News Release

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OPS Hold Groundbreaking Ceremony for New J.P. Lord School, One-of-a-Kind Facility

Omaha, Neb. – The Omaha Public Schools held a groundbreaking ceremony this morning at 9 a.m. for a school facility that will be the first of its kind in the nation and possibly the world.

The new J.P. Lord School will be located at 4444 Marinda St. Designed as a 45,000 square-foot building, the new school will sit on 10-acres and have eight classrooms, art, music, and physical education rooms, a library, a multisensory room and an 8- by12-foot hydrotherapy pool donated by the Omaha Volunteers for Handicapped Children. Additional features include a ceiling-mounted lift system to assist staff in transferring students and a covered drop-off canopy to protect students from inclement weather as they arrive and depart school. The new building will also allow increased interaction between the school’s 64 students and other OPS students. $3.4 million from the 2014 OPS Bond Program and a $6.6 million relocation agreement with the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine fund the project. Construction is set to begin in Oct. 2016 with a substantial completion date of May of 2018.

Norris Middle School provided the pre-ceremony music for guests. Highlights of the opening of the ceremony included special acknowledgements by Principal Laura Mac-Holmes, the presentation of colors by Central High School’s JROTC Color Guard and the “Star Spangled Banner” performed by members of Central’s choir.

“The staff, students and families of J.P. Lord are grateful for the generosity of the Omaha taxpayers,” said Laura Mac-Holmes, the school’s principal. “Having a new facility has long been a dream of our J.P. Lord family.”

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OPS Superintendent Mark Evans, OPS Board Member Marian Fey and City Councilman Chris Jerram also gave remarks.

“This is an exciting day for OPS and for J.P. Lord,” said Evans. “This new building, which is a one-of-a-kind in the United States, will provide innovative, state-of-the-art equipment that will ensure Omaha’s special needs students receive the best educational experience possible. We’re looking forward to the school opening in the fall of 2018.”

Next, Dr. Karoly Mirnics of Munroe-Meyer Institute spoke briefly and presented the school with a check. Munroe-Meyer Institute is a partner and neighbor to J.P. Lord School and provides its occupational/physical therapists.

“The Munroe-Meyer Institute’s partnership with J.P. Lord has been invaluable,” said Mirnics. “They have been amazing neighbors, and we have enjoyed our collaborations as we have worked together to serve students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are very excited for J.P. Lord’s new building and the opportunities it will provide to OPS students. Even though they are moving, the physical distance will not affect our relationship. In fact, I envision an even tighter bond between MMI and the new J.P. Lord.”

Following the presentation, guests donned construction hats and proceeded to break ground. Participants included Evans, Fey, Chief Operations Officer Antoinette Turnquist, Jerram, parents of J.P. Lord students, Mac-Holmes, John Maderak of Darland Construction, Pat Carson of BCDM Architects, Jo McCartney of OVHC and Steve Selting and Mark Sommer of Jacobs Engineering Group.

Mac-Holmes concluded the ceremony and then invited guests to the Norris Middle School auditorium for refreshments.

If you are interested in covering this event, you must contact the OPS District Communications Office at (531) 299-0221. We will contact staff to inform them of your visit and we can help facilitate parking, if needed.

About OPS: Omaha Public Schools is the largest school district in the state of Nebraska and is governed by a nine-member Board of Education. OPS employs more than 7,296 staff and has 82 schools and 13 alternative programs serving approximately 52,000 students in grades K-12, including special education and English language learners. The district’s vision – Every Student. Every Day. Prepared for Success. – and its mission – to prepare all students to excel in college, career and life – demonstrate OPS' commitment to ensuring all students can be successful in the classroom and beyond.

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