

HIGHLIGHTS

A publication for the families, patrons and organizations of the Elkhorn Public Schools District.

Student Learning and Successful Outcomes Remain Priority Despite Pandemic Disruptions

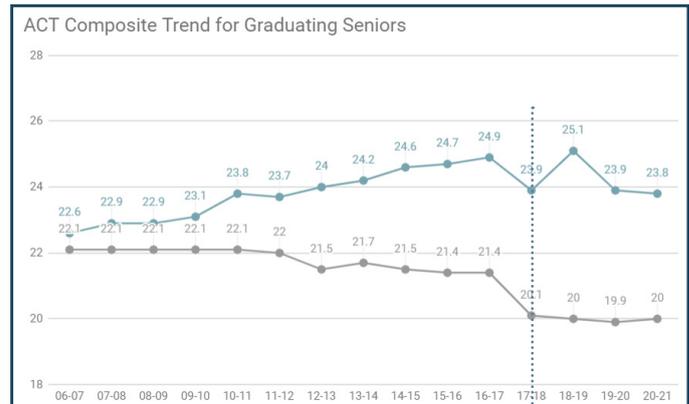
Over the course of the past two years, Elkhorn Public Schools (EPS) worked toward a clearly defined goal of ensuring the continued success of its students and maintaining standards of excellence despite pandemic challenges. To align with this goal, EPS students participated in full in-person learning with minimal time in remote learning during a period when few other districts nationwide were successful in doing so.

Given the understanding that in-person learning best accomplished the goal, EPS teachers, staff, and administrators dedicated themselves to ensuring in-person learning remained available. "EPS staff at all levels, from administrators to custodians, worked together as a team to do what was best for students: provide a stable in-person learning environment during a time of instability. The cooperation and teamwork were phenomenal," said Carla Rowher, Spring Ridge Elementary teacher and Elkhorn Education Association president. It is thanks to this partnership and the resiliency and motivation of our students that EPS proudly continued to see high levels of success in all facets of student learning in the face of disruptions.

High levels of success for EPS students means many things such as continuing a trend of graduating over

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The 20-year ACT Composite Trend graph depicts the ever-widening gap created between EPS seniors annually striving to reach the expectation of excellence that has been set and the average composite score attained by senior students across Nebraska. Notably, the 2017-2018 school year was the first year in which all Nebraska junior students were required to take the ACT, therefore explaining the slight dip in the composite score trend. Additionally, although participation remained high in EPS during the 2020-21 school year, participation at the state level dropped. The ACT is a culminating measure that represents the output of many in our EPS K-12 system and our partnership with the community.

98 percent of students, further widening the composite ACT score gap between EPS seniors and the state of Nebraska average, and seeing over 80 percent of EPS students in grades K-9 score at or above national averages on MAP Growth assessments in reading and math.

Why EPS?

"EPS students are second to none when it comes to their curiosity and zeal for learning. This is due to effective teaching at all levels as well as the phenomenal familial and communal support of EPS."

- Mike Gambrel, Elkhorn Middle School

In addition to academic successes, record numbers of students remained engaged in extracurricular activities,

earning various team and individual awards and championships, and continued to participate in student organizations and events that contribute greatly to Elkhorn community efforts.

As Cherie Kerr, Elkhorn South High School teacher, states, "EPS students have a drive and willingness to put in the time and effort to maximize their potential in all areas". It is this student drive, paired with the culture of high expectations that has been created in partnership with involved parents and supportive community patrons, that fosters our culture, and it remains a vital aspect in ensuring the future success of every individual student at every level of their learning, both today and into the future.



During the most recent two academic years, a combined total 21 EPS students were named National Merit Finalists, an annual recognition designated for only the top 15,000 student applicants nationwide.

DISTRICT NEWS

Unprecedented Rates of Student Enrollment Growth Continue, District Opens 3 New Buildings During Pandemic

Adapting to growth is not a new concept to EPS as the District continues to see an average annual rate of student enrollment growth of nearly 6%. In response, EPS continually works to determine necessary next steps in ensuring that every student will have a viable place to learn well into the future. Through it all, a strong sense of partnership and support continues to permeate our ever-growing, always-changing community. "Elkhorn is unique because of the way they have adapted to growth but still keep the district feeling like a small, close knit community" says Kayla Kobes, a teacher at Elkhorn's Blue Sage Elementary.

In response to the growth and development of our community, three new school buildings have been opened in the previous two years. The building projects, which were completed on time and within budget despite pandemic disruptions, represent a new school for every level of learning including Woodbrook Elementary, Elkhorn North Ridge Middle School (ENRMS), and Elkhorn North High School (ENHS). The schools are all located in the northwest quadrant of the district which has been identified

as one of the fastest growing areas in our community. Projections show it remaining as such for several more years given numerous pieces of land within the area that remain yet to be developed. While ENRMS and ENHS are not expected to reach enrollment capacities for several years, current projections show Woodbrook Elementary reaching building capacity by the 2023-2024 school year as a result of the extensive residential development surrounding it. As such, two additional elementary schools will be needed in the future to accommodate further development in the area. Notably, land on the south side of EPS boundaries is significantly closer to being fully developed.



In May 2022, ENHS will graduate its first class of seniors. Nearly 200 ENHS students will be included in the EPS Class of 2022 made up of over 700 students striving to continue the trend of graduating over 98% of seniors.

Regardless of the challenges brought on by continued growth and nearly 500 new students entering EPS's doors every August, the District remains one of the lowest cost per pupil districts in the state of Nebraska. With an average cost per pupil of just over \$11,300, EPS proudly provides a high quality education to students in a cost effective way with over 65% of the annual budget spent directly on student instruction.

Why EPS?

"While we are certainly a growing school district, EPS still functions like a close-knit community. Much of our staff live in the community and send their children to our schools. Quite a few of our teachers are former students. School board members are our neighbors, and we all care so much about our students. To me, EPS is family!"

- Peg Pearson, West Bay Elementary

Opened in August 2020
Current Enrollment: 394
Functional Capacity: 600 students

Opened in August 2021
Current Enrollment: 199
Functional Capacity: 900 students

Opened in August 2020
Current Enrollment: 882
Functional Capacity: 1,250

DISTRICT NEWS

EPS Prepares Students for Lifelong Learning on All Paths

With a core mission of developing lifelong learners, EPS continually works to guarantee that every student has the opportunity to follow any path they choose upon completion of their primary education. To assist students in better understanding their options and determining the best course of action moving forward, EPS focuses on building a core educational foundation and offering career explorations, internships, and expert sharing sessions to raise awareness of future prospects.

In alignment with the goal of opening every future door, EPS provides a strong educational base of required core classes that, especially when paired well with elective coursework, aims to give students a running start upon completion of their EPS education. In addition to meeting the standard graduation requirements in science, social studies, reading and writing, in the most recent EPS graduating class, over 97 percent of students completed Algebra II. Given its reputation of being a core building block for mathematics, completion of Algebra II is a proven indicator of future educational success. Notably, over 50% of the EPS Class of 2021 also completed at least 50 credits throughout their high school career, exceeding the EPS graduation requirement of completion of 42 credits. Staff members also work closely with students and their families to align elective coursework with future plans and the educational needs required to be successful on that path.



Detailed curriculum cards are always available for review at www.elkhornweb.org/programs/curriculum.

Why EPS?

"EPS students show up every day, ready to learn. They have high expectations for themselves and continually strive to meet them."

*- Paige Baumert,
Elkhorn North Ridge Middle School*

To further assist students in determining and understanding their future intentions, EPS created a Career Awareness Program which gives students numerous opportunities to learn more about individual fields, specific careers, and military opportunities. Monthly "Eat with an Expert" sessions allow students to meet in small groups with career experts to learn more about a specific field and the educational or training needs to pursue it, as well as build relationships with the expert who can then be a resource for the student in the future. During the current academic

year, "Eat with an Expert" presenters have represented a broad range of industries including skilled and technical sciences, human services, business management and entrepreneurship, and health sciences. The Career Awareness Program also partners with local businesses and organizations to annually offer over 100 students the opportunity to participate in internships, job shadows, business tours, and teacher cadet positions to give students real life experience and better insight into the day-to-day happenings of an individual within specific industries. "Through these partnerships, students can link their core curriculum with the world of work and develop skills and attitudes that will prepare them for future employment," says Dana Buurman, Career Awareness Program advisor. "Students engaging in these activities enhance their personal growth and gain assistance with making wise career choices", she says.

Regardless of the way a student chooses to map their future, EPS strives to be a foundational developer and collaborative partner by inspiring students to focus on building the knowledge and skills necessary to be responsible citizens and lifelong learners.

If your business or organization is interested in providing career opportunities to EPS students, please contact Dana Buurman at dbuurman@epsne.org.

Did you know?

With the opening of Elkhorn North High School in August 2020, EPS began offering high school students across the district the opportunity to elect welding courses for the first time. The EPS welding lab has since seen nearly 180 students complete courses.





HIGHLIGHTS

The EPS Highlights are distributed for the sole purpose of informing district residents of the programs, procedures, and progress of the school district. We encourage you to read the Highlights, participate in activities in your neighborhood school, and offer feedback on information you would like to see shared. Questions or comments can be directed to the Administration Office by calling (402) 289-2579 or emailing kperchal@epsne.org.

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Sara Fjell, Activities Director

Elkhorn North High School

Dan Radicia, Principal
Emily Christensen, Assistant Principal
Luke Ford, Activities Director

Elkhorn South High School

Mark Kalvoda, Principal
Rachel Bruce, Assistant Principal
Roger Ortmeier, Activities Director

Elkhorn Grandview Middle School

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Elkhorn Middle School

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Elkhorn Ridge Middle School

Tanner Schutt, Principal

Elkhorn Valley View Middle School

Chad Soupir, Principal

Arbor View Elementary

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Amy Christ, Principal

Fire Ridge Elementary

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Hillrise Elementary

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Manchester Elementary

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Sagewood Elementary

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Skyline Elementary

Sarah Yandell, Principal

Spring Ridge Elementary

Laurinda Petersen, Principal

West Bay Elementary

Jen Coltvet, Principal

West Dodge Station Elementary

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Westridge Elementary

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