

NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER:

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT IS A FINANCIAL & ACADEMIC DISASTER.

BACKGROUND. The Omaha Public School District (OPS) continues to stand out as a prime example of a large urban school district terribly mismanaged, one that provides taxpayers a poor product for the taxes it consumes. The district stumbles from crisis to crisis without recognizable solutions to its ongoing problems. The leftist majority school board, which governs the district, continually ignores taxpayer complaints and continued exposure of its obvious inadequacies.

FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT. The OPS board appropriated \$1.2 million to buy 8 acres adjacent to Westview H.S. in June, 2025, for expansion. If the district had purchased this property at the time of the school construction in 2022, it could have paid fewer taxpayer dollars.

ILLEGAL ALIEN PROTECTION. The school board in 2017 passed a resolution that prohibits OPS from giving federal immigration authorities information on student or family immigration status unless compelled by court order or law. If ICE officers want entry to school premises, ICE must provide specific written authority. OPS does not care that taxpayer property tax dollars are subsidizing illegal alien students. Its board intends to continue to defy the Trump Administration rule revision that now allows ICE agents to carry out immigration enforcement in schools. Its resolution states that OPS will not tolerate ICE disruptions.

FEWER GRADUATIONS. In 2025, the OPS high school graduation rate was only 71.5%, a decrease of 2.6% over the last 5 yrs. 28.5% of students, 1,086, did not complete their coursework on time to graduate in 4 yrs. Burke HS had maintained the highest graduation rates in the district until 2025, the rate dropping from 76.9% in 2024 to 74.1% in 2025. South HS showed the largest decline, from 71.6% in 2024 to the district low at 64.4% in 2025. The Council of Great City Schools Academic Key Performance Indicators 2023-2024 report showed a national median high school graduation rate of 83.6%.

DROPOUT RATE. The OPS high school dropout rate was 14.6% in 2025, an increase from 2024. All OPS high schools showed an increasing dropout rate over the last 5 yrs. Completion of high school is a critical measure that significantly impacts prospects in college and career opportunities. High school graduates less likely to suffer unemployment and earn about \$8,000 more annually than dropouts.¹ Dropouts more likely to become chronically unemployed, seek welfare, and incur health problems.²

TEST SCORES PLUMMET. The 2024-2025 OPS ACT test scores dived. A score of 20 to 36 considered adequate. In English Language Arts, Benson HS juniors ranked 11.8 compared to 12.8 in 2016-2017. Bryan HS juniors ranked 12.3 compared to 13.6. Burke HS juniors scored 12.9 compared to 17.4. Central HS juniors scored 14.5 compared to 17.6. North HS juniors ranked 11.1 compared to 15.3. Northwest HS juniors ranked 11.6 compared to 12.3. South HS juniors scored 11.8 compared to 14.4. Math scores mirrored the above. Benson HS juniors ranked 13.7 in 2024-2025 compared to 15.2 in 2016-2017. Bryan HS juniors scored 14.0 compared to 15.3. Burke HS juniors ranked 14.0 compared to 17.5. Central HS juniors ranked 15.4 compared to 18.0. North HS juniors scored 12.7 compared to 16.6. Northwest HS juniors ranked 13.4 compared to 14.3. South HS juniors ranked 13.8 compared to 15.6. Science scores likewise dived. Benson HS juniors ranked 13.9 in 2024-2025 compared to 14.3 in 2016-2017. Bryan HS juniors scored 14.7 compared to 14.8. Burke HS juniors ranked 14.7 compared to 18.1. Central HS juniors scored 16.2 compared to 18.2. North HS juniors ranked 12.9 compared to 16.4. South HS juniors scored 14.0 compared to 15.4. Northwest HS juniors were the only ones who scored higher in 2024-2025, 13.9 compared to 13.5. Examination of the percentage of juniors meeting state proficiency benchmarks in 2024-2025 reveals abysmal numbers. At Benson HS, only 14% of juniors were proficient in English Language Arts. Bryan HS 16%, Buena Vista HS 11%, Burke HS 22%, Central HS 30%, North HS 30%, Northwest HS 11%, South HS 11%, and Westview HS 34%. At Benson HS, only 9% of juniors were proficient in Math.



¹ 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics.

² Ibid.

Bryan HS 8%, Buena Vista HS 7%, Burke HS 18%, Central HS 20%, North HS 9%, Northwest HS 5%, South HS 10%, and Westview HS 22%. At Benson HS, only 18% were proficient in Science. Bryan HS 21%, Buena Vista HS 17%, Burke HS 27%, Central HS 32%, North HS 17%, Northwest HS 17%, South HS 19%, and Westview HS 34%. OPS student academic achievement continues to fall while district property taxes increase.

BUDGET BUSTING. The OPS board busted the property tax lid for 2025-2026, raising the tax levy from \$1.07 to \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed valuation, costing the owner of a \$300,000 home about \$3,100 property tax annually. It is a 7.26% tax hike. \$10 million more to the district contingency fund without due cause, because federal funding



has continued apace. The district generously purchased 27,216 student bus passes for all middle and high school students from 8-1-25 to 7-31-26, costing \$172,157, although many students already qualify for free bus rides and others utilize personal transportation. Several OPS board members seek to re-qualify all students for free breakfast and lunch programs and cancel school lunch debt owed. Because of a critical error in state aid given OPS, the district accrued \$61 million not meant for the district. This sum retracted and

apportioned in 2026 to other school districts which should have received additional sums. OPS nevertheless in FY 2024-2025 received \$493,785,832 in state aid. This resulting FY 2026-2027 fiscal shortfall means that OPS can either hike its tax rate or cut its bloated budget. OPS board members intend to raise our property taxes.

TAKE ACTION NOW. The only means to improve the poor academic performance of OPS students and alleviate our enormous property tax burden levied by OPS is to elect fiscally-conservative school board members or to persuade state senators to pursue state control over the school district because of its gross mismanagement. If you reside in the OPS school district, join others to find conservative school board candidates. Also, lobby your state senator to sponsor legislation that would allow the state education dept. to manage OPS. Email netaxpayers@gmail.com for state senator contact information and join our NTF *Education Watch Project*.

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