

Omaha Public Schools Board of Education

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Dec. 11: Departing board members, academic progress highlight OPS Board meeting

Belvedere Elementary School principal Shaneice Udofia and Crestridge Elementary School principal Valerie Varas were recognized with the 2024 Lozier Foundation MOEC LIGHTS Outstanding Elementary Principal Award during the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) Board of Education meeting. Superintendent Matthew Ray and board members commended their leadership. The meeting also included farewells to departing board members Margo Juarez, Tracy Casady, and Spencer Head, each acknowledged for their contributions and service. Juarez, who is transitioning to the Nebraska Legislature, encouraged others to consider joining the board, emphasizing the value of community engagement.

The OPS Board reviewed several significant reports, including updates on academic performance and graduation rates. Chief school improvement officer Susanne Cramer shared that the district showed improvement in English-Language Arts (ELA) and Math proficiency across many grades in 2023-24 compared to previous years, despite changes in standards and cut scores. At the high school level, ACT scores reflected gains from 2021-22 but remained below pre-pandemic levels. Graduation rates climbed to 72.2% district-wide, with increases at several high schools, including South High, where targeted support initiatives such as Senior Saturdays were credited with contributing to success. However, dropout rates have risen over the past six years, reaching 5.26%.

Public comments highlighted student advocacy and community concerns. Central High School's student progressives club, represented by Fiona Bryant, called on the board to update a 2017 resolution to ensure protections for undocumented students and their families amidst potential federal policy changes. The board also approved a wide-ranging consent agenda, including staffing adjustments, significant contracts, and funding allocations for educational programs and infrastructure improvements.

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