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Wahoo native Ryan Raabe takes over 8th grade SPED at Otte Middle School

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Ryan Raabe is the new eighth grade special education teacher at Otte Middle School.

Raabe, whose last name is pronounced "Raby," grew up in Wahoo, graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in December 2025 and is working toward a master's degree in special education through the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

"Blair is a small town," Raabe said. "Yeah, it's a huge part of my identity. I've lived in a small town my whole life."

"Just knowing the values that the people who

live in small, rural farming communities hold, and growing up with those and having those instilled with me," he said, "is something that I kinda wanna carry into the classroom, and in the community as well."

Raabe said he teaches to "advocate for those who don't always get what they need," and eighth grade for its timing. "Eighth grade is a very transitional time going into a much larger world," he said. "But giving them the guidance to hopefully make some good decisions and set them out for success not only in high school, but the years after that follow."

Raabe volunteered with Special Olympics basketball in Nebraska. His first event was a unified event pairing students with athletes. "They have students and then athletes as well that come together and then they play together," he said. "And just seeing how sports could build relationships and help students form relationships that they might not have normally made was super inspiring."

Raabe also helped at the state games. "Seeing how excited and how supported those kids had felt during those events was super inspiring to see that they do have someone in their corner and

they have people cheering them on. And I think that's super important," he said.

Raabe said he reached out to parents. "I'm with their kids for eight hours a day, so I'll be forming a relationship with their kids," he said. "But I also wanna form a relationship with them 'cause they know their kid far better than I ever will."

"The ultimate goal is the kid, but it takes a village, as they say, to raise a kid," Raabe said. "So I'm one aspect of it, but their input is just as important as mine."

Students can expect a mentor, he said. "I feel like the best word to describe it would be men-

tor. Someone that they can look up to, to see or give guidance or look to guidance, that this is how, even if I am where I'm at today, I can make something of myself tomorrow."

"Humans are humans. We all have our bad days," he said of difficult days with students. "They're bound to have a bad day, but they're kids and go home and reset and come back the next day."

"I'm excited to get in there and get to work and hopefully make a difference," Raabe said. "And as Dr. Johnson said, there's been some trust issues, but hopefully having that open communication with the



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students and as well as the parents and making them feel like they have a role in their child's education is super important to me."