

EDUCATION CONNECTION



NEWS FROM THE KANSAS CITY, KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WINTER 2016

HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM DIPLOMA+ SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE

CYNTHIA LANE NAMED SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

SCHOOL LIBRARIES REMAIN RELEVANT AND RESOURCEFUL IN TODAY'S TECH-SAVVY WORLD



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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Cynthia Lane
Superintendent of Schools

We live in a state where, if you drive down almost any rural road, you will see barns that could never have been put up by an individual working alone.

Communities raised these structures, and it is not a coincidence that we use the same word, “raised,” when we talk about what we want for our children.

Raising our children to be prepared for college, to possess the attributes of productive citizens and the skills of leaders, requires collective investment. In today’s fast-paced world, it can be easy to forget the important lesson, bestowed most often by our elders, that good things come to those who work hard and serve the community. None of us became successful due to individual effort alone. We rely on the collective efforts of those around us to become productive, contributing members of our communities.

Working together, we can ensure that quality education continues to be accessible to each of our 22,500 students. The decisions we make as a school district, and as a community, are vital, and they require that we take time to engage our stakeholders.

I was so pleased that on November 4, 2015, nearly 150 parents, students, community members, and business partners attended the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools’ (KCKPS) fall Community Forum. During the forum, attendees had the opportunity to learn, to engage, and to influence the important work underway in the district. We grappled with the challenges, and discussed the best course of action(s) to take to

ensure KCKPS, and therefore the community, continues to excel and achieve.

A key challenge in front of KCKPS (and all school districts) is to evolve our education system to meet the demands of our fast-moving global society. We know that today, each student must have a solid academic foundation, anchored by strong literacy skills, along with the work-ready skills required in professions of the future. One question we must continue to ask is: How do we transform the educational experiences our students receive in a manner that will prepare them for the demands they will face in their futures?

Forum participants grappled with this question, even as they applauded the progress of the district. They expressed excitement about our students graduating Diploma+, and offered constructive feedback. By the end of the forum, we had collected lists of ranked priorities. Top priorities for those in attendance were:

- Opportunities for learning beyond the classroom
- Early college and technical college classes
- Career exploration visits to business and industry
- Athletics
- Academic competitions
- Transportation
- Fine Arts
- Technology

The results of the conversation will be used in future planning sessions by the board and administrative team. We look forward to future forums in order to learn, engage, and to ensure our community shapes and influences the work of KCKPS. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to be involved.

We rely on the collective efforts of those around us to become productive, contributing members of our communities.

Check out Dr. Cynthia Lane’s blog, “It’s Up to Us” at blog.kckps.org

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TELL US HOW WE ARE DOING!

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is currently administering a survey to parents and community members to assess their perceptions of KCKPS, and to understand how the district is doing in terms of implementing its mission, vision, and goals.

Please take a few minutes to add your voice, by completing the survey on-line: <http://kckps.org/survey>.

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BOARD OF EDUCATION'S LEGISLATIVE GOALS

FOCUS HEAVILY ON SCHOOL FUNDING ISSUES

The 2016 session of the Kansas Legislature promises to have a profound impact on the work of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS), and ultimately on the more than 22,500 students served by the district. Legislators in Topeka will be challenged to deal with a significant shortfall in state revenue, caused by the tax cuts pushed through by Governor Sam Brownback in 2012. In addition, an anticipated ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court in the *Gannon v. State of Kansas* school funding lawsuit has the potential to force the legislature to find additional school funding, in order to comply with the state constitution.

Every year, in preparation for the upcoming legislative session, the Board of Education develops a list of legislative priorities, and adopts its annual legislative goals. Again this year, the Board's legislative goals focus heavily on school funding issues. KCKPS relies heavily on funding from the state of Kansas, in order to provide district students with the same educational opportunities as students in more advantaged communities.

In recent years, despite numerous court rulings requiring the state legislature to increase funding to local school districts, the legislature has chosen to focus more on providing tax cuts to the wealthy, and to certain classes of business owners. These cuts have led the state from a surplus of almost \$1 billion to today, when the state has drastically cut funding for education, social services, transportation, etc., and still has less than \$10 million in the treasury.

Legislative Goals I-V and VII [see sidebar] all relate to school funding, and essentially ask

the legislature to follow the Kansas constitution and fund public schools adequately, and in a manner that provides sufficient money for schools that serve large numbers of English-language learners and students living in poverty. These issues will be especially important in the 2016 legislative session, because last year, the legislature eliminated the funding formula, and replaced it with so-called "Block Grants," which froze school funding for two years, and does not account for changes or growth in student population. The legislature will begin work on a new funding formula, and the choices they make, both in terms of how they fund schools and in how much funding they provide, will have a huge impact on KCKPS.

Other legislative goals seek to allow the Board (along with other districts throughout the state) to continue to implement higher standards that will allow each student to exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society. The goals also ask the legislature to provide additional funding for kindergarten and early childhood education, and to maintain the state's tradition of non-partisan school board elections.

The Communications Department will continue to provide regular updates on what is happening during the legislative session using the district website, the district's social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), and the district's television channel, KCKPS-TV. Parents and community members are urged to stay informed, and to express their opinions to their elected representatives.

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEGISLATIVE GOALS 2016

- I. Fulfill the constitutional requirement for the State of Kansas to provide "... suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state." This includes rejecting any attempt to place more of the burden for funding education on local taxpayers, which would widen the education gap between wealthy communities and the rest of Kansas.
- II. Ensure that school funding in Kansas continues to be directly related to what it actually costs to educate specific students, so that districts can continue to receive the funds they need to serve the students they serve. This includes advocating that at-risk funding continues to be based on family income.
- III. Ensure that any increase in the Local Option budget is equalized at 100% without proration.
- IV. Ensure that any response to the current fiscal crisis does not negatively affect the solvency of the KPERs system.
- V. Resist all attempts to take established revenues away from local governments in order to balance the state budget. Specifically, changes in state tax policy should not occur at the expense of local governments by shifting responsibilities and fiscal obligations from the state to cities and counties, K-12 education or higher education.
- VI. KCKPS is committed to the goal of graduating each student prepared for college and careers in a global society, and it is critically important that the legislature not do anything to hinder the district's focus. Specifically, the district urges the legislature to reject any attempt to obstruct funding for the implementation of Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.
- VII. Oppose the use of public dollars and tax credits to fund private schools, and support the requirement that any school that receives public funds must meet state and federal accountability standards and provide programs/services required of public schools. Also, maintain the constitutional requirement that public schools be operated by locally elected boards of education.
- VIII. Fully-fund full-day kindergarten, and provide additional funding for early childhood education.
- IX. Support continuing to have non-partisan school board elections.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES REMAIN RELEVANT AND IN TODAY'S TECH-SAVVY WORLD



Walk into any school library in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools and the landscape will be drastically different from the traditional structure of a large room, filled with rows of books. That's because school libraries have adapted to the changing times.

Today's school libraries are filled with computers, iPads and headsets. There are study groups meeting, students being tutored and cozy spaces to read. But one thing that hasn't changed is the goal of these libraries: to connect students with needed resources.

Many of the resources offered through the libraries are now in a digital format, and school librarians are seen as digital leaders who guide their students to this online information.

Card catalogs of old have been transformed into online databases. Research can be done with a few keystrokes on the computer, instead of through microfilm.

Magic Wall of Books

Most books are now available online as ebooks. Laura Wilcoxin, librarian at F.L. Schlagle High School, said the school's Magic Wall where students access ebooks is quite popular.

"The Magic Wall has really taken off this year," Wilcoxin said. "My numbers have more than doubled over last year. Because of this, our overall checkout numbers have already doubled and we are only halfway through the year."

The ebooks can be checked out using an app and downloaded to a computer, tablet or smartphone. Each school in KCKPS has a Magic Wall with a large selection of ebooks. And one of the biggest advantages, besides ease, is that there are no late fees. Once the checkout time is up for the ebook, it simply disappears from the student's computer or electronic device.

KCKPL eCommunity

But KCKPS students have an advantage that students in other school districts across the nation don't have. Because the KCK Public Library (KCKPL) system is a part of KCKPS, students have access through their school library to a myriad of resources offered by KCKPL through their eCommunity system at no cost. There also is no cost for community members to use these resources; all that is necessary is a library card (and patrons may now register for these online).

"Many parents think libraries are just about books, but they are so much more today," said Ami Garrison, librarian at J.C. Harmon High School. "The databases alone are a great option for our families."

Garrison said accessing a story from an academic journal outside the library can cost as much as \$50 to download. But through KCKPL, it is available at no cost.



Here is a list of some of the resources offered through the KCKPL eCommunity:

- Tutor.com. This student tutor center offers free homework and study help from live experts, 24/7, in subjects including math, science, English, social studies and test prep (including ACT, state standardized tests, Accuplacer and more).
- Mango. This is a language learning site with access to more than 71 different languages including Spanish, English, French, Russian and even American Sign Language.
- Hoopla. This site contains audio books, movies, television shows, comics, music and more.
- Specialized databases for all core subjects and most elective courses for students.
- Access to encyclopedias.

School libraries are resourceful and relevant. They promote the love of reading, contribute to enhanced literacy and provide students with tech savvy ways to gather accurate and pertinent information to advance learning.

The Top Reasons to Use KCKPL Databases (instead of using a search engine) to find information online:

- The databases have reliable, accurate information that is fact checked by publishers.
- The databases are unbiased.
- The databases are free and available from home.
- The databases provide the most up-to-date information (because they are updated daily).
- An audio version is available (so you can listen as you read).
- They are translated into several languages.
- A citation for references is provided for each article.
- You can download articles so you can work offline or email them to yourself.
- There are different levels/lexiles available (for all ages).
- They allow students to become familiar with using the databases in preparation for college.
- Using the databases provides lifelong learning opportunities.

Here's how to access the library's Databases and other eCommunity resources:

- Go to www.kckps.org
- Choose "Community Information" from the top menu bar
- Choose "Libraries (public)" from the side menu

BOOK



Help today's readers become tomorrow's leaders! The goal is to send every child home with 10 books to read over the summer months.

DRIVE

Donate NEW books for KCKPS students in grades K-5. Monetary donations for books are also welcome!

Donations can be dropped off at any KCKPL Branch now through April 2016.

Make checks payable to:
KCK School Foundation for Excellence.

Scan the QR code to find a list of the most popular titles.



HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM



It was like a college signing day for athletes, but instead of athletics, students were receiving college offers based on their academic standing.

In the fall of 2015, nearly 850 of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools' high school seniors (or 72 percent of all seniors) received scholarship letters from area universities offering them partial or full funding to attend their schools. It was part of the district's new Diploma+ Scholarship Program. Students received the offers based on their grade point averages and ACT scores.

Representatives from the universities made visits and/or sent letters to students at all five of the district's high schools.

"It was like opening presents at Christmas!" said Washington High School senior Elizabeth Hartegan. "You don't know what you're going to get but it's always exciting."

As the process began, rumors began to fly around the hallways at the high schools. Which school is coming next? Who will be receiving letters? How much will the offers be?

Because of the Diploma+ Scholarship Program, Hartegan received more than 10 letters with offers (some from colleges she had already applied to and others through Diploma+). One scholarship offer was a four-year renewable scholarship worth a total of \$48,000. She said since she was young she has known she would attend college some day but this process opened her eyes

to the wide variety of universities and their programs.

"It also made me excited and hopeful, because financially, it's hard," she said.

Tyrone Hooks, a senior at F.L. Schlagle High School, received at least 15 scholarship offers from universities, many through Diploma+. One was a four-year renewable scholarship that would give him a full-ride.

"It definitely helps me to have so many choices," he said.

Edward Marquez, the district's Diploma+ college and career coordinator, said the program benefits students in a number of ways that go beyond money being offered. For some of the students, he noted, this was the first time that any college or university had expressed an interest in them. For those students, receiving a scholarship offer might be the thing that gets them to think about attending college after high school. In addition, many students received offers from schools that had not previously been on their radar, or that didn't seem attainable.

"We see this program as a way to motivate our students," said Marquez. "They know that if they keep working hard, people will notice, and the vision and aspirations they have can be fulfilled."

Participation in the program required that a student's parent sign a transcript release letter. This allowed the school to share

DIPLOMA+ SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE



transcript information with participating colleges and universities. Those schools then selected the students whose academic credentials fit the profile of student they are seeking, and made them offers.

The following colleges and universities participated in the initiative:

- Avila University
- Donnelly College
- Kansas State University
- Park University
- Pittsburg State University
- University of Kansas
- University of Missouri
- University of Missouri-Kansas City
- St. Mary University
- William Jewell College



Watch a video on the Diploma+
Scholarship Program on the KCKPS
YouTube channel,
www.YouTube.com/KCKPSTV.

CYNTHIA LANE NAMED SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR



Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lane has been named 2016 Superintendent of the Year! The award was announced in the fall of 2015 by the Kansas School Superintendents' Association (KSSA).

Candidates for Superintendent of the Year are assessed according to their professionalism, communication, community involvement and leadership in meeting the needs of students. As Kansas Superintendent of the Year, Lane will now be considered for the National Superintendent of the Year program. KSSA also provides a \$1,000 scholarship to a high school senior selected by the Kansas Superintendent of the Year.

"I am humbled and honored to have been selected for this award," Lane said. "I accept it on behalf of the Board of Education and the team of people in the district and in the community who work tirelessly to graduate each student prepared for college and careers in a global society. This award is a tribute to their commitment to this community, and their dedication to the idea that every student deserves access to a high-quality education."

This recognition is the culmination of a life dedicated to educational leadership and excellence. Lane has worked in education for more than 30 years, including the last 14 as an administrator in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS). Prior to becoming superintendent, she worked as an assistant superintendent, director of special education, associate director of special education, and a building principal. Before returning to KCKPS in 2001, she served as the director of special education in Spring Hill.

Lane is a member of the American Association of School Administrators, she chairs the Kansas School Superintendents' Association legislative committee, and has been extremely active with the United School Administrators of Kansas, where she was recently honored with a USA | Kansas Outstanding Service Award. She is a member of the Kansas-Missouri Superintendent Forum and began her leadership career as a member of the Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators.

In addition to her education leadership, Lane is actively engaged in the community. She is involved with the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Parents and Child Empowerment Services, and serves on the Country Club Bank Advisory Board. Her passion for early education is demonstrated through her continued involvement with the Successful Partnership to Assure Readiness for Kindergarten (SPARK) and Kindergarten Ready Committee.

She earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Pittsburg State University and a doctorate from the University of Kansas. In 2013 she was honored by the University of Kansas with a Leadership for Learning Award, and in 2014 received a Meritorious Achievement Award from Pittsburg State University.

Lane will represent Kansas at the American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education in February in Phoenix, and will be considered for the National Superintendent of the Year program.

2015-2016 DISTRICT CALENDAR (THIRD QUARTER)

January

- 12 Board of Education meeting
- 18 Holiday / Administrative Offices closed
- 26 Board of Education meeting

February

- 9 Board of Education meeting
- 10 Early Release / Family Advocacy
- 12 Family Advocacy Day / No School for Students

- 15 Holiday / Administrative Offices closed
- 23 Board of Education meeting

March

- 8 Board of Education meeting
- 10 Last day of 3rd quarter
- 11 .5 records prep / .5 inservice
- 14-18 Spring Break
- 22 Board of Education meeting

April

- 12 Board of Education meeting
- 21 Kindergarten Roundup
- 22 Teacher Non-Duty Day / No School
- 22 Furlough / Administrative Offices closed
- 26 Board of Education meeting

The full district calendar is accessible from the homepage of the website, www.kckps.org (click on "calendars").

2015 REASONS TO BELIEVE ALUMNI HONOR ROLL



Twelve outstanding alumni were inducted into the *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll on November 18. *Reasons to Believe* was launched in 2002 to recognize the success and achievements of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools through its alumni. Members of the 2015 Alumni Honor Roll are (back row, from left) Gary Belske, class of 1974 Washington High; Rev. Rick Behrens, class of 1977 Washington High; Steve McGill, class of 1974 J.C. Harmon High; Donald Holland, Sr., class of

1973 Wyandotte High; Andres Dominguez, class of 1977 J.C. Harmon High; Dr. Harold Frye, class of 1962 Wyandotte High; (front row, from left) Jennifer Jo Cobb, class of 1991 F.L. Schlagle High; Julia Peña, class of 1982 J.C. Harmon High; Mrs. Lucy Saunders, class of 1939 Sumner High; Sarah Gorelick Ratley, class of 1951 Wyandotte High; Dr. Oneita Taylor, class of 1964 Sumner High; and Michele Foulks, representing her son, Darrell Stuckey, class of 2005 Washington High.

2015 *Reasons to Believe* Scholarship Recipients

sponsored by McAnany, Van Cleave & Phillips, P.A.



Katya Diaz, Wyandotte High School



Sydnei Patton, Sumner Academy of Arts & Science

Did you miss this year's *Reasons to Believe* Celebration? You can watch it online on our YouTube page, www.youtube.com/KCKPSTV.

COMMUNITY FORUM ON MARCH 2 - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The district will host its next Community Forum on Wednesday, March 2, 2016. It will be held at J.C. Harmon High School.

Stay tuned to the district's communications sources (Facebook, website, KCKPS-TV, Twitter) for more information.

2015 Marching Band Festival!



Saturday, January 23 & Sunday, January 24, 2016

— 15th Annual Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library —

EAGLE DAYS



CHECK OUT OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Did you know that KCKPS has a YouTube channel where videos about all types of district programs and initiatives are posted? Did you know that you can subscribe to the site so you will be notified when a new video is posted?

Check it out at www.youtube.com/KCKPSTV

Operation Wildlife volunteers will have live birds of prey on exhibit (including eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls) and will talk about the birds and their natural history. View eagles and waterfowl take flight over the lake. Get ready for creative fun with crafts for kids.

Two Wyandotte County Lake Locations:

Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library
Open Saturday from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday from Noon - 4:00 pm

James P. Davis Hall
Open Saturday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday from Noon - 4:00 pm

Birds of Prey Presentations at BOTH Locations:

Saturday - 10:00 am, 1:00 pm & 2:30 pm
Sunday - 1:00 pm & 3:00 pm



For more details, call 913-299-2384 or visit www.kckpl.org/schlagle

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