

As expected, it's OKC vs. the Spurs.
Who wins? Who knows?
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Broken Arrow rallies past Owasso
for 6A boys soccer title
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WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

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MONDAY MORNING REWIND

BUSINESS SUPPORTS SPACE FORCE GOALS



STEPHEN PINGRY, TULSA WORLD

Quantum Space CEO Jim Bridenstine speaks May 12 during the announcement of a new spacecraft parts manufacturing facility at Tulsa International Airport.

Spacecraft parts manufacturing facility planned at Tulsa airport

WORLD STAFF

A company helmed by Jim Bridenstine, former congressman and NASA administrator, announced May 12 that it will open a high-precision spacecraft parts manufacturing facility at Tulsa International Airport.

Quantum Space, based in Rockville, Maryland, announced the new project with an initial 50 "high-skill" jobs, with expected expansion.

The facility, to be built in the Spartan Building — one of the original airplane hangars at the Tulsa Airport — will serve as the company's primary site for "large propulsion tank manufacturing and precision spacecraft parts production," a news release said.

The initial investment will be about \$80 million with planned expansion that could lead to hundreds more jobs over the years, officials said.

"Quantum Space is building satellites to meet the needs of the Space Force's theory of competitive endurance,"

Bridenstine said in a prepared statement.

"Sustained maneuver for dynamic space operations is a key enabler of those needs. The state of Oklahoma is aligning itself to support the U.S. Space Force by building test and operational infrastructure to achieve (a) sustained maneuver," he said.

The company plans to build 1,000 small satellites per year to basically serve as fueling vehicles for existing satellites at various orbits in space. They will be about the size of a small Volkswagen, said Kam Ghaffarian, executive chairman of Quantum.

"What Quantum is doing is sending up a big gas tank," said the company's general manager, Rick Ketchum. "In some sense we will want to put a QuikTrip for every satellite," he said, drawing laughter at a news conference attended by about 200 people including many Tulsa Regional Chamber, city, state, educational and business leaders.

Quantum Space's first Ranger spacecraft is slated to launch in the second

quarter of 2027, the release said.

— **Michael Dekker**

City unveils violence intervention and prevention initiative in north Tulsa

In December 2024, just weeks after taking office, Mayor Monroe Nichols announced that the city had received a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to fund a community-based violence intervention and prevention initiative.

On May 12, joined by local partners, Nichols unveiled details of Secure Tulsa, as the pilot program will be called.

"At the time, we were really talking about laying the foundation to make sure that we built something that was resilient, strong and effective," Nichols said during a press conference at City Hall. "And I'm super excited that in that year and a half, we've done just exactly that."

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5 THINGS TO KNOW

New child literacy law takes effect in 2027-28

ANNA CODUITTI
Tulsa World

1. Beginning with the 2027-28 school year, Oklahoma third-graders who fail after two standardized tests to prove grade-level reading proficiency are likely to be held back to repeat third grade. The new law was signed April 21. Oklahoma has had legislation to promote child literacy since 1997, with mandated third-grade retention for struggling readers in place from 2012 to 2014. Changes to the law added a probation period for third-graders who fail standardized reading tests and adjusted the exceptions for retention, but in 2024 the Legislature removed the option to hold back third-graders for poor test performance.

2. Based on spring 2025 testing, only 27% of Oklahoma third-graders are reading at or above grade level. Senate Bill 1778, the Strong Readers Act, commits funding to help public schools identify struggling readers earlier and provide targeted intervention. Co-author Sen. Adam Pugh pointed out the key to the legislation is getting parents more involved. Studies show a steep decline in parents reading to their young children, with adults who grew up in the internet era much less likely to agree that they read for pleasure. The result: children look at reading as just another subject to learn, not a life skill with the potential for enjoyment. SB 1778 pushes schools to clearly communicate with parents about their students' reading progress with guidance on helping the child at home.

3. Area school districts are trying to work through the logistics of the Strong Readers Act. "Families need to understand that their child's experience may look very different in '27," a Tulsa Public Schools administrator said. "It could be that they're spending time in a transitional classroom or getting pulled out to spend more time with a specialist." Schools will be required to start implementing reading support and multiple tiers of interventions starting in kindergarten, such as small groups, tutoring before or after school or assigning students who are not reading on grade level to a transitional classroom rather than fully promoting them to the next grade. Optional exemptions from the retention requirement include multilingual learners with under two years of English language instruction, students with disabilities on an IEP (individualized education plan) with intensive

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Per-pupil spending still last among neighboring states

ANDREA EGER
Oklahoma Watch

State lawmakers are touting historic education spending levels, but Oklahoma's per-pupil spending rate is still dead last among surrounding states.

New state-by-state comparisons show that recent investments have boosted Oklahoma's spending to about \$12,519 per student, with additional increases expected for fiscal year 2027 from \$232 million in new education funding in the new state budget.

But when you rank 49th out of 51, playing catch-up is an astronomically expensive proposition.

While Oklahoma has increased per-pupil spending by about \$1,100, neighboring states have made similar hikes.

That means Oklahoma is still about \$1 billion short of meeting the regional average spending rate of \$14,975 per student, and only Idaho and Utah spent less per student than Oklahoma, according to annual

data reported by the federal National Center for Education Statistics at the end of April.

The average Oklahoma public school teacher will earn an estimated \$62,055 in gross pay and benefits in 2025-26, ranking 41st in the nation, according to the newly released Rankings and Estimates report by the National Education Association, the most comprehensive comparison available. That lags behind the regional average of \$66,152 by about \$4,100.

Oklahoma Speaker of the House Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, recently hailed a new historical high in state public school funding.

"This is not an opinion. It is an undeniable fact," Hilbert posted on Facebook in late April. "Next year the budget for common education in Oklahoma will increase by over 225 million, setting a new record for the 9th time in 11 years."

One of the state's most influential public education advocacy groups said Hilbert's

statement is correct — and cause for celebration.

"They talk about it being almost half the budget, but that is a byproduct of how our state was founded," said Shawn Hime, executive director of the Oklahoma State School Boards Association. "It does put more pressure on lawmakers."

"Most of the states in our region have far more local, dedicated revenue sources to cover costs. According to NCES, we are now (spending) within \$700 dollars per student than Texas, so we are making up some ground. My message to our members is, 'Tell them thank you for what they've done starting with the 2018 session.'"

Catching up and balancing budgets

The recently passed \$12.8 billion state budget for FY 2027 includes \$2,000 raises for classroom teachers and millions of new dollars for line items aimed

About Oklahoma Watch



Oklahoma Watch, at oklahomawatch.org, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that covers public-policy issues facing the state.

at improving students' literacy and math results.

While per-pupil spending doesn't necessarily determine academic outcomes, it is still worth tracking because Oklahoma's constitution made public schools here more reliant on state funding than many surrounding states.

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