked about a lot by Marvel fans, like my father and me. The sassy attitude Deadpool and Wolverine gave each other like devoted friends was hilarious.



Photo Courtesy of Walt Disney Studios



Peso Pluma performs at the CHI Health Center Aug. 3. Photo Courtesy of Raquel Miranda

Eagles experience Peso Pluma concert

Gaby Antunez
staff writer

Peso Pluma entertained the crowd at the CHI Health Center on Aug. 3, 2024, as part of his Éxodo Tour of more than 35 cities. The tour is called the Éxodo tour to promote his new album, "Éxodo" which dropped on June 20, 2024.

Many Eagles were able to see him in person, and those who went were incredibly happy about attending. The concert lasted around two hours, and there was merch available for sale, ranging from hoodies to tote bags. There were many people that attended, varying from casual listeners to hardcore fans.

Students went to the concert for various reasons. Junior Dayami Huitron went to accompany her family, while senior Emma Miranda went just for the experience.

"I decided to go to the concert because I enjoyed his music," Miranda said.

Raquel Miranda, Emma's sister, said there were multiple memorable parts especially when Pluma brought out a lot of surprise guests. "Peso brought out Jasiel Nuñez to play 'Lagunas.' It was so memorable because 'Lagunas' is one of my favorite songs," Raquel Miranda said.

"Lagunas" was also Huitron's favorite part of the concert, she said, "since we were in the pit, we got to say hi and meet them." She was able to see so many different artists in person and even meet some of them just by going.

Some hit songs that he played at the concert was the single, "Ella Baila Sola" featuring Estaban Armaso, which is a very upbeat, catchy and popular song. Another song that was played was "RELOJ" featuring Ian Cornejo from the album "Éxodo." It is a very slow song with many instruments in the background. The single "Bye" was also played, which is an upbeat song that has a deep meaning.

Emma Miranda enjoyed seeing the reactions of the cheering of the crowd and "a nice duality between the performances throughout the concert." She was happy to witness all the emotions of the fans connecting with their favorite artists. She was engaged the whole time because of the variety of music, ranging from banda to rap.

Huitron and Emma Miranda said they would recommend others go to the concert, and that they would have been upset if they missed out on such an opportunity. They had no regrets about going and were very glad they went to the Peso Pluma concert. "It was so fun and hype," Huitron said.



Central students hold a banner as they lead Color Guard and marching band during the Dundee Day Parade on Aug. 24.

Photo Courtesy of OMAHA CENTRAL MARCHING BAND

Eagles brings spirit to the annual Dundee Day parade

Hattie Moeller
news editor

Omaha Central's marching band propelled up Underwood Avenue on Aug. 24, their fight song ringing through the crowd. In unison, the band and color guard highlighted the school's presence as they marched, played and twirled along the parade route, as a part of the Dundee Day festivities.

Their engagement has become an anticipated aspect of the annual event, as purple floods the Dundee streets and engulfs the community with a passion for Central.

It is also a display of Central band and color guard pride, as dozens of Central students volunteer their time to be at the morning celebration and perform. They walked alongside groups of politicians, businesses and other school representatives.

Senior Nell Farrington has participated in the parade for four straight years as a marching band member. Farrington was born and raised in Dundee, and enjoys recognizing friends, family and neighbors along the parade route. "It is very heartwarming to see everyone love the band, as much as we do playing in the band," Farrington said.

Marching band is an expression of Central's heart and soul. As students chant "Go Central Go! Go Central Go!", children of all ages danced, sang, and watched in awe.

For many Dundee families, the younger children will grow up to become Central students. Senior Owen Fuesel said, "We hope they have a little spark, and want to follow in our footsteps, and join the Omaha Central marching band!"

The family-friendly parade draws thousands of midtown locals annually. Many are students, teachers or Central alumni who can sing and dance along to their alma mater's fight song and other classic renditions.

Senior Emma Garabrandt reflected on the time and effort the music programs put into their productions. Parades, like Dundee Days, are fun ways for music students to volunteer and perform. "It pays off when we are able to perform for our community, which we have grown up in," Garabrandt said.

The initial inspiration for the Dundee Day parade began in 2000, when Dundee Dell relocated from its Dodge Street location to Underwood Avenue. Dundee Day Coordinator Eric Kaplan said, "The Dell, rather than hiring movers, asked all their regular patrons to help them move, creating a parade of stools, tables, chairs and equipment north along 50th Street."

Since then, Dundee Day and its parade have been a constant event for community members to enjoy.

Central High choir holds fundraiser for spring trip

Sayra Hernandez
staff writer

Central is having their annual fundraiser for a spring trip to Worlds of Fun as a reward for all their effort and a way to spread their talent. Some students who participated in the fundraiser are juniors Lizbeth Uriostegui-Estrada and Jazmin Guimenes-Mills.

This trip has been a tradition for many years now. It is also one of the most exciting trips for students because they get to visit places they have never been to before. This trip gives students the opportunity to build relationships with the rest of the team and make many memories.

"My favorite part about going to Worlds of Fun is going on rides with my friends, it's also nice to see other schools, too," Mills said.

Both the trip and the fundraiser are traditions, with different things being sold throughout the year. Every year it is different. This year they are selling cookie dough and house décor. In the past year, they have sold Christmas wrapping paper and other little things. They try to change it up every year so it is not repetitive.

When it comes to the fundraiser itself, students each have a unique experience because it's not a typical fundraiser. It's not like a chocolate or cookie fundraiser, the ones schools usually do. Aside from that each student must sell separately.

Whatever money they collect goes into their ticket. They make sure to always try the best they can to sell out on everything so that no student must pay or add money to their ticket. Uriostegui-Estrada, who is in her first year of choir, said, "I have Hispanic family members, so they don't really know things I run or anything and they just said they could buy cookie dough in the store, so they don't really trust ordering things online, so I haven't sold anything."

Since Uriestegi Estrada did not sell anything there's a very high chance her ticket will be paid for.

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sports & leisure

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CENTRAL FOOTBALL LOOKS TOWARD FUTURE



Senior defensive and tight end Ike Ackerman rushes to the end zone in the Sept. 6 game against Omaha South.

BRADLEY SMITH | The Register



Senior wide receiver JB Livingston locks in during the Sept. 6 game against Omaha South.

BRADLEY SMITH | The Register

Steven Dickerson
sports editor

The Central football program, which was 3-3 entering play Friday, is looking to become a dominant team in Nebraska starting this season. The addition of a powerhouse wide receiver and a multi-talented freshman are helping to accomplish that goal, despite a major loss of a transfer and a robust group of seniors that won't be playing after this season.

Expectations for the Eagles this season were strong after a 2023 season that was widely viewed by coaches and players as a transitional building year because of an entirely new coaching staff. Despite the transition, the Eagles finished 4-5, outscoring their opponents 322-162, and set high expectations for this season.

"Last year with new coaching staff was the foundation, but this year, the chemistry is a lot tighter, especially with the senior leadership," senior tight end and defensive end Ike Ackerman said.

Ackerman, who is committed to play football at Northwest Missouri State University next year, believes this year is a

pivotal turning point.

"We're telling them [younger players] of our principles and setting the culture," he said.

His goal to make Central a consistently successful team, giving examples of schools like Elkhorn South, is a sentiment echoed by assistant coach Nick Webster.

"Give us a couple of years and you're going to see us be a powerhouse," Webster said.

The team already has a strong start, with returning quarterback BJ Newsome not being a senior until next season. Newsome managed to complete 63% of his passes in the 2023 season, one of the strongest rates in the state.

Freshman quarterback, wide receiver, and defensive back Yasir Grixby has caught the attention of coaches, teammates and fans alike. His strong football IQ, versatility and quick ability to call plays has made him a player to watch for the future.

"It's reassuring that the future of Central is in bright hands like Yasir's," Ackerman said of the freshman, who still has plenty of seasons to become a leader in the state. Webster said football is in Grixby's blood and will help him keep the

team developing forward.

Success for Central hasn't come without challenges, though. Star wide receiver DaShawn Prince chose to transfer to Millard South for his junior season after a strong 2023 at Central. That left the team with a question of who would fill the role.

That person has come to be senior JB Livingston, who is playing his first year of football for Central. Livingston has dominated the field with outstanding catches and forceful runs that are often over 30 yards. Coaches remarked that Livingston has been a fantastic addition to the team.

Adding to hope for the future, Central has the top sophomores in the state in defensive back Tory Pittman III and running back Kylon Haynie. Both have explosive running abilities and can read the field. Their skills were on full display during the tough Bellevue West and the easier Omaha South game. They both have offers to play at Nebraska, with Pittman having offers to places like USC and Wisconsin as well.

"It's good to see that younger success," Ackerman said of the sophomores.

Despite the success, the Eagles face a challenge in their

FOOTBALL on page 16

Midwest Medalist: All about Paralympic badminton athlete Jayci Simon

Arisa Lattison
editor-in-chief

This year at the Paris 2024 Summer Paralympic Games, 19-year-old Jayci Simon represented the USA badminton team in women's singles and mixed gender doubles with her partner Miles Krajewski. Together they took home the first ever badminton medal for Team USA across both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is also the first time that a U.S. athlete has ever qualified to participate in parabadminton.

Simon has been playing badminton since she could walk. She started out with basketball, soccer, volleyball, dance, and gymnastics before being recruited for badminton in 2016 based on her athleticism through the Little People of America and Dwarf Athletic Association of America.

"[Because of this] my mom then got me a backyard badminton set and I started in my grandparents' backyard," she said, "which then led to camps and clinics."

At just the age of seven, she was diagnosed with acromic dysplasia, a rare form of dwarfism. There were less

than 40 cases reported in the world at the time. Due to her condition, she has persisting joint and bone pain. Simon has had around 10 surgeries in her lifetime and grew up going to physical therapy weekly. However, this did not deter her at all.

"As dwarfs we have many physical limitations, [but] this doesn't stop us from being able to do anything we set our mind to," she said. "We can do everything everyone else can do; it might just be in a different way!"

Simon went on to compete at the 2017 World Dwarf Games (WDG) and medaled in all ten events she took part in. She won gold medals in doubles badminton, basketball, the 40-meter run, and the 4x40 relay race. She also won silver medals in singles badminton, soccer, and shot put and discus.

In 2018, Simon went to her first international tournament, The Pan Am Championships, in Lima, Peru. That was where she realized her passion and talent for badminton.

"It was an eye opener to see that other people like me could compete at such an elite level," she said. "During that tournament I had also won two medals, and I realized my

potential in the sport."

As she went on to play, she made many memories, both in and out of tournaments, but her favorite match was against 10-time world champion Rachel Choong from England.

"It was my longest match going just over an hour and I won in three sets," Simon said. "That was my first tournament of the qualification period and an epic win."

Her continued hard work paid off, as on April 3, Simon qualified to represent the U.S. at the Paralympics. She explains her training process leading up to the games.

"Up until the summer months, I trained without a coach," she said. "I would create my own workout regime and have my parents throw me shuttles."

Otherwise, she had two primary coaches she would work with.

"Once every couple of months, I would go to Nebraska to train with Coach Moss [Lattison] for a long weekend," she said. "During the summer, I was fortunate enough to train at Frisco Badminton with Coach Abhishek [Ahlawat] and the

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Junior shortstop Ada Jantzen leads Eagle softball p. 14

Jantzen had highest batting average in Class A in the 2023 season and looks forward to leading the Eagles in the 2024 season, coming back with stronger leadership skills.

Tennis coach Robert Tucker discusses his last season as head coach p. 14

Boys tennis Head Coach Robert Tucker is retiring at the end of the year after 26 years teaching and nearly 20 coaching.

Union Omaha makes soccer enjoyable p. 14

Union Omaha offers an exciting atmosphere as they lead the United Soccer League. They are looking to win their league title with a strong finish.

New scoreboards and speakers at Seaman Stadium p. 15

The new scoreboards give OC Broadcasting an opportunity to expand their videography, while new speakers offer a better experience for fans.

Ada Jantzen leads Central softball as shortstop

Boe Di Lorenzo
staff writer

The Omaha Central softball team has had many blowout victories throughout their season. A key contributor has been Junior shortstop Ada Jantzen.

Her stats as of Oct. 9, 2024 have been eye-popping, as she has a .556 batting average with an on-base percentage of .619, 40 hits, two home runs and a slugging percentage of .944. The team now sits at 13-13, coming off winning the Central Invitational Tournament in September with three straight large margin victories.

Jantzen is one of the most experienced players on the team, as she has been playing competitive club softball since she was in fifth grade over the spring and summers. Not to mention how she has very well above average fielding with the some of the most action playing the shortstop position. She has only one error so far.

Jantzen has been such a key player on the team that last year she was co-team captain and had the highest batting average in Class A at .585.

Her leadership qualities also contribute to the way she and her team succeed. "For the next two seasons, I'm mostly looking forward to growing as a leader and more focusing on how I can set the team up for success. I want this team to be able to be able to compete with anyone in the state and I think that Coach Tash (Coffiel) and the other upperclassmen on the team have done such a good job growing the program," Jantzen said.

Another contributor to her success on the field has been the work Jantzen put in during the off-season.

"In the off-season, I mainly focus on going back to the fundamentals, especially with fielding. I work with my batting coach on how I'm going to be successful against all types of pitching. Then, most of the time, I'm doing some sort of lifting program," Jantzen said.

With many more games left to be played in the season, she looks forward to the games ahead and more chemistry forming with her teammates.

Tucker takes on his final swing with Central boys tennis

Katie Besancon
digital editor

Robert Tucker has been the psychology teacher at Central for the last 26 years and has also been the Central boy's tennis head coach on and off for the last 20 years.

This is his last for both roles, as he will be retiring at the end of the school year. Within the past 12 years Tucker has taken on the laid-back approach to coaching. "I keep it very similar to my teaching style, [where] I try to make my points without being abrupt or yelling while trying to build on strengths while bridging weaknesses," Tucker said.

This allows Tucker to help his athletes build confidence so they see they can succeed on the court and have skills they can develop.

"As an urban district, we have kind of a disadvantage when we compete against the suburban schools where the kids have probably been playing tennis since they were three to four years old," he said.

As a coach, he sees many sides of students, whether it's in practice, on the court or in the classroom. Tucker said that is the highlight of his job.

"My favorite thing about being a coach is being able to see students outside of an academic setting and to be able to get to know them on a much more personal level," he said.

One of the things that Tucker said he will miss most about coaching is the personal relationships he has been able to build with his athletes.

While Tucker currently doesn't get to play a whole lot of tennis because he is usually coaching the boys or the girls' tennis season, one thing he says he looks forward to is being able to join leagues and play a lot more.

During his on-and-off coaching of the Central tennis team, Tucker has made a lot of memories, not only with the sport, but with his athletes as well, his favorite being from several years ago during one of his early tennis seasons. The boys' team, although not winning state championships, did win the outstanding sportsmanship award.

"Being able to be recognized for that sense of sportsmanship, which I work on quite a bit with the kids, was nice to have," Tucker said.

As his last fall sports season is already halfway gone, Tucker has emphasized that his primary goal is to have his athletes "be better today than you were yesterday, to be able to develop your skills and a love for the game of tennis," Tucker said. After his time at Central concludes, Tucker looks forward to the future. "My post-retirement plans are much like a senior in high school - I plan on taking a gap year," Tucker said.



Coach Robert Tucker talks to players in a huddle at practice. He is in his final season coaching tennis.

BRADLEY SMITH | The Register

Union Omaha atmosphere makes soccer enjoyable

Grace Sunseri
opinion editor

I am one of those people who played soccer in elementary school, and then forgot everything I once knew about soccer. But I went to the Union Omaha vs. One Knoxville game in Omaha on Sept. 21, blind and not knowing what to expect, with a friend who also had no idea what to expect.

Union Omaha was founded in 2019. They are part of the United Soccer League, League One. They are currently 12-3-4 as of Oct. 9 and lead their league. They have three remaining regular-season games and the playoffs for the league title begin in November. Union has good standing to have a run in the playoffs or even win their league title. Needless to say, I went in with extremely elevated expectations.

We sat in the endline section, which is behind one of the goals. The tickets cost \$22.74 each, and for two tickets and after the various fees, the total came out to \$52.00. These tickets were extremely cheap for the experience and view we had. We were slightly to the left, behind the goal, giving a clear view of left field and of the player action that happens in front of the goal.

It was beautiful night to watch a soccer game. It was around 70 degrees and there was a light breeze.

During soccer games there is not always a lot of action happening, which can be boring at times. The ball is constantly changing possession with congestion at midfield and during this game neither team really had any opportunity to score.

But, in the 31st minute, Charlie Ostrem of Omaha scored the one and only goal of the game. Ostrem signed with Omaha on Jul. 31 of this year and this was his first goal on the team.

The stadium absolutely erupted, and many people had noise makers which elevated the cheers tremendously.

The most memorable part of this game for me were the fans. I have been to professional basketball, football, and volleyball games and never have I heard heckling like I did from the Union Omaha fans.

Before the match even began, an older man a few rows back from us was calling the opposing goalie out by name, first name, and making fun out of him.



The view from where the author sat on Sept. 21.

KATIE BESANCON | The Register

While the fans could be annoying with their incessant heckles, I have also never seen support like these fans. There are fans who sit in the grass, or the Berm, and they go all out. Drums, noise makers, neon-green and grey smoke bombs are just some of the things we saw.

We left after the 60th minute, just after half-time, to beat any possible severe weather home, but we did not miss too much as we witnessed the only goal of the night.

Union Omaha games are a special atmosphere with affordable prices and a great way for any Omaha resident to spend their Saturday night, soccer fan or not.

New scoreboards and speakers to bring a new fan experience to Seeman stadium

Becca Rock
chief copy editor

Scoreboards and a new sound system are bringing a new level of energy to Seeman Stadium.

Omaha Public Schools bought scoreboards for all district high school athletic facilities, including at Omaha Central, during the Nov. 4, 2023, school board meeting. The scoreboards cost \$1,374,210.00 and were bought through the company Digital Scoreboards.

Central is not just going to use it as a scoreboard though. "We don't just want to do score, touchdowns, and boring ads, we want to engage the crowd too," OC Broadcasting coordinator Benjamin Boeckman said.

The goal is to show Central "as we know who we are, but so that everyone can else can know us," he said.

OC Broadcasting is a sports-video journalism program at Central that livestreams on-campus events, and Boeckman said the group was excited to introduce instant replay to the football watching experience.

Currently, replays are already being done by the OC Broadcasting team, but one challenge of getting the replay on the board is simple communication.

"We want to make sure the people that are running the board are doing the ones and twos, the start/ stops, and the touchdowns are comfortable, before we radio them to switch the system over from Score Vision," Boeckman said, referring to the scoreboard app they use.

The broadcasting team will have the ability to compile all its camera angles to make what Boeckman called "awesome replays and videos, to really experience being at the event." Eventually, the goal is to get direct fan involvement. "Between quarters we could do a fan cam, for example we have a graphic for 'Show your Eagle,'" Boeckman said.

Overall, the scoreboard will show Central's fan environment for everyone at the games, both now and once again during the winter sports season with the indoor scoreboards.

Last spring the speaker system on the football field went bad, with a staticky, inconsistent sound.

"These speakers were original equipment, making it date back to fall of 2005," Assistant Principal and Athletic Director Rob Locken said.

Currently at Central's home football game, there is a makeshift set up of large rolled-in speakers with bulky wiring, and the speaker system was planned to be installed in early October.

"The problem we run into is that pre-pandemic, (TMS Production Integration) had everything on the shelf, now the manufacturers do not produce the speakers until they get an order in," Locken said.

While the speakers breaking is upsetting to many, Locken said it made sense, as the speakers were quite old. Locken was impressed and happy with the volume and clarity in the temporary system.

Once everything at Seeman is put together, not only will the environment be better, but "Central will be showcased, and our story will be shared to all who come into our house," Boeckman said.



BRADLEY SMITH AND AUBRI KOLTERMAN | The Register

Top: Central added a new scoreboard to Seeman Stadium. Bottom: Sophomore Connie Moennig runs a camera for OC Broadcasting.

Senior Alijah Wayne's last ride with Central football

Aubri Kolterman
staff writer

At 6'4" and 230 pounds, senior Alijah Wayne has found himself on the football field and has had a great four-year career experience at Central.

Wayne has played several positions including wide receiver, tight end, and defensive end. He is currently positioned at wide receiver and prepares by staying healthy and hydrated.

Wayne has been playing football since eighth grade, but really stepped up his junior year of high school. Sophomore year was a bit challenging for him, however, that "unique summer" was when he really found his football identity. He came through with his first interception of the year.

Junior year was a big year for Wayne, getting five sacks. The Central vs. Prep game in 2023 was a big game for him, and he played well defensively.

This year Wayne beams with confidence looking into his biggest season yet.

"I mean senior year, it just doesn't really feel real that it's here, happened so fast," Wayne said. "Seems like freshman year was yesterday."

Wayne has had two head coaches throughout high school. Jay Landstrom was his coach his freshman and sophomore year, and Terrence Mackey is now the current head coach, moving on to his second year with the program.

Landstrom said Wayne has improved immensely, he has gotten bigger and stronger, he's smart, a great leader, and a good teammate. Not only is he someone you want on your team, he cares about the team.

He has paid his dues. He always works hard and puts in the time, and Landstrom thinks he will have a big senior year. "Definitely miss coaching him, and it was a great opportunity for me to be able to work with a kid like him," he said.



Alijah Wayne defends Eagle territory during the Sept. 6 game against Omaha South.

AUBRI KOLTERMAN | The Register

Mackey said Wayne has matured and gotten stronger. He trains four times a week, on top of what he does at school. He sees leadership. The seniors have really stepped up and taken charge, including Wayne, he said.

Looking forward into this year, Mackey expects to see leadership and development and him continuing to mature to an outstanding young man.

"Wayne does well, he is always ready to come in, and always willing to put in the work," Mackey said.

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lack of specialization. Compared to other teams, many of Central's players play both offense and defense, which can lead to fatigue late in games. This is because of the sheer level of athleticism shown in the players, as many of them are multi-sport athletes with skills that lead to success in all sports.

"I was tired as hell [against Bellevue West], but my team needs me so I can't just say no," Ackerman said.

He feels that while fatigue makes it more challenging to play, he likes that most people on the team can play both sides of the ball. Livingston said that he thinks fatigue, along with penalties, played a main role in the team's Aug. 30 loss to Bellevue West.

"We just lost momentum after that first half, I think we just needed to reboot," he said.

Now that they have had multiple games, it is likely that the team will learn how to handle fatigue better, he said.

Regardless of how the team performs, the culture-building that has taken place has been the most important, Webster said.

"These guys are all great teammates," he said.

Ackerman said he hopes he can leave an impact on the younger and newer players, just like older players did with him in previous seasons. Livingston said he felt welcomed by the program and feels like it is a family.

Focusing on building culture and a positive atmosphere for players is a good goal for Ackerman this year when looking at how Central can win. John Eliot, a clinical associate professor in sports management at Texas A&M University, collected data in 2017 that showed that teams whose players identified team atmosphere as trusting and positive won far more than teams whose players did not identify their team atmosphere as such.

Ackerman and Webster believe the best way to look toward the future is by building an undeniably fierce culture that will lead to consistent success.

PARALYMPICS from page 13

elite team." (Moss Lattison is the writer's father.)

For Simon, finding a balance between badminton and other aspects of her life was challenging. During most of the qualification period, she juggled a part-time job, school, as well as training.

"You really just have to prioritize your schedule, but it [leaves] very little free time."

Simon has plans for the Los Angeles 2028 Summer Paralympics, but while she has the time, she enjoys outdoor activities such as camping, kayaking, biking, hiking and playing other recreational sports. She also likes hanging out with her friends and family. One of the people she spends the most time with is her mother. Simon looks up to her mom as one of the biggest inspirations in her life.

"She has taught me that in order to accomplish a goal, you have to work hard for it," she said. "[My mom] is my travel buddy, role model and best friend."

To those looking to start out in badminton or a sport in general, the silver medalist has a word of advice—she believes that without risk, there is no reward.

"It doesn't matter how or when, you just have to start!" she said. "I've learned that dreams are worth taking risks for. You typically only regret the things you don't try."

Football game themes announced for 2024 season

Jazmin Guimenes-Mills
staff writer

Football games are one of the most popular school events throughout the school year. Every year, there are multiple memorable football themes loved by students and staff. One of the best ways students can show their Central spirit is by showing up and popping out for the football themes.

Student Council member Victoria Cayetano explained the process on how the football game themes are picked. "Student council splits into groups and votes on the themes for the year," Cayetano said.

Cayetano also expressed excitement in regard

to the football game themes this year, especially the western game theme against Prep. "I'm excited to see everyone dressed up in their cute cowboy outfits," she said.

This year, there is a variety of themes students and families are sure to love. The game against Bellevue West on Aug. 30 had the theme of "Purple Out". Students showed up in purple outfits, some had purple paint on their face. The homecoming game this year was against South on Sept. 6 and the theme was beach. All through out the student section were floral blouses and flower leis.

On Sept. 12, Central played North as an away game. The theme for that game was "Camouflage".

Camouflage themed outfits and face paint were seen all throughout the student section. Sept. 20 was a game against Buena Vista and it'll also be an away game. The theme for that game is "Neon". Students popped out in their brightest colored outfits. Central and Westside went against each other here at Central on Sept. 27 and "Jersey" was the theme. Students wore their favorite team jersey whether it was soccer, basketball, football or a single players number.

Western was the theme for the game against Creighton Prep on Oct. 4. Students dusted off their cowboy boots and cowboy hats. At Papillion-La Vista High School on Oct. 11, Central played the Monarchs. The theme was "Secret Service." Black outfits are to be expected for this game.

Oct. 18 is the last home game at Central and we're playing against Millard North. Pink out is the theme, come dressed head to toe in pink to show your school spirit.

Our last football game of this year is going to be Oct. 25 at Fremont High School and the theme is pajama. Dress cozy in your pajamas for this last game.



A group of seniors hold signs and cheer in the student section on Sept. 6 in the game against Omaha South.

BRADLEY SMITH | The Register

Girls cross country team strong, even with young roster

Charli Tobin
staff writer

The Central High girls cross country team has been running the extra mile this year, even with a young roster. "We enjoy this year's roster; they are very coachable and are a blast to be around," Head Coach Trent Lodge said.

This year's roster has also been ahead of the last few years according to Lodge, and he is excited to build up this roster over the next four years. As for how the season is going, Lodge has been very happy with what he's been seeing at the meets. "Six of our top seven runners are freshman," Lodge said.

Violet Fannin had a time of 21 minutes and 49 seconds at the Lincoln North Star Invitational, which was the fastest time for the team at that event.

"The goal is to have our kids make state every year if not the whole team," Lodge said when asked about the growth of the talent of the team over the season. The team trains at Elmwood or Memorial Park, where they stretch, do their dynamics and their workouts.

Lodge also spoke about their seniors and how they help mentor their younger teammates. "Our seniors are great leaders," Lodge said.

The coaches, including Lodge and math teacher Molly Jensen and English teacher Martha Omar, want their seniors to take a role where they lead the team in stretches and help where they can.

"I would say I feel accomplished, as someone who has ran since the age of 4, it makes me feel proud that I can see my teammates accomplish their goals and watch as we get closer as a team," senior Kyra Fry said.

Lodge also mentioned how the team helps each other with homework and academics. Community is a big value of the team.

"I love cross country for the community. You make friends quickly and everyone is super supportive," freshman June Yamamoto said. "The community is great on the team, we always support each other and have a great time at practice," Fannin said.