

Option enrollment students bring in thousands of dollars to Mead

Nearly two-thirds of total students come from other districts

By Hunter Williams

Out of 233 students at Mead Public Schools in the year 2024-2025, 81 of them opted in from outside of the school district; this is possible because of option enrollment.

Nebraska's option enrollment law enables students who live outside of the district to enroll at Mead rather than their home district. During recent years, the net total of option students has fluctuated, always staying positive and peaking in the 22-23 school year at 72 net positive students.

The net total of option students is found by subtracting the students opting out of the district from the number of students opting in. And these students have opted in without any advertisement from Mead Public Schools to attract students.

"We have a good reputation, and people within driving distance consider us a quality school," said superintendent PJ Quinn.

Having this many students opting in compared to opting out is good for a few reasons. It helps with funding for the school, keeps it functioning, and contributes to activities.

With around 70 students opting in this school year and a total K-12 enrollment of about 240 students, taking away those students would put Mead at around 170 total

students.

"That's an area I don't really want to be in. So, option enrollment is really important to us," Quinn said.

Funding is another big part that option enrollment plays in benefiting the school overall every year. Based on net positive students, each school receives

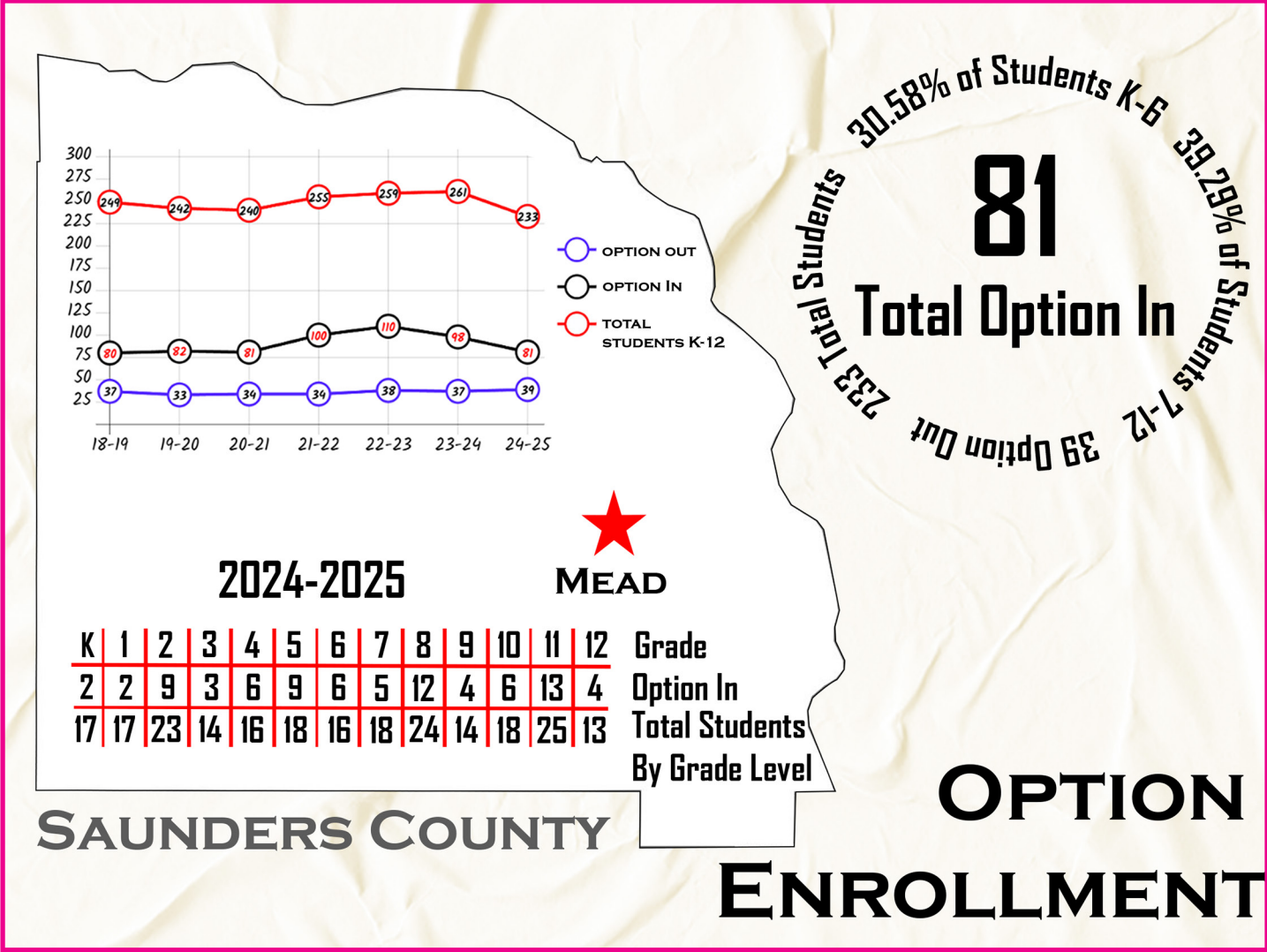
state funding based on a complex formula.

Mead received \$423,422 the past year, having a net positive of 42 students K-12. Mead had 81 students opting in and only 39 opting out.

For each student, it is around \$10,000, which is based on the net positive total for that year, according to Quinn.

Without the ability to have these option-in students come to Mead, the enrollment numbers are just too low.

"Without 70 students, the class sizes would be much lower and would cause discussion for a consolidation, so I consider our option kids really important," Quinn said.



Mead district not seen as best fit for everyone

By Jade Grasiani

Sometimes you get a feeling that a school is not right for you. It doesn't necessarily mean the school you are currently at is bad, but perhaps it's not where you belong. With the opportunity of option enrollment, students must ask themselves – should I stay or should I go?

Nebraska allows students to option enroll into districts where they don't live with certain requirements. A total of 41 students option enrolled out of Mead in the 2025-2026 school year.

Sophomore Jersey Siske attended Mead for her entire life but soon started to realize that even though she was comfortable at Mead, a bigger school like Yutan may fit her needs more. Just co-opting with Yutan softball wasn't enough.

"I was really close with a lot of the softball girls," Siske said. "They convinced me to come to Yutan so I could also play basketball with them too."

Senior Gionni Conti was one of 12 students who transferred out of Mead to Yutan in the 25-26 school year. He transferred to Mead from Gateway Elementary in his fifth-grade year. Even though he wasn't at Mead his whole life, saying goodbye to this small-town school was still difficult.

"I definitely miss my friends and teachers," Conti said. "My friends because I grew up with them basically my whole life, and definitely some teachers that helped me out throughout the years."

Most of the time when students option

enroll out of a school, they stick with their new school. However, that was not the case for the Anderson family.

Freshman Myles Anderson transferred from Mead to Yutan in fourth grade. According to his mom Hannah Anderson, "Yutan is a great fit for Myles, he likes the bigger school."

Myles' sister Ayslee also started school in Mead but decided it was best to leave along with her brother. Not only did it not feel like the right fit, but she was also still very young when her transfer decision was made.

"She decided to go to Yutan as well," Anderson said. "Then she kind of regretted that decision as a couple years went by. She told me once that she was too young for me to let her make that decision, and she wishes she never left Mead."

So, during her sixth-grade year, Ayslee returned to Mead. Having two kids going to different schools may seem challenging, but it works perfectly for this family.

"I just honestly think I have two different kids," Anderson said. "So, I just think it's great that we have the opportunity to have kids in different schools where they fit better."

Although it works perfectly for the kids, and their parents know it's best for them, their mom and dad still have a couple of disadvantages when it comes to having kids at different schools.

"Whenever Mead plays Yutan it's kind

Positive attributes attract families into Mead district

By Alivia Dunaway

Imagine walking into school every day thinking that you had to walk on eggshells because the teachers were so against you. This is what junior Peyton Markvicka says she experienced every day at Wahoo Public Schools.

Markvicka says she went through a lot at Wahoo with the teachers, the principal and even the students.

"I got suspended for something that didn't involve me," Markvicka said.

Markvicka also struggled academically after her suspension.

"The teachers refused to help me with the homework I got after being suspended, because they thought I was in the wrong when I got suspended," Markvicka said.

Markvicka's mom, Kasey Markvicka, is happy with her decision to transfer Peyton to Mead.

"Things are way better at Mead; the school is run more orderly and fair," Kasey said, "Education takes priority over social status."

Peyton was going through a lot at home while she was at Wahoo, and going to school every day was horrible for her.

"That school (Wahoo) drained the life out of Peyton during the worst time of her life," Kasey said.

Peyton transferred to Mead at the start of her freshman year.

Mead Public Schools has a system in place for open enrollment. This means students who live outside of the district can

enroll at Mead rather than their home district. Out of the 233 students at Mead, 77 are opted in.

While Wahoo has the most option enrolled students at 44, senior twins Ashton and Wyatt Vera are the only two students who option enroll from Elkhorn.

"I feel like Mead is a lot more welcoming than Elkhorn was," Ashton said.

The Veras live in the Elkhorn North district and went to schools in that district until eighth grade, when they transferred to Mead.

"The change from a big school to a small school was an adjustment, but once I adjusted, it was a lot better than Elkhorn," Ashton said.

Four out of the 13 2025 graduates opted into the district. Graduate Addison O'Brien was one of them and attended school at Mead throughout her entire career.

"I liked how small Mead was and the attention to detail there," O'Brien said.

While Yutan sends nine students to Mead this year, 17 of Mead's students live in the Fremont district.

Junior Ava Marshall opted into Mead during her seventh-grade year and has been happy with her experience, as has her family.

"We like the small-town feel and small classroom sizes compared to our home district, Fremont Public Schools," said Rebekah Marshall, Ava's mom.

Mead has a diverse range of personalities among its students, making it easier to

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PERSONAL COLUMN: OPTION ENROLLMENT GOOD FOR ME

By Ava Marshall

When Covid-19 hit, schools all around the world rapidly started to close down. The small, private school I went to was no exception.

Trinity Lutheran went from social distancing in class to masks and then finally to online schooling. It took more than a year for them to finally re-open and eliminate the preventative policies that they had put in place.

My parents, being relatively uncomfortable with the environment created by the pandemic, pulled me and my three siblings out of Trinity.

Positives attract families to attend Mead district

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find your group of friends and fit in, according to guidance counselor Dawn Moser.

“Students at their old schools thought they didn’t have a place to fit and heard good things about Mead, so they came here,” Moser said. “The students who have transferred in have been doing amazing.”

Students who have transferred in found it easy to make friends and felt welcomed by all the students.

“I found a group of people I liked, and we’ve been friends since,” Peyton Markvicka said.

Attending a small school has numerous benefits, according to multiple students.

“Teachers are able to tend to all the students since there aren’t many of them per class,” Ashton said. “I feel like I get all the help I need whenever I need it.”

There are downsides to going to a small school, though.

“Everyone knows almost everything about each other because secrets get around fast,” Vera said.

Overall, students and parents of students are happy with their decisions to transfer to Mead.

“We have been extremely happy with our decision,” Rebekah Marshall said.

That’s when the opportunity to option enroll to Mead Public Schools arose.

According to the Nebraska Department of Education, “the Enrollment Option Program allows a student entering kindergarten through 12th grade to attend a different public school district other than the school district they reside in.”

The NDE opened the door for opportunities such as better extracurriculars, achieving more playing time, escaping bullies or reducing commute time.

The private school I came from didn’t offer FFA, Skills USA or even One Act. Transferring to Mead meant I was introduced to these skills.

Open enrollment has allowed me to start enjoying school; from extracurricular opportunities to making new friends, the change has been positive.

How did we decide on Mead? I live in the Fremont district. Our options were between the smaller schools in our area such as Mead, Yutan or Wahoo, who all have less than 400 students enrolled, and Fremont, with 5,000-plus attendees.

After Trinity and before Mead, my 6th grade year, we homeschooled. I struggled tremendously.



AVA MARSHALL

I needed a real teacher; I needed someone who could show me *how* to reduce fractions or count neutrons. Someone to answer my questions in person.

That meant the choice was easy; choose the smaller school that is closer to what I have always known.

Having the option program meant that I could attend Mead. I was able to receive intentional one-on-one help, rather than say in Fremont with 30+ students in each classroom with teachers scrambling to reach everyone.

Not only was I able to receive the help I needed, but I was introduced to programs like journalism and SkillsUSA, furthering my academic abilities.

The Option Enrollment Program gives students the opportunity to shine their brightest, taking full advantage of their talents.

Mead’s school district not best fit for everyone

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of like which side do we sit on and cheer for?” Anderson said. “So that’s kind of awkward.”

Overall, many students have benefited from having option enrollment as a choice to do. Now, students can go where they feel they belong.

“There’s not a lot of issues we have with it at all,” Anderson said. “It kind of just flows.”



PEPRALLY FUN - Junior Peyton Markvicka performs a routine with the cheerleaders during the homecoming pep rally. Markvicka used the option enrollment policy to come to Mead Public Schools and she says it has been a positive experience.