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Columbus Public Schools

# DISCOVERIES

Spring 2024

ENGAGING ALL LEARNERS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS



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*Discoverers of Distinction*

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## Down To The Minute



Review the Board of Education's recent meeting minutes online. To access the minutes, use your smart device's camera to scan the QR code on the left.

## About This Letter

**DISCOVERIES** is published three times a year (one printed and two digital) by the Columbus Public Schools, P.O. Box 947, Columbus, NE 68602-0947.

Dr. Troy Loeffelholz is the Superintendent of Schools and Nicole Anderson is the CPS Foundation and Marketing Director.

The Columbus Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicap in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities. **The Columbus Public School District** is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you have any special needs requests that will assist you in participating in services, programs and activities of the Columbus Public School District, please contact your building principal or the Superintendent of Schools. **Board of Education:** President Doug Willoughby; Vice President Mike Jeffryes; Candy Becher, Mark Brown, Doug Molczyk and Theresa Seipel.

**ON THE COVER:** A Columbus Middle School student adjusts a heat lamp during equipment tests in Heather Hauder's 6th-grade science classroom. CMS science teachers, Anna Harms, Justin Wardyn and Hauder were awarded a Columbus Public Schools Foundation Classroom grant which they purchased stands for heat lamps, allowing students to better utilize the equipment and perform more experiments.



## First Honorees of Discoverers of Distinction Announced

CPS Foundation will hold the first annual Discoverers of Distinction Ceremony on April 18, 2024. The inaugural class of inductees will include members in the categories of Legacy Discoverers of Distinction and Honorary Discoverers of Distinction.



### Scan Now To Purchase Your Discoverers of Distinction Ceremony Tickets!

Above: Columbus High School Principal Dave Hiebner, right, watches as Love Signs installs the Discoverer of Distinction display at CHS in May of 2023.

## Legacy



- **ADRIANNE ELLEFSON ROGERS**  
Class of 1950 - Physician, Researcher and Educator



- **DR. S. KAY (BECHER) ROCKWELL**  
Class of 1957 - Professor & Evaluation Specialist in the Dept of Ag Leadership, Education and Communication at UNL, Humanitarian



- **RON LAMBERT**  
Class of 1957 - Entrepreneur and Real Estate Developer



- **DR. JOANN EICKHOFF-SHEMEK**  
Class of 1970 - Professor and Author

## Honorary



- **PHIL RAIMONDO**  
Former Chairman and CEO, Behlen Manufacturing



- **TONY "TR" RAIMONDO**  
Former Chairman and CEO, Behlen Manufacturing



<https://bit.ly/3vi5Xxk>



<https://apple.co/3vhacJP>

# Download our app!

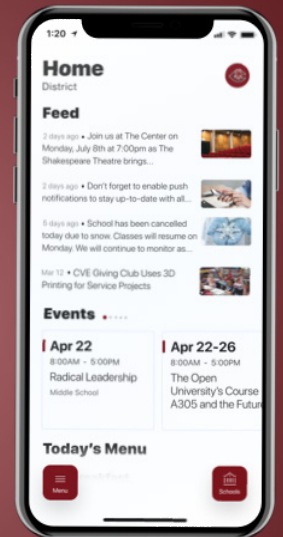
It's everything Discoverers, **in your pocket.**

¡Dale un vistazo a nuestra aplicación!

Está todo Discoverers, **en tu bolsillo.**

Découvrez notre app!

Toutes les informations scolaires de **Discoverers.**



# District keeps moving forward 3

## Strategic Planning, Superintendent Hiring, Bond Issue happening across CPS

**Dr. Troy Loeffelholz**  
Superintendent

What is not happening at Columbus Public Schools? From my seat, that list is very short. Our school district continues to distinguish itself from other school districts with the success of our students and staff.

It is our job to continue gaining momentum for the best education we can provide our student body.

This spring we will be starting a new chapter for Columbus Public Schools. Our school district is going through a comprehensive strategic planning process to identify the needs of our school district over the next 3-5 years.

A road map of sense to provide a direction for our board of education, administration,

and staff. Our strategic plan is long overdue and we need to look into the future and shape our school district to meet the needs of our community.

The board of education is currently searching for a replacement for myself as superintendent of Columbus Public Schools.

These past fourteen years have been awesome leading a great school district. I can't wait to see what the strategic plan sets in place and the goals for this school district into the future. The board of education will announce the next superintendent on March 25, 2024. I will work with that individual

on a transition plan so it will be a smooth process for everyone.

This spring our board of education has decided to pursue a \$26 million dollar bond issue. The bond vote will be during the primary election on May 14, 2024. The bond issue will entail safety and security at all of our school buildings. This will include bullet

protection film for all glass doors, secured vestibule entrances at four of our elementary schools, and new security cameras across the school district.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

## Fast Facts

Read more about the proposed projects, information about bonds and updated population data.

**PAGE 4**

## Community-Wide Emergency Response Training Exercise in Columbus set for April

After nearly two years of extensive conversation and planning, numerous Columbus area agencies are coming together for an Emergency Response Training Exercise in order to be better prepared in the event of an emergency.

Platte County Emergency Management is spearheading the exercise in collaboration with the Columbus Police Department, Platte County Sheriff's Office, Columbus Fire Department, Columbus Public Schools, Columbus Community Hospital, East Central District Health Department and Columbus City Hall.

The exercise will take place beginning at noon on Friday, April 19, 2024, at Columbus High School, 3434 Discoverer Drive – a day in which CPS students are not in school. The exercise itself will take place from approximately 33rd Avenue to 41st Avenue.

"I'm excited to see everyone working together toward a common training goal," Platte County Emergency Manager Tim Hofbauer said. "All those involved in the planning and participating in these exercises

have invested a lot of time and are truly invested in the safety of the community."

Columbus Police Chief Charles Sherer emphasized the importance of the training exercise.

"No one wants to think a situation like this could happen in our community; however, as situations across the country have shown us, no one is exempt.

These situations can occur anywhere, in any size community," Sherer said. "In order for local law enforcement to prepare for events such as this, it is necessary to undergo this type of training to show our preparedness; both our strengths and our weaknesses."

The Local Emergency Planning Committee made of representatives from the aforementioned agencies began this process in Summer 2022 with monthly meetings that also saw tabletop exercises completed in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

During the April 19th training exercise, volunteer actors will be role players. Emergency Management is coordinating the exercise, while local law enforcement agencies will work to contain the threat. The Columbus Fire Depart-

ment will handle treating and transporting victims, while Columbus Public Schools will focus on its emergency response and reunification. Columbus Community Hospital will treat victims who are brought in for emergency care.

"We don't want to be inventing a process in real time," said Dr. Mark Howerter, the hospital's chief medical officer. "Our goal is to practice, troubleshoot and perfect so if this ever does occur, we have processes in place and know we can be as efficient as possible. We want to test our ability to respond to a mass casualty incident and be prepared for an event like this."

Those involved praised the collaboration among the agencies.

"This is an amazing group. We all have a part to play and the collaboration has been outstanding," Columbus Police Capt. Doug Molczyk said. "All of the agencies involved with this exercise practice and train for worst-case scenarios. It is exercises like this one where we combine all our independent training into one. We need to know how to work together as a team and that is one of the goals of this exercise."

Columbus Public Schools Superintendent Troy Loeffel-

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

## PARENT SURVEY

### Parent & Guardians

As part of the strategic planning process, ask that you complete the online parent survey. We need your feedback!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PDZMRRS>

### Padres y Tutores

Como parte del proceso de planificación estratégica, las Escuelas Públicas de Columbus enviarán una encuesta en línea para padres. ¡Necesitamos sus comentarios!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PGR839D>

### Parents et Tuteurs

Dans le cadre du processus de planification stratégique, les Ecoles publiques de Columbus enverront une enquête en ligne aux parents. Nous avons besoin de vos commentaires!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PGCYTCW>





# Fast Facts

## DISTRICT BOND REFERENDUM COLUMBUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



### WHAT'S PROPOSED?

On March 1st, the Columbus Public Schools Board of Education approved a facilities bond referendum in the amount of \$26 million based on results of voter surveys, a community town hall meeting and the effects that LB 878 could have on our growing school district. The vote will take place on May 14th.

#### WHAT'S PROPOSED?

- **Safety and Security Improvements in the District's existing buildings and facilities**
  - Bullet resistant window coverings
  - Security camera updates
  - Secure and controlled entrances
- **Additions and improvements to existing elementary buildings to include dining areas and kitchens at Centennial, Emerson, North Park and West Park.**
- **Addition and improvements to the existing middle school building to include a classroom addition and remodeling of dining facilities.**
- **Providing for the necessary furniture, equipment and apparatus for such additions, renovations and improvements.**

#### THE PROPOSED PROJECTS WILL:

- Will meet the immediate facility needs of Columbus Public Schools.
- Will address safety and security needs across all district buildings.
- Will expand eating and kitchen preparation areas at four elementary schools where they are not large enough to accommodate the student population.
- Will expand CMS dining areas to accommodate 1,200+ students. The current space is designed for 800 high school students.
- Will relieve overcrowded classrooms at Columbus Middle School.

### WHAT IS A BOND?

A bond is a State-approved funding process for a set scope of projects.

When voters approve a bond proposal, the school district sells bonds in the authorized amount and uses the proceeds of the sale to pay for those projects in the bond proposal.

#### BONDS CAN BE USED FOR:

- Construction of new school buildings or additions to existing school buildings.
- Land purchases as well as site development and improvements.
- Purchase loose furnishing, equipment and some technology purchases.
- Remodeling existing school buildings.
- Playground development and improvements.

#### BONDS CANNOT BE USED FOR:

- Salaries and service contracts.
- Portable classrooms for temporary use.
- Textbooks.

CPS is a **SEPARATE ENTITY** from the City of Columbus.

### DISTRICT GROWTH

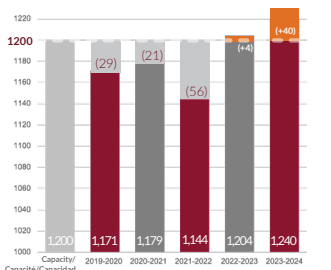


**HAVE QUESTIONS?**  
CLICK OR SCAN TO REVIEW THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ONLINE!  
<https://www.columbuspublicschools.org/bondfaqs>

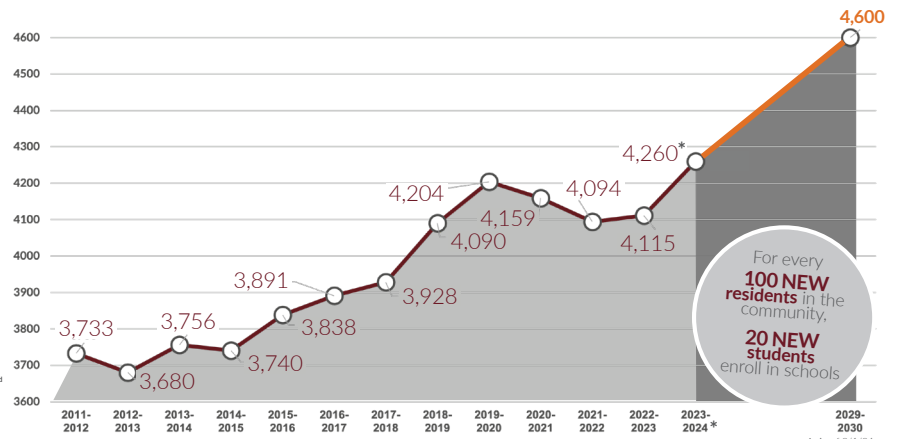
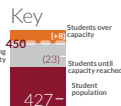
The **SPACE AND FACILITY** needs **ARE REAL** and are **NOT GOING AWAY.**

CPS' projected enrollment for 2030 is 4,600 students, an increase of 340 students from the current year.

#### COLUMBUS MIDDLE SCHOOL



CMS has a current population of 1,240. That is 40 students over capacity and 440 than the building's cafeteria was designed for.



For every **100 NEW** residents in the community, **20 NEW** students enroll in schools.

\* As of 2/1/24

### LEARN MORE

# CPS Names Finalists for Next Superintendent 5

Three move forward for interviews, Board of Education to decide by month's end

On Monday, March 4, 2024 the Columbus Public Schools Board of Education met with Consultants from McPherson & Jacobson to review candidates for the position of Superintendent for Columbus Public Schools. By unanimous approval, three names were moved forward for interviews to be held on March 20th and March 21st.

## DR. DEVIN EMBRAY

Dr. Embrey began his teaching career at Montezuma Community Schools and Knoxville Community Schools in Iowa. He began his administrative career at Fort Dodge Community Schools as an assistant principal.

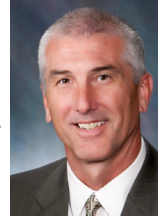


Other administrative positions include principal and assistant superintendent at West Delaware County Community Schools, superintendent at Independence Community Schools and is currently the superintendent at Glenwood Community Schools since 2010. Dr. Embrey

is married to Angie and they have three grown children and one in college.

## DR. VERN FISHER

Dr. Fisher began his teaching career at Oakland-Craig High School. From there Dr. Fisher spent the next twelve years in teaching and administrative positions in several school districts in Texas.



Dr. Fisher served as a principal in the Van and Jacksonville Independent School Districts.

In 1998, Dr. Fisher returned to Nebraska and became principal at Beatrice Middle School and then Lincoln Northeast high school.

Dr. Fisher also served in central office positions in Lincoln Public Schools and Grand Island Public Schools.

Dr. Fisher was the Superintendent at South Sioux City and is currently at Gibbon Public Schools.

Dr. Fisher is married to his wife Tracy and

they have three grown children who are all in education and four grandchildren.

## DR. CHIP KAY

Dr. Kay began his career as a teacher in Ogallala Public Schools. While there Dr. Kay also served as an assistant principal and activities director.



Following Ogallala, Dr. Kay held teaching and coaching positions at North Platte High School. At Perkins County Public Schools, Dr. Kay held positions of assistant principal, activities director, and technology coordinator. In 2013, Dr. Kay became superintendent of Shelby-Rising City Public Schools and held this position from 2013-2020.

Since 2020, Dr. Kay has served as the Director of Finance and Human Resources for Columbus Public Schools. Dr. Kay is married to Jeanne Kay and they have three children, one grandchild, and one on the way.

## Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, Hospital, ECHD Among Training Participants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

holz echoed that sentiment.

"It is very clear that members of all groups have and want to create safe learning environments for all schools within our community. This drill is an opportunity to train schools, fire and rescue and law enforcement to appropriately respond to a crisis we all hope and pray does not happen in our community," Loeffelholz said. "If it does, the data and what we learn will help us respond to serve the people we are responsible for."

Platte County Sheriff Ed Wemhoff said having all of the area agencies involved collaborate and prepare for a "what if" situation is paramount to serving its citizens properly.

"I believe that if you are not learning you are failing, and although this event has already taught us a few things, we still have more to learn. As Platte County sheriff, I believe it is imperative to plan for events that I pray to God never happen," Wemhoff

said. "History and data will show that people fall back on training during highly stressful situations, which is why we need to train for incidents such as this. We need to train in these types of situations to better prepare ourselves to be effective in protecting the citizens we have sworn to protect."

The April training exercise comes after a similar drill was conducted involving area agencies back in September 2019 on the Central Community College-Columbus campus.

Sue Deyke, the hospital's emergency room director, called the process of planning this drill "amazing," noting Columbus Mayor Jim Bulkley has also attended the meetings.

"We're invested in this," Deyke said. "Heaven forbid this ever happens, but we would know what (other agencies) are doing. And it is tremendous to have that kind of support."

## Forward

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The second part of this bond issue will be to improve and update the kitchens and dining areas of four of our elementary schools.

Currently our kitchens are outdated and not large enough to keep up with our growing student population or the ability to serve over 13,000 meals during the summer lunch program. This program includes all children within our community.

The third part of this bond proposal is to add 12-14 classrooms to our existing middle school and expand our dining area to serve 1,200 students.

Our current middle school enrollment is 1,240 and the building has a capacity of 1,200.

So we are a little cramped in this space. This will allow the school flexibility in space to accommodate not only the growth of our student body but allow us to serve all 1,200 students comfortably in our cafeteria.

Our current cafeteria is set up to serve 800 high school students comfortably. Our high school had an open campus and never had to serve the entire student body.

Please keep informed of what is going on in our school district. Many things are happening and we continue to progress to meet the needs of our community.

Dr. Loeffelholz



## Safe2HelpNE available to CPS staff, students

Safe2HelpNE is a report system designed for students, staff, and parents to anonymously report concerning behavior which could impact the safety of students or schools across Nebraska. Students, staff, and parents can report concerning behavior which may impact the safety of students or schools including, but not limited to items listed on the right.

[www.education.ne.gov/safety/safe2help-faq/](http://www.education.ne.gov/safety/safe2help-faq/)

- School threats
- Bullying
- Suicide concern
- Crime
- Domestic violence
- Abuse
- A friend's physical or mental health

## SCAN TO WATCH

- Dr. Troy Loeffelholz, Superintendent, Provides the Details of the 2024 Bond Issue.
- Director of Finance and Human Resources, Dr. Chip Kay discusses how Bond Financing Works.



# Communication Methods



## Direct Mail

One way communication used by CPS District and School Buildings to families.



## Thrillshare

One way communication used by the CPS District and School Buildings to families for text messaging and automated calls. Every parent/guardian is automatically included. If you change a phone number, address or email be sure to contact your school as well as update your profile in ParentVue.



## EduTrack (Wordware)

One way communication used by school building food service staff to communicate outstanding account balances. This may be text messages, automated calls or email.



## ParentVue

NEW parent portal that replaces PowerSchool. You will have access to grades, attendance and other data about your child or children. You will be able to see records for all of your children with this single log in. Log in directions will be mailed to your home.



## Remind

Two way communication that allows for texting and phone calls. Used by teacher and activity sponsors without exchanging phone numbers. Provides safety for you, your student and staff as all text messages are archived. You MUST OPT-IN. You do not need a smartphone; you can sign up with an email address as well. An activation code is needed. Teachers will provide this code to you using either Google Classroom or SeeSaw. Prior to your teacher contacting you please download the REMIND app. On Apple and Android devices, go to your app store and search Remind: School Communication.



## Google Classroom

Used by high school and middle school students. Each teacher sets up a virtual classroom for each class section. This is optional for parents/guardians. This is where students see assignments, due dates, and general class information. You can receive regular summaries from Google about your student's work. To join, email your student's teachers and ask to be invited to Classroom. This will add you to all of their classes. Be sure to include your student's name and student id number.



## Seesaw

Used by elementary students and parents/guardians. Each teacher will set up a class within this platform and communicate to you how to access your student's information. This is optional for parents/guardians. This is where you and your child will receive and complete assignments.



## Email

All staff members may be contacted by email. Email addresses can be found online at each school's website.



## Smore

One way communication tool used by the district and principals to send newsletters or alerts via email.

[COLUMBUSPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG](https://www.columbuspublicschools.org)



**SARAH PAPA**

SOCIAL WORKER, LMHP - CPS



**JANET HIBBS**

SUBSTITUTE - CPS



**ASHLIE STONE**

PRINCIPAL - KRAMER PRESCHOOL

**MEET**  
THE  
**TEAM**



CATCH THE NEW RELEASES  
ON CPS SOCIAL MEDIA!

# 2024-2025 Calendar



SCAN TO VIEW THE CURRENT CALENDAR  
 ESCANEA PARA VER EL CALENDARIO ACTUAL.  
 SCANNEZ POUR VOIR LE CALENDRIER ACTUEL.

## Columbus Public Schools 2024-2025 *Discoverers* Calendar

August 2024							January 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3	1-2						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3, 6						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	7						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	24						
25	26	27	28	29	30	31							
September 2024							February 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	14						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	17, 20						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	18, 20						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19, 20						
29	30						20						
							21						
October 2024							March 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10-14						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17						
27	28	29	30	31			28						
November 2024							April 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	18, 21						
17	18	19	20	21	22	23							
24	25	26	27	28	29	30							
December 2024							May 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	18						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20						
29	30	31					21						

**Key:**

- Early Dismissal
- Elem 2:15 HS 2:35 MS 2:35
- Professional Development or Workday/No School for Students
- Beginning/End of Quarter
- No School for Teachers and Students
- K-12 early dismissal
- Graduation
- Preschool

**Calendar Facts**

- \*There are 168 K-12 student contact days in the calendar.
- \*\*152 Preschool student contact days.
- \*The last day of school is scheduled for May 20th.
- \*The district may start at 10:00 a.m. due to inclement weather.
- \*Students may have to make up days of attendance if the district accumulates 4 or more days due to weather.
- \*Those days have been designated as 4/4/25 & 5/9/25.



Updated 2/19/24

**High School Hours - 8:10 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.**  
 Wednesday Early Dismissal - 2:35 p.m.

**Middle School Hours - 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**  
 Wednesday Early Dismissal - 2:35 p.m.

**Elementary School Hours - 8:00 a.m. - 3:25 p.m.**  
 Wednesday Early Dismissal - 2:15 p.m.

**Preschool Hours - 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Session**  
 Noon to 3:15 p.m. Session  
 Head Start Classroom - 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.  
 Wednesday Early Dismissal - 2:15 p.m.

# DISCOVERIES

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SPRING 2024

# DISCOVERIES

*Engaging all learners to achieve success*



Columbus Public Schools

● DISCOVERERS OF DISTINCTION ● 2024-2025 CALENDAR

## Parent & Guardians

As part of the strategic planning process, ask that you complete the online parent survey. We need your feedback!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PDZMRRS>

## Padres y Tutores

Como parte del proceso de planificación estratégica, las Escuelas Públicas de Columbus enviarán una encuesta en línea para padres. ¡Necesitamos sus comentarios!



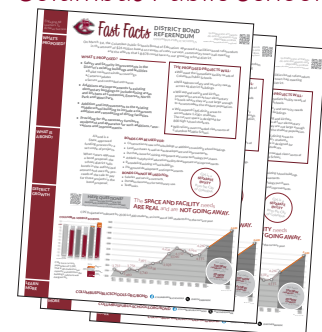
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PGR839D>

## Parents et Tuteurs

Dans le cadre du processus de planification stratégique, les Écoles publiques de Columbus enverront une enquête en ligne aux parents. Nous avons besoin de vos commentaires!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PGCYTCW>



● 2024 BOND REFERENDUM

# Fast Facts

**PARENT SURVEY/ ENQUÊTE PARENTALE/ ENCUESTA PARA PADRES**