

Catch the WAVE

Monthly updates from Superintendent Chambers

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Human Resources

Congratulations to our District-wide Honorees!

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to our Teachers of the Year! The Teachers of the Year will be honored at the Emerald Coast Conference Center on Tuesday, February 2, 2021. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, attendance is limited to 5 per school (see Angelique Cox's email on December 14th for details). Luckily, the event will be livestreamed for your viewing pleasure! Congratulations to the Finalists, one of whom will be named Okaloosa County's Teacher of the Year:



Joy Robertson
Bluewater
Elementary School



**Jessica Landry
Plew**
Elementary School



Megan Mueller
Fort Walton Beach
High School

We're All Valued Employees

Human Resources

Congratulations to our District-wide Honorees!

OKALOOSA COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

School	Teacher of the Year	School	Teacher of the Year
Antioch	Haiden Dauphin	Longwood	Jacqueline Jacks
Baker	Belinda Seiffert	Mary Esther	Dianne Branham
Bluewater	Joy Robertson	Meigs	Erika Hill
Bob Sikes	Daniela Burkel	Niceville	Gina Emery
Bruner	Shea Harrell	N.W. Florida Ballet	Robin Murray
Choctawhatchee	Valerie Chubb	Northwood	Erika Holt
Crestview	Sharon Morrow	Okaloosa STEMM Academy	Jill Russ
Davidson	Kimberly Sears	Okaloosa Technical College	Rhena Wienert
Destin Elementary	Michelle Rathmann	Plew	Jessica Landry
Destin Middle	Demetris Stevens	Pryor	Ginger Clark
Edge	Kristen Early	Richbourg	Becky Lubben
Edwins	Eric Anderson	Riverside	Carolyn Stuckey
Eglin	Sherry Chavers	Ruckel	Jon Olson
Elliott Point	Alyssa Porter	Shalimar	David Lawrence
Florosa	Ashley Berry	Shoal River	Amy Pearson
Fort Walton Beach	Megan Mueller	Silver Sands	Susan Moore
Kenwood	Amy Dooley	Southside	Stephanie Hicks
Laurel Hill	Kathleen Foy Redfern	Walker	Ashley Watson
Lewis	Lisa Vaughan	Wright	Laura Stitzer

SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to our Support Professionals of the Year! The Support Professionals of the Year from each worksite will be honored at the Niceville Community Center on February 5, 2021. The Okaloosa County Support Professional of the Year will be announced on that day! Finalists will be announced soon.

Human Resources

Congratulations to our District-wide Honorees!

OKALOOSA COUNTY SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

School	Name	School	Name
Antioch	Stacie Griffiths	Maintenance Grounds Support	Gary Brown
Baker	Cynthia Bell	Mary Esther	Erin Thompson
Bay Area Office	Mary N. Rivas	Meigs	Joseph H. Neely, Jr.
Bluewater	Jeanne Whyte	Niceville Complex	Lori Hupp
Bob Sikes	Vickie Precht	Niceville High School	Dwana Neyendorf
Bruner	Sammie Beard	Northwood	Michelle Painter
Choctawhatchee	Justin D. Floyd	Nutrition Center	Cynthia Critcher
Crestview	Scottie Milton	Okaloosa STEMM Academy	Senna Giles
Davidson	Michelle Geoghagan	Okaloosa Technical College	Mayela Nagy
Destin Elementary	Pamela Page	Plew	Anna Marie Haley
Destin Middle	Andy Cooper	Pryor	Melody Hess
Edge	Annette Buckley	Richbourg	Vada Moore
Edwins	Ted R. Wojciechowski	Riverside	Angela Livingston
Eglin	Terri Davis	Ruckel	Michael R. Wright
Elliott Point	Traci L. Drew	Shalimar	Debra L. Cahoon
Florosa	Tanya L. Garcia	Shoal River	Andrea Staples
Fort Walton Beach	Kyle Bryant	Silver Sands	Anita D. Mitchell
Kenwood	Penny L. Powell	Southside	Classie Mae Wilkes
Laurel Hill	Leslie Renee' Alford	Transportation Central	Amy Riggs
Lewis	Jennifer Guyton	Transportation North	Debra Duda
Longwood	Kionna Ruiz	Transportation South	Mary L Reedy
Maintenance FWB South	Austin Dale Caudill		

Pictures of the Support Professional of the Year Finalists will be in the next newsletter!

Are you Following us?



Human Resources

Congratulations to our District-wide Honorees!

OKALOOSA COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS OF THE YEAR

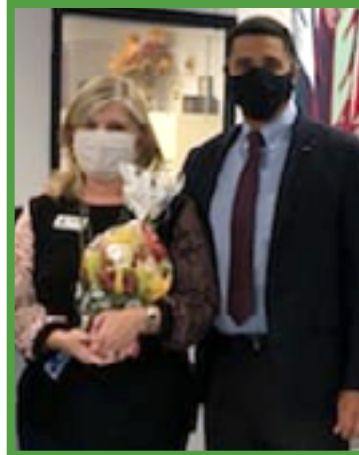
Congratulations to our Okaloosa County Administrators of the Year! The Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year were honored at the School Board Meeting on Monday, January 11, 2021.

Secondary Principal of the Year



Dexter Day
Crestview High School

Elementary Principal of the Year



Amy Klugh
Bluewater Elementary
School

Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year



Merchelle Hixson-Wells
Fort Walton Beach
High School

Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year



Susan Geering
Bluewater Elementary
School

**Congratu-
lations to
Merchelle Hixson-
Wells who has
also been named
the NASSP/FASA
Florida State As-
sistant Principal
of the Year!**

Human Resources

Milestones!

The following employees are enjoying a milestone this month based on their continuous service date. Congratulations and thank you for your efforts in this noble and important profession!

Hired in the OCSD 5 years ago this month...

- Ms. Bollhalter, Shoal River
- Ms. Connally, Longwood
- Ms. Douglas, Antioch
- Ms. Hoffman, Silver Sands
- Ms. Moon, Crestview
- Ms. Taylor, Walker
- Ms. Towe, Antioch
- Ms. Watson, Walker

Hired in the OCSD 10 years ago this month...

- Mr. Bates, OTC
- Ms. Jenkins, Ruckel
- Ms. Vaughan, Shalimar
- Ms. Waldhour, Ruckel

Hired in the OCSD 15 years ago this month...

- Ms. Anderson, Richbourg
- Ms. Coggins, Transportation
- Ms. Crews, Laurel Hill
- Ms. Downey, Kenwood
- Ms. Downs, Shalimar
- Ms. Morris, Mary Esther
- Mr. Olson, Ruckel
- Mr. Patten, Baker
- Mr. Peterson, Crestview
- Ms. Smith, Shoal River

Hired in the OCSD 20 years ago this month...

- Ms. Diamond, Elliott Point
- Ms. Sullivan, Elliott Point

Hired in the OCSD 25 years ago this month...

- Ms. Rushing, Edwins
- Ms. Switzer, Wright
- Ms. Whiddon, Edge
- Dr. Hale, Human Resources

Hired in the OCSD 30 years ago this month...

- Ms. Lee, Destin Middle

Hired in the OCSD 35 years ago this month...

- Ms. White, Davidson



Professional Services

WE'RE
HIRING!

Do you know someone who is interested in becoming a teacher?

Are you a para-professional who has considered a teaching career?

Do you have a child who has recently graduated from college but hasn't settled into a professional position?

Is someone in your family a recent military retiree and looking for a second career?

Why not share with them the option of becoming a teacher? It is easier than you might think, and now the starting salary of \$44,300 is more competitive than ever before!

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the minimum requirements to teach in Florida?

A: To begin your teaching career, you must

1. Hold a bachelor degree in SOMETHING (it doesn't need to be in the education field) and
2. Unless your degree matches the content area, pass a subject area test in the content area you wish to apply. For example, a degree in English would allow you to teach English and a degree in math would allow you teach math. A degree in recreation would not allow you to teach PE. You would have to pass the PE subject area test.

Q: How much does it cost to take a subject area test?

A: \$150

Q: How do I see what the test looks like?

A: You can take a practice test as well as register by going to the testing website. www.fl.nesinc.com . To find the practice test, select a subject area test at the top, go to the bottom and click resources, and then select sample questions.

Cont.

Professional Services

Q: Where do I take the test?

A: There are a number of testing sites available. The three nearest locations are Northwest Florida State College, Pensacola State College, and Pensacola Pearson Testing Site. The testing website shows all the locations (including military bases if you have access).

Q: So, if I have a bachelor's degree and pass a subject area tests, is that it?

A: That's all that it takes to be hired; however, after you are hired, you will have three years to take your general knowledge tests, any remaining subject area tests, and your professional educator test. Most people also need to complete 15 hours of college coursework within the three year period. These are usually online and taken at one of our local colleges or universities.

Q: What if I don't have a bachelor's degree yet?

A: Many college and universities offer work at your own pace/online education degrees. We routinely assist students in completing their course requirements from Northwest Florida State College, University of West Florida, Grand Canyon University, University of Phoenix, Western Governor's University, and many more.

Q: If I am employed as a paraprofessional, does OCSD provide any assistance towards my degree?

A: OCSD does not provide financial assistance; however, we will make accommodations to your work schedule for practicum hours, and at the time of your full-time student teaching assignment, OCSD will cover your insurance and return you to a like or similar para position if you are not hired in a teaching position.

Q: Where else can I get more information?

A: The Professional Services Department would be glad to help anyone navigate the path to a teaching career. Please contact us at (850) 833-5857.



Risk Management

It's time to check your paystub!

Make sure that your Open Enrollment elections are ALL correct.

If you participate in the FSA program, this is the month the new annual deductions start coming out of your check...so, look it over carefully! If you have a discrepancy, call the Risk Management office immediately so we can investigate and help. Please have your "Benefits Confirmation Summary" handy before you call. We are always happy to help. You can reach the Risk Management Department at (850) 833-3190.

Are you new to OCSD's benefits?

Are you enrolled in a Medical Plan? Did you receive your Take Care Visa Flex Card? All new hires from the beginning of the 2020-21 school year should have received the Take Care Visa Flex card over the Winter Break. The Take Care Visa Flex Card has money loaded on it and the card becomes effective January 1, 2021.

If you didn't receive your card, call our office immediately so we can investigate and help. Please check with HR (833-5800) before contacting the Risk Management office and make sure the District has your CURRENT address on file. If you need to make a change of address, HR is the only department that can make such changes. If your address is correct and you didn't receive a Take Care Visa Flex card, we can order another card for you. We are always happy to help. Again, you can reach the Risk Management Department at (850) 833-3190.

Not exactly sure what kind of benefit's OCSD has to offer or what you signed up for?

Check out this link! <https://ocsd.fbmcbenefits.com/>

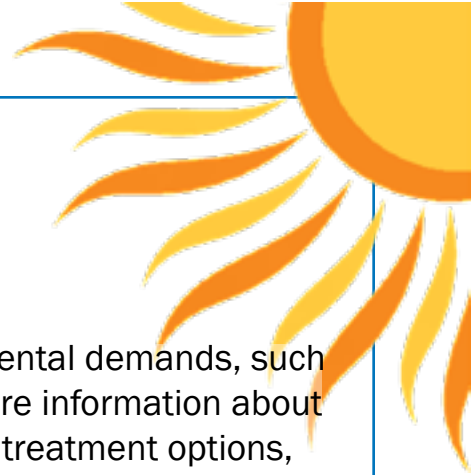
Also check out our Risk Management Department webpage on the OCSD website! It's full of valuable information. <https://www.okaloosaschools.com/depts/rm>

Employee Wellness

According to the Harvard Business Review (Dec 2010), 57% of people with high health risk reached low-risk status by completing a worksite cardiac rehabilitation and exercise program. Are you utilizing the benefits that United Healthcare provides? Contact Risk Management at (850) 833-3190 to find out more!

Risk Management

Employee Wellness



Stressed?

Stress is our body's way of responding to physical, emotional, or mental demands, such as those imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. If you would like more information about the signs and symptoms of stress, its effects, and management or treatment options, please click www.ocsd-fl.safeschools.com/login for a 12-minute course. Your employee EID is your username.

Your mental health is important. Our District Website has many resources for you in this area:

<https://www.okaloosaschools.com/wellness/>

<https://w?q=content/mental-health&q=content/mental-health>

Employee Assistance Program

One of the things you'll find at the link above (among others) is information about our Employee Assistance Program (4 free sessions each year for you or your family members) with a Licensed Mental Health Counselor or Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Services include counseling for a variety of needs, including many related to stress and similar emotional issues. If you are interested in information regarding this program, please contact the Pattison Professional Counseling Center (<https://www.ppcfcl.com/>) and let them know you are an Okaloosa School District Employee. They have two offices: Fort Walton Beach (850) 863-2873 and Crestview (850) 682-1234.

7 Tips for Working From Home

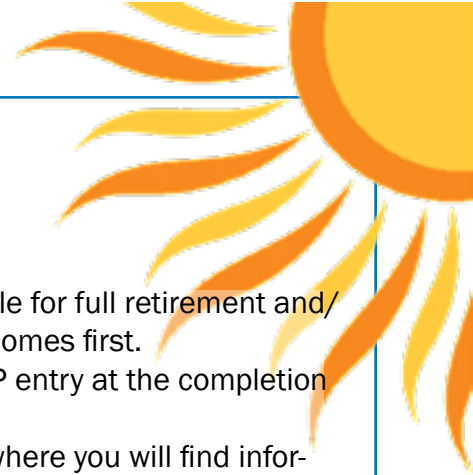
We know that working remotely can be challenging in many ways. TheMuse.com lists some tips for staying productive and maintaining balance. They may not all fit your MySchoolOnline model...but maybe they do! We've listed some to consider below. What others might you suggest that we may be able to share next month? Let us know!

1. Get Dressed
2. Designate a Workspace of Home Office
3. Keep Clearly Defined Working Hours
4. Build Transitions Into (and Out of) Work
5. Don't Get Too Sucked in by the News – or Anything Else
6. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
7. Don't Forget to Socialize

If you want to read the article in its entirety, you can find it here:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/coronavirus-work-from-home-tips>

Retirement



Highlights

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

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

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

Social Security Information

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

Medicare

Are you close to 65 years of age? Check out this website to make sure you know your facts and to avoid any penalties for not registering by your deadline.

<https://www.medicare.gov/>

Curriculum & Instruction

iReady Reminders

- The i-Ready Diagnostic Window has been extended to January 7- February 5.
- The first Diagnostic is automatically assigned, but an administrator or teacher must manually assign subsequent Diagnostics.
- Administrators (or teachers) should assign the Diagnostic to the class the night before or the morning of testing. Do not schedule ahead of time, or students will not be able to continue in personalized instruction until the diagnostic is complete. Only assign one subject per student at a time.
- Monitor completion and rushing using the Diagnostic Status Report during your Diagnostic Window. Ensure each student completes a Diagnostic within 21 days of starting a test to avoid test expiration. Teachers should actively monitor test expiration and rush alerts.
- Retest students as needed within the Diagnostic Window (Red Flags for rushing).

How to Assign a Diagnostic

1. Select Assess & Teach from the top navigation.
2. Select Assessment for the category.
3. Select Reading or Math under Diagnostic or Diagnostic & Standards Mastery.
4. In the Actions dropdown, select Diagnostic under Assign or Cancel. The corresponding pop-up will appear. Make sure to click the arrow after each step to move forward!
5. Choose Classes/Report Groups or Students.
6. Use the checkboxes to select your population.
7. Review your selections and click Assign Diagnostic or Cancel Diagnostic.

Curriculum & Instruction

mySchool Online End of Semester Reminders

MSO Teachers

If students have earned Engagement Points, teachers should add them to the student's final grade at the conclusion of the semester.

Covid-19 Update



The most recent COVID information on Okaloosa Schools that has been provided by the Florida Department of Health is outlined below. You may know that we have been updating information similar to this on our website weekly since early October. This particular data covers the period of September 6th through January 2nd.

Amidst the pandemic and all of the challenges that we are facing in our communities and our schools, the following summary of information might be of interest to you:

- Almost 99% of our Elementary School Students have been COVID free this year.
- Almost 98% of our Middle School Students have been COVID-free this year.
- Almost 96% of our High School Students have been COVID-free this year.

The latest word from our Okaloosa County Department of Health on transmission within our schools was that only **one out of ten** COVID cases we've seen have resulted from transmission within the school building. We will continue to follow established protocols as we move into the second semester and will do our very best to create a safe and healthy environment for our students and staff.

September 6, 2020 through January 2, 2021

	% of Students Identified as COVID- Positive	% of students not identified as COVID- Positive
Elementary School average (E)	1.3%	98.7%
Middle School average (M)	2.2%	97.8%
High School average (H)	4.2%	95.8%

For school specific statistics, please click [here](#).