



Oklahoma Foundation *for* Excellence

ELEVATING PUBLIC EDUCATION



2024-25 IMPACT REPORT



The Academic All-State class claps along as the crowd sings “Oklahoma!” at the conclusion of the 2025 Academic Awards Celebration.

AJ STEGALL PHOTOGRAPHY

Recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma’s public schools.

COVER PHOTO BY RYAN SHERWOOD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	3
Academic Awards	4
Oklahoma School Foundations Network	8
Mentoring Grants	10
Teacher Professional Development Partnerships	12
Donor Recognition	15
Financials	15

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is a privilege to share with you the 2024-25 Impact Report for the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. This report highlights a year of growth, gratitude and renewed commitment to our mission of recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma's public schools.

As we launch our 40th anniversary year, we are proud to introduce OFE's new visual identity, including a modern logo and tagline: Elevating Public Education. This refreshed brand reflects both the strength of our history and our bold vision for the future. We believe — now more than ever — that when we elevate excellence, we elevate Oklahoma.

This year, we also pause to honor the life and legacy of our founder, David L. Boren, who passed away in February. A visionary leader, former governor and U.S. senator, and lifelong advocate for education, he believed deeply in the promise of public schools and the power of recognizing excellence. His founding vision continues to guide our work, and his legacy lives on in every student we celebrate, every teacher we support and every community we serve.

To all who have given their time, talent and resources to support our work this year, thank you. Your belief in our mission makes all the difference.

With gratitude,



Elizabeth Inbody
Executive Director



ACADEMIC AWARDS

Excellence begins in Oklahoma's public school classrooms, where we're taught to reach higher and strive bigger. The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence exists to elevate this excellence.

Each year, we award \$175,000 to exceptional public school educators and students through our Academic Awards. The program culminates with our Academic Awards Celebration. It's a night for them to shine in front of nearly 700 fellow supporters of Oklahoma public education, and a night for us to do what we do best: put public schools' brightest minds on the biggest stage.

MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE

When our team shows up at public schools to celebrate our award recipients, we don't just bring a big check.

We bring joy.

You can see it not just in the five educators being honored with the Medal for Excellence, one of Oklahoma's most prestigious teaching awards. It's on the faces of their students, colleagues, administrators and anyone else who joins us.

The students are often the most excited. They beam with pride at the chance to celebrate a beloved teacher and eagerly share with us what makes them so special.

These opportunities to uplift public school educators mean so much to us. Our award recipients, who are teachers and administrators at the elementary, secondary and collegiate levels, impact thousands of



OFE President Lee Ann DeArman, left, and Executive Director Elizabeth Inbody, right, present Sherry Durkee with the Medal for Excellence.

AJ STEGALL PHOTOGRAPHY



Dr. Jennifer Rudd celebrates her Medal for Excellence with students and colleagues.

RYAN SHERWOOD

students. We love paying them back with their own special day and presenting them with a \$5,000 check.

Our school visits are just a primer, though, for the main event. Each May, these educators take the stage at our Academic Awards Celebration. In moving acceptance speeches, they share their insights on teaching and the importance of their profession.

“Standing here today, I am reminded of the profound power of public education – not just as a path to knowledge, but as a force for opportunity, hope and community,” said **Dr. Jennifer Rudd, recipient of the Medal for Excellence in Research University Teaching.**

As they take in the audience’s thunderous applause, we are reminded once more of the importance of these educators’ work. By putting them in the spotlight, and by celebrating them at their schools in front of students and peers, we send a strong message about the value of their work and of academic excellence. This recognition will echo across generations of classrooms to come.

MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS

- **Elementary Teaching: Leah McDonald**
Music teacher at Edmond Public Schools’ Heritage Elementary
- **Secondary Teaching: Nadine Hanefield**
Service careers special education instructor at Great Plains Technology Center in Lawton
- **Administration: Sherry Durkee**
Superintendent at Sand Springs Public Schools
- **Regional University & Community College Teaching: Dr. April Haulman**
Education professor at the University of Central Oklahoma
- **Research University Teaching: Dr. Jennifer Rudd**
Assistant professor of veterinary microbiology and interim associate dean of academic and student affairs at the Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine

ACADEMIC ALL-STATE

One by one, the 2025 Academic All-Staters stepped onto the stage. Walking alongside them were their chosen teachers, the dedicated public school educators who had helped them navigate the path to graduation.

After each teacher placed a medal around a student's neck, the duo turned to the audience and beamed. It was hard to tell who had more pride in the All-State accomplishment: the student or their teacher.

These moments crystallize the importance of our work. Excellence happens every day in Oklahoma classrooms, and we exist to shine a light on those achievements.

The touching scenes of high-achieving public school seniors taking time to appreciate their accomplishments are the culmination of a celebration that began in February, when the All-State class was announced.

Each year, we honor 100 seniors as Academic All-Staters. The award signifies exceptional academic performance,



All-Stater Anna Dostal, left, with teacher Jennifer Ellis

The 2025 Academic All-State class



leadership and service to their communities.

Each honoree receives a \$1,500 award, and they become part of a very exclusive group. On the day of our Academic Awards Celebration, they get to spend time with fellow All-State alumni. These conversations provide the new All-State class with fresh perspectives and inspiration along with the chance to make valuable connections with community leaders.

Academic All-State is more than a medal and a check, though. By championing these students' achievements, we send a powerful message about the importance of public education and the powerful impact of high-quality teachers and schools. That's why we bring those teachers onto the stage. It's also why, since our foundation started, we've given each school an exclusive flag to fly after they have their first All-Stater.

We're not just recognizing academic excellence; we're amplifying it.



All-Stater Nash Gandhi, right, with teacher Trey Logsdon



PHOTOS BY AJ STEGALL PHOTOGRAPHY



OFE President Lee Ann DeArman, left, and OSFN Director Lauren Dow, right, present Kendra Horn and Abbie Vaughn of the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation with an Outstanding Program Award.

AJ STEGALL PHOTOGRAPHY

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOUNDATIONS NETWORK

Across Oklahoma, more than 200 public school foundations boost their local schools in countless ways. These citizen-led nonprofits raise millions to enhance funding and galvanize their communities in support of teachers, staff and students.

Through our Oklahoma School Foundations Network, we nurture and promote public school foundations. Lifting up these organizations that do so much for Oklahoma public education is crucial to our mission.

OSFN supports public school foundations through



Pre-K Play-Based Learning Initiative

2025 OUTSTANDING PROGRAM AWARD WINNERS



ART OFF THE WALL

Noble Public Schools Foundation

Students and well-known Oklahoma artists create and donate art pieces for this bi-annual fundraiser. The first event in 2023 was an overwhelming success, drawing more than 80 attendees and raising nearly \$14,000 for classroom grants.



T-UP FOR OKCPS 2025

Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation

Each year, the foundation activates the community to foster support for public education by asking them to purchase and wear bilingual "OKCPS Champion" T-shirts. The campaign raised \$110,000 in 2024.



PRE-K PLAY-BASED LEARNING INITIATIVE

Stillwater Public Education Foundation

SPEF provided \$43,875 to purchase materials and manipulatives for play-based learning, ensuring a more equitable experience for 17 pre-K classrooms.

free resources, training and networking opportunities. OSFN Director Lauren Dow brings together the foundations' executive directors for monthly online meetings. In addition to providing time to brainstorm, these gatherings allow the directors to hear from guest speakers on topics like fundraising and marketing.

"Oklahoma School Foundations Network provides tremendous resources and connections for public school foundations," said Emily Lewis, executive director of the Stillwater Public Education Foundation. "When I first stepped into my role in public education, the OSFN community was there to encourage and support my growth and the foundation's success."

We also provide strategic planning services for foundations looking to sharpen their mission and goals.

Each year, we honor three foundations with Outstanding Program Awards. In addition to receiving \$1,000 prizes, the winners step into the spotlight at the Academic Awards Celebration — a moment that not only acknowledges their hard work but also spreads the word about their innovative, highly successful programs to the education community.

We are proud to champion this network of public school foundations that is one of the largest and most effective in the nation.



Bruins on the Run

MENTORING GRANTS

An innovative mentoring program created by the Bartlesville Public Schools Foundation has fifth graders seeing their teachers in the new role of running buddy.

Three times a week during the school year, more than 100 students run alongside teacher mentors as part of Bruins on the Run, an after-school program that is one of 12 recipients of our 2025 mentoring grants. The program is designed to increase focus in the classroom, build positive student-teacher bonds and improve relationships among students at different schools.

Studies show that mentors can lead the way for student success in and out of the classroom. Our grants help fund the strategic needs of these vital programs that positively affect the lives of Oklahoma students.



The Comeback Kid Society

13,200

K-12 students impacted
by 2025 mentoring grants

Our 2025 grants, which total \$18,000, will impact 13,200 mentees in grades K-12. We offer two types of grants: \$3,000 start-up grants for organizations or programs within their first three years of operation and \$1,500 opportunity grants for established programs.

Through these grants, we support a diverse range of programs that allow Oklahoma youth to build meaningful mentoring relationships.

Students often fill the role of mentee and mentor. The Carney Public Schools Top Dawgs are high schoolers who promote kindness and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. Our grant will fund an anti-bullying workshop that will include a skit, games, a speaker and mentor-led discussions on dealing with bullying situations.

In other cases, community members serve as trusted mentors. The Comeback Kid Society pairs at-risk youth with a reliable adult who provides consistent emotional support. Grant funds will support workshops that help mentees complete academic requirements, build life skills and gain practical experience.

“We anticipate that these resources will not only improve students’ learning but also significantly boost their confidence and long-term success in education, employment and independent living,” said Andrew Aldridge, the organization’s philanthropy coordinator.

GRANT RECIPIENTS

START-UP GRANTS

- **Meeker High School Leadership Team**, Meeker
- **Pathways**, The Comeback Kid Society, Oklahoma City

OPPORTUNITY GRANTS

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma**, Bartlesville
- **Bruins on the Run**, Bartlesville Public School Foundation
- **Bulldog PAWS (Partners at Work in Schools)**, Okmulgee Education Foundation
- **Carney Public Schools Top Dawgs**, Carney
- **Loveworks Afterschool Leadership**, Loveworks Leadership, Norman
- **M.V.P. (Mentors with Vision & Purpose) Initiative**, Uplift Mentoring, Shawnee
- **Norman High School Elementary Spanish Mentor Program**, Norman
- **ReadOKC Book Club**, Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation
- **Tulsa BizTown**, Junior Achievement of Oklahoma
- **Whiz Kids of Oklahoma**, Oklahoma City



"I hope to pass on the wonder and excitement that I was able to experience through this program to my students."

**— KATIE ETHRIDGE
FIFTH GRADE TEACHER AT
NICOMA PARK INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**



Jennifer Gay, center, visits with historical interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg. Gay is an eighth grade United States history teacher at Washington Middle School.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS



Oklahoma fifth grade educators load a ship during a visit to the Jamestown Settlement.

Each summer, Oklahoma educators embark on exceptional professional development opportunities.

These life-changing adventures are made possible by our partnerships with two national organizations, the Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute of Colonial Williamsburg and Fund for Teachers.

These programs reenergize educators, sending them back to their classrooms with not just new resources but also new enthusiasm.

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

Thirty-seven Oklahoma educators returned to school this fall prepared to bring early American history to life.

These fifth and eighth grade teachers spent six days in Virginia at the Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute of Colonial Williamsburg. Chelsee Gray, a fifth grade teacher at Ada City Schools' Willard Grade Center, called it "one of the most amazing weeks of my life."

Our organization has coordinated Oklahoma educators' participation in the institute since 1983, helping more than 1,200 teachers experience this immersive professional development opportunity.

"This experience has reignited my passion for teaching history and given me tools to create meaningful, inquiry-based lessons that encourage critical thinking and empathy," said Dewey Elementary School teacher Jeannie Eutsler. "My students will benefit from richer, more engaging content that helps them see themselves as part of a larger historical narrative."

Teachers explored the restored capital city of colonial Virginia, visiting historical buildings and interacting with interpreters who bring the era to life. They engaged with primary source material, debated historical issues and tried activities like rope making and canoe carving.

"Discussions around freedom, responsibility and active citizenship reminded us that teaching history is not just about the past — it's about helping students understand their role in shaping the future," said Sonya Markle, an eighth grade history teacher at Ardmore Middle School.



Fifth grade
teacher
institute
attendees

PROGRAM IMPACT

LISA PITTS, OAKDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL

"The lesson I'm most looking forward to sharing with my students is an archaeological dig simulation based on the Jamestown settlement. Students will take on the role of archaeologists, uncovering 'artifacts' at a mock dig site in our classroom. They'll use critical thinking skills to analyze what the objects might be, how they were used, and what they reveal about daily life in early Jamestown."



"This activity will encourage students to ask questions, draw conclusions, and piece together the story these artifacts are telling. It's a hands-on way to explore history that makes learning active, investigative and meaningful."



From left: 1. Darci and Seth Reeves of Latta Public Schools visit Boldly Grown Farm, a certified organic mixed vegetable farm in Washington. 2. Jesse Wren, who teaches at Riverfield Country Day School in Tulsa, learns to make poi, a traditional Hawaiian dish. 3. Rachel Langley of Riverfield Country Day School volunteers at a loko kuapa, a fishpond with a seawall of lava or coral rubble, in Oahu, Hawaii, to learn how ancient farming practices can feed communities while fostering sustainability.

FUND FOR TEACHERS

Over the summer, 20 Oklahoma teachers traveled the world to gain knowledge for their classrooms.

Thanks to our partnership with Fund for Teachers, these educators were able to pursue self-designed professional development opportunities.

Our work with Fund for Teachers has provided more than \$3.3 million in fellowships to 973 Oklahoma educators since 2006. Every year, we marvel at the creativity and skill these talented educators employ in developing imaginative fellowships that meet their students' unique needs and interests.

Darci and Seth Reeves, a husband and wife team from Latta Public Schools, visited the Skagit Valley in

northwest Washington to learn about the production and preparation of locally sourced produce. Darci, a family and consumer sciences teacher, and Seth, an agriculture education instructor, will use this knowledge to cultivate students' interest and teach them to produce and prepare sustainable, nutritious food.

Other Oklahoma educators studied the history of London's theater scene, learned about Hawaiian traditions and history and explored Renaissance art and culture in Florence, Italy.

By empowering educators to pursue new insights and experiences, these fellowships make student learning more effective and transform Oklahoma classrooms.

MAJOR DONORS

We are grateful to our many donors for their commitment to our mission of recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma’s public schools. We thank the following FY25 major donors for their generous support.




Teresa B. Adwan, Adwan Family Trust
 Bank of Oklahoma
 Cherokee Nation
 The Chickasaw Nation
 The John and Donnie Brock Foundation
 ConocoPhillips
 The James C. and Teresa K. Day Foundation
 The First National Bank & Trust Co., Chickasha
 Morgan Spring Harris (1998 Academic All-Stater)
 Christa Leamon Hughes

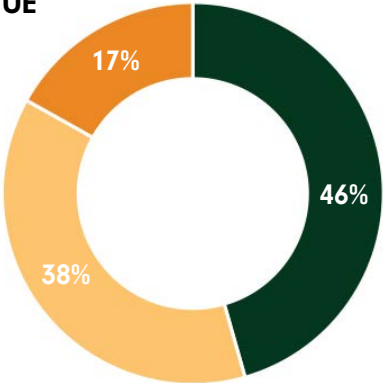
Kendrick Family Foundation
 McCasland Foundation
 The Meshri Family
 Oklahoma Natural Gas, A Division of ONE Gas, Inc.
 Oklahoma State University
 Phillips 66
 Frank C. Robson
 Arthur and Betty Thompson
 The Wisdom Family Foundation, Inc.
 The Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation

2024-25 FINANCIALS




OFE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported through private contributions. Depicted are unaudited financial results for the 2025 fiscal year. A summary of audit findings will be posted at OFE.org/Financials upon completion.

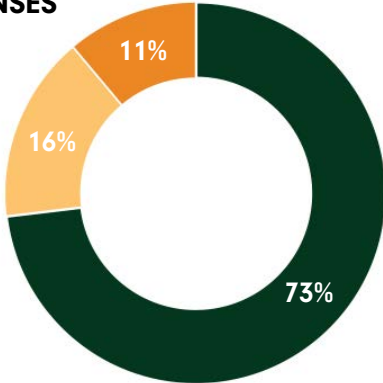
OPERATING REVENUE \$1,019,666

-  **Contributions**
\$464,781
-  **Endowment**
\$382,714
-  **Other**
\$172,171



OPERATING EXPENSES \$1,019,666

-  **Programs & Related Staff Support**
\$745,370
-  **G & A**
\$160,925
-  **Fundraising**
\$113,371





Oklahoma Foundation
for Excellence

5530 N. Western Ave., Suite 100
Oklahoma City, OK 73118-4003
(405) 236-0006 | info@ofe.org
Learn more at OFE.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



SUPPORT US WITH A GIFT

Our foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supported through private contributions.

Join us in recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma's public schools by making a donation today.

