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## Smith named OPS fine arts coordinator

By Karah Wilson Messenger-Inquirer  
May 10, 2023



Kara Smith

Owensboro Public Schools announced Tuesday that Kara Smith has been named the district’s next coordinator of fine arts.

Smith replaces Tom Stites, who will retire from the position after 14 years. She will begin July 1.

“I was interested in this position because I’ve always had an interest and passion for leadership,” she said. “Here at Owensboro Middle School, as one of the band directors, we work very closely with other teammates in other arts programs. That has helped me get a springboard and interest in having a leadership position on a larger scale.”

Smith began working at OPS seven years ago as the music teacher at Estes Elementary School. One year later, she became the co-director of the OMS band, a position she has held for six years.



“When I found out I had been selected for the new position, I was really excited and, honestly, just very honored and humbled, especially with this fantastic district and amazing arts program,” she said.

Prior to joining the OPS staff, Smith was a middle school band director and assisted with a high school band in Trigg County. She transitioned to elementary music for two years in Caldwell County.

“I contribute a lot of my success in my current position, leading into my new position, to the arts experiences I had as a student,” she said. “I was very involved in our school’s music program through the band at Mayfield Independent Schools.”

Smith began her journey in music in the sixth grade, and it continued through high school.

“The experience I had with our music educators there is actually what led me to want to be a part of this profession,” she said. “I knew my senior year, when I was getting ready to graduate high school, that I wanted to go to school for music education and eventually become a band director.”

The fine arts program at OPS is “outstanding,” according to Smith.

“That was one of the things when (me and my husband) applied to teach in this district that attracted us to move to this area,” she said. “It’s been known for many years just how outstanding our arts programs are and the great work done by our educators and Mr. Stites.”

Smith said there has been a lot of growth in the program during Stites’ tenure in the district.

“We probably have the largest percentage right now across the whole OPS district involved in the arts that we’ve ever had,” she said, “and a lot of that can be contributed to Mr. Stites and the work that he’s done.”

Once in her new role, Smith said she plans to continue a lot of the things the district is currently doing.

“So many things are going very, very well, and it’s a very well-laid foundation that can be built upon,” she said. “I do plan on coming up with some innovative ideas to get even more of our students involved across all of our elementary, middle and high school campuses.”

Smith said she specifically wants to work on bringing more diversity to the program.

“I want to really reach out to students and families from all different backgrounds that we have at OPS and get as many different kinds of people involved in the arts as we possibly can,” she said.

The support from the school district, administration and community, and what the district offers to students, are what make OPS’ arts program stand out, Smith said.

“Without that, we wouldn’t have the systems in place that we need to set up these programs for kids to be successful,” she said. “We offer multiple different opportunities for every child from kindergarten to grade 12.”

Smith said it’s important to her to see students provided with the opportunity to have an arts education.

“I know how life-changing they can be,” she said. “The arts we had at my school were very minimal compared to (at OPS). I know from personal experience how arts can completely change lives, and we see it in kids every day.”

Smith earned a bachelor of arts in music education from Western Kentucky University and a Rank II in school counseling from Murray State University.



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