



South O'Brien High School The Wolverine Roar

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South O'Brien School Achieves High-Performing Academic Award

By Ethan Schwarz and Bode Bailey

South O'Brien High School achieved a High-Performing rating on the Iowa School Performance Profile. Only 12.4% of schools in Iowa have achieved this rating, placing the Wolverines as one of the top 40 high schools in Iowa. Ratings are based on ISASP testing scores, attendance, and post-secondary readiness.

South O'Brien excelled in several categories and subcategories. The school was significantly above the state average in Academic Growth and Academic Proficiency in ELA, mathematics, and science. In addition, Chronic Absenteeism was below the statewide average. Another strength was the availability of work-based learning, nearly doubling the state average with a percentage of 57%.

Principal Denise Phillips

rewards the students for their hard work on Friday, November 22, with free DISCOVER and popcorn in the commons. Reflecting on the achievement, Phillips said, "It is important to put in perspective how few high schools have reached the High-Performing status." She went on to emphasize how challenging it is to get to the top two tiers. "There are more schools in the bottom two tiers than the top two combined." The graph shows the percentage of Iowa schools that fall under each category.

No high school in Iowa has achieved a rating of Exceptional; only elementary/middle schools have. "This accomplishment is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and willingness of our students and staff to push beyond comfort zones. It's about contin-

ual improvement in the pursuit of excellence."

During Denise Phillips' three years as principal, South O'Brien has achieved significant growth. In the previous two school years, South O'Brien was rated Commendable. The year before Phillips stepped up into the role of principal, South O'Brien was Acceptable. "It's a constant cycle: you reflect, you refine and you improve," Phillips said. "One area I am targeting this year is chronic absenteeism, but our attendance growth could have been better. It's an area I will be targeting moving forward."

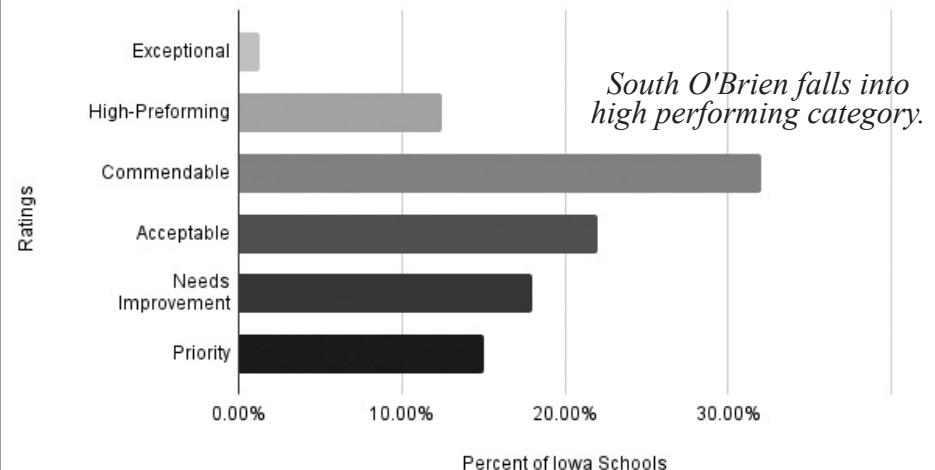
South O'Brien High School's High-Performing rating reflects the students' and staff's hard work and dedication to growth.

The graph on the right shows where South O'Brien landed in the rating system.



Seniors Brett Evans, Ashton Hunt, and sophomore Kaden Tjossem are excited for free popcorn during free DISCOVER, a reward to the collective student body for their hard work on ISASP testing.

Iowa School Performance Profile 2024



Wolverine Den Section Themes

By Jayven Miller and Carter Halverson

The Wolverine student section is back and ready to cheer on the basketball teams once again. With girls' and boys' basketball teams starting their season, student leaders have decided on the dress-up themes for each game. Fans came out to December games dressed in their construction gear, frat clothes, and even their beach wear. Starting boys basketball player



Students pose in the student section to show off their Frat outfits.

Setting the Tone for the Holidays

By Amelie Wilson and Ella Friedrichsen

The South O'Brien High School and Junior High Music Department presented their winter concert on December 5. Band and Choir director Becky Meyer selected multiple festive musical pieces for the audience to enjoy this year. Former South O'Brien Choir teacher Becky Lickiss returned to assist Mrs. Meyer with conducting the choir.

The night started with the junior high band and choir performing their two favorite songs, "A Light of Hope, A Song of Peace" and "Bell Carol Rock." Following the junior high performance, jazz 1 and jazz choir performed fan favorites, "Hooked on the Holidays" and "Jingle Bell Rock."

Director Becky Meyer explained the song choices by saying, "All of them bring out holiday memories. They

are some of my favorite Christmas songs." After the concert, she remarked on the show, "All the music students were very well-prepared for the concert and it showed in their performances this evening." Meyer added, "I would like to thank all the patrons of the South O'Brien School District for their continued support of our music programs."



Jazz 1 presents the song "Hooked on The Holidays."



Becky Lickiss directs the 7-12 combined choir as they wave their hands while performing "Jingle Bell Rock."

Dance Team Performs at State Dance

By Grace Keen

The South O'Brien Dance Team competed at Wells Fargo in Des Moines on Thursday, December 5. The team took two dances to state and performed hip-hop and hoopla, earning a Division 2 rating for both dances. The com-

petitors are coached by Priscilla Jenness and Jessica DeMars.

The dance team started preparing their two dances in the summer of 2024 for their performance at the Iowa State Dance and Drill Team Association (ISDTA). The team

went to a Critiquing Clinic in Sergeant Bluff on November 9 and received helpful feedback. Coach Jessica DeMars said, "As the season has gone on, I've seen so much growth in every single dancer. The team has worked hard to put

the best dances they can out on the floor while also creating a personal bond that has made the team stronger." Watch for the Dance Team as they perform during halftime of upcoming basketball games.



The Dance Team lines up for a group picture after their dance. Team members are Chloe Cox, Gretchen Joines, Ciara Roberts, Grace Keen, Adrianna Ebel, Tawni Wulf, Emma Beck, Addyson Harper, Lyla Reichle, Maeci Stevens, and Ryleigh Gimer.



The girls pose for a group picture before the hip-hop dance. Back: Maeci Stevens, Ciara Roberts, and Tawni Wulf. Middle: Chloe Cox, Grace Keen, Gretchen Joines, and Emma Beck. Front: Adrianna Ebel, Ryleigh Gimer, Addyson Harper, and Lyla Reichle.

Books Donated to English Class

By Iverson Harms and Addison Hedberg

Seniors in Mrs. Faust's advanced composition class recently read *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom. The 1997 book follows the author's connection with his college sociology professor. Mitch loses touch with his professor for sixteen years but later reconnects when Morrie is diagnosed with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis).

Community members and friends of Mrs. Faust donated the books. Mrs. Faust said, "I was encouraged to teach the book after discussing it with several people who have read it. I thought a memoir would benefit the Advanced Composition curriculum, which mainly focuses on writing." She also stated, "It's important for students to explore literary themes and make con-

nctions. This reading experience allowed the seniors to think about the relationships they have developed over the years."

Faust posted on Facebook asking for donations. Within a few weeks, she had a stack of new and used books for her classes. "I was overwhelmed by the generosity," Faust said about receiving the donated books.

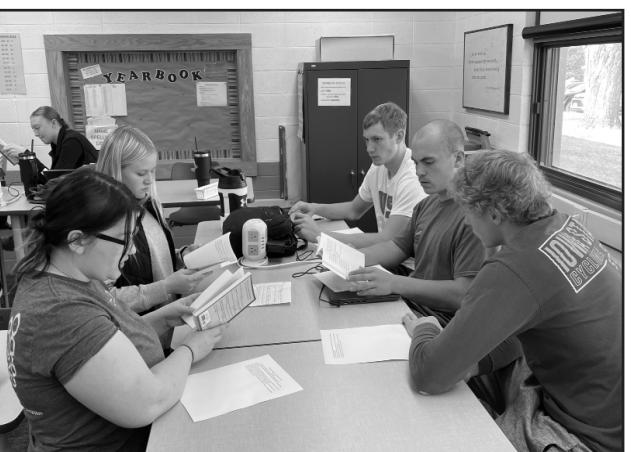
Students in the class enjoyed the reading experience. According to Maddie Friedrichsen, a senior in Advanced Comp, "I learned to prioritize the things that matter most to me, as demonstrated by Mitch's value in quality time spent with Morrie." Maddie added, "I am grateful that Mrs. Faust introduced me to this book, as it applies to the start of the next

chapter in life. I will always remember what I learned from *Tuesdays with Morrie*."

Another senior in Advanced Comp, Reese Lundquist, shared his insight on Tuesdays with Morrie. "I liked the life lessons that Morrie taught, like never taking

anything for granted and living fully."

After reading the memoir, Advanced Comp Students were asked to write a short memoir about a memorable person or place from their lives. Many students plan to give the essay to someone as a gift.



Seniors Kylee Lee, Maddie Friedrichsen, Brett Evans, Ashton Hunt, and Jordan Jenness discuss the memoir *Tuesdays With Morrie* in Mrs. Faust's Advanced Comp class.

What is your favorite Christmas tradition or activity?



Freshman

Allison Griebel

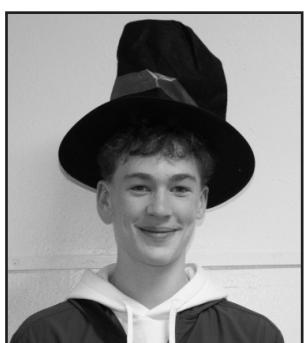
"Decorating the Christmas tree with my family."



Sophomore

Raegan Plagge

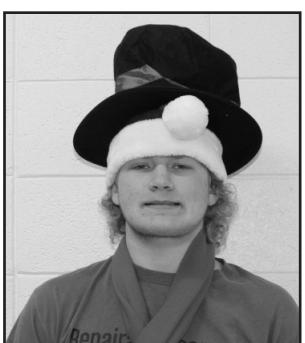
"Opening presents on Christmas morning with my family."



Junior

Brody Van Beek

"Exchanging white elephant gifts with family every year."



Senior

Nate Rohlfsen

"Going to church on Christmas Eve."



Staff

Landy Oliver

"Having a Christmas Eve gathering with family."



Staff

Aaron Giese

"Decorating the house and putting up Christmas lights."

First Semester Ends Before Christmas

By Shayli Johnson and Avery Halverson

South O'Brien High School has made a significant change to its semester test schedule by moving exams from January to December, just before Christmas break.

Testing will be in progress on December 18, 19, and 20. After much debate, the administration collectively decided to move the tests before the holiday break.

A lot of benefits come with the rearrangement. It is better for students mentally because students get more of a break without worrying about their upcoming semester exams. This also allows teachers and students to put the last semester behind them and start the new semester after Christmas break.

However, there are some disadvantages as well. Principal Denise Phillips said, "The only disadvantage is that the first semester is 80 days and the second semester is 99 days creating an unbalanced schedule." However, teachers are finding new ways to offer the same curriculum for one-semester classes despite having fewer days. One thing that gave

teachers a piece of mind was knowing that there are likely to be missed days in the spring semester due to weather, activities, and senior graduation.

An addition to the semester tests is students can opt out of any one exam. To opt-out, students must have a B or above in both quarters, a C- or above in all classes, 5 or fewer unexcused tardies, and 10 or fewer absences. Each test is 90 minutes long with a 15-minute break in between. Students are allowed to leave for the day at 1:45 pm if they have no make-up tests to complete.

The semester tests are different depending on the class and teacher.

Teachers may opt to give a cumulative exam or a final project to wrap up the semester. In Mrs. Faust's Advanced Composition class, seniors will put together a final writing portfolio, while Mrs. Poeckes is giving a final exam in Chemistry. The band is bringing in a critic during their semester final to help them improve their performance.

New Locker Rooms

By Kelsee Warnke and Lindsey Einck

Progress continues on the remodeling project at the South O'Brien High School. The boys locker rooms remodeling process started following the 23-24 basketball season. The locker rooms have not been updated in over fifteen years. High School Principal Denise Phillips stated, "They truly just needed a facelift." With the recent bond passing, the school was able to put around \$1 million into the reno-

vation. The locker rooms now feel more spacious with new lockers to utilize. In addition, they also got eight individual shower stalls and nice big mirrors as well. The high school boys have enjoyed the new design of the locker rooms. "I like how even though the lockers are the same size, it feels a lot more open. The remodeling was a great upgrade," says senior Carter Halverson.