Orange County Public Schools dates back to 1869. The state of Florida passed the first school law, which established Orange County as a school district, to be governed by an appointed board of three members and run by a superintendent. W.C. Roper, A.C. Caldwell, and Zelotes Mason were the first board members, with W. A. Lovell serving as superintendent. Teachers were paid one dollar per month per student. The population of Orange County at the time was 2,195.

In the early 1900s, transportation became a major issue as the school board awarded bids to drivers who provided their own horses and wagons. In 1915, teacher Mattie Chapman became the first student transport driver to use an automobile, the likes of which gradually replaced wagons and horse teams throughout the district. In 1936, the district bought its first fleet of 30 steel school buses.

The population of Orange County continued to grow rapidly, from 70,074 in 1940 to more than 236,500 two decades later. Thousands of military personnel and their families moved into the area when Orlando became a major flight training ground for the Army Air Corps.

As the district grew, many of the original schools that current residents are familiar with were built – for example, Lake Como Elementary (1951); Jones High (1951); Wheatley Elementary (1951); Boone High (1952); Edgewater High (1952); Orlo Vista Elementary (1952); Dream Lake Elementary (1954); Glenridge Middle (1956); and Evans High (1958).
Exponential growth continued, and in the 1970s, more and more families and immigrants moved into Central Florida, bolstered by the development of Walt Disney World and other industries.

By 1980, the population of Orange County was about 458,000, a 33-percent increase from the previous decade. With 4,850 teachers serving 81,000 students, OCPS was the 28th-largest district in the nation. As the 20th century drew to a close, Orange County Public Schools continued its commitment to the young people of Orange County. Programs expanded to include alternative education, bilingual programs, community education, extended-day enrichment programs, hearing and vision screenings, a hospital/homebound program, prekindergarten program, and preschool diagnostic and intervention services.

The district began actively recruiting parent volunteers and business partners to support our schools. The Foundation for Orange County Schools was created to help recruit, retain and recognize quality teachers.
in the district. More recently, the school board adopted a Philanthropic Strategic Plan to raise money for unfunded programs that are proven to increase student achievement.

Currently, Orange County Public Schools is the 10th largest in the nation with more than 203,000 students, 188 schools and almost 24,000 employees. The district would not be where it is today without the support of the community. In 2002, after several failed attempts, voters approved a half-penny sales tax for the renovation of old schools and to support the construction of much-needed new schools. Thanks to that effort, and a renewal of the half-penny in 2014, all students in Orange County will have access to modern classrooms and technology.

The district’s current vision is to become the top producer of successful students in the nation. The mission statement provides a roadmap of how we plan to get there: to lead our students to success with the support and involvement of families and the community. As Henry Ford wrote: “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”