THE PIPER PRESS

SPRING 2025



Piper USD 203

INCLUSIVITY | INNOVATION | COMMUNITY | INTEGRITY | PASSION

FROM *the* HELM

A Message from the Superintendent, Dr. Jessica Dain



As the school year comes to a close, I am filled with pride and gratitude for what we've accomplished together. This year marked the official opening of our brand-new Piper High School and the exciting launch of Pirates Bay—spaces that now serve as vibrant hubs for learning, athletics, and community connection. We earned the Kansas Can GOLD distinction for our Individual Plan of Study for the second consecutive year, the only district in the state to achieve this remarkable honor. With support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, we secured $198,000 to advance our Real World Learning efforts, further proving that Piper is truly #FUTUREREADY.

These milestones would not be possible without the collective dedication of our community. To our teachers, thank you for your tireless commitment to students. To our families, thank you for your continued partnership and trust. And to our students—you are the heart of this district. Your enthusiasm, resilience, and achievements, from hosting and winning sub-state basketball to showcasing culture through the BLAZE Council, have been nothing short of inspiring. Together, we've created moments that will shape futures and build pride for years to come.

As we reflect on a year of growth and celebration, let's carry forward the spirit that has defined our journey. Whether we're raising over $25,000 at the Foundation Auction, honoring a Piper Hall of Fame inductee, or opening new athletic fields with roaring crowds, one thing is clear: the energy and excellence of Piper are unmatched. Let's continue to believe in our mission, in one another, and in the bright horizon ahead. #BELIEVETHEHYPE—because the future isn't just coming, it's already here in Piper.

Proud to be a Pirate,

Jessica



Pictured here: Dr. Andrea Paulakovich, Assistant Principal at Piper Middle School distributes certificates to 8th grade students during "Promotion Day." Students declare their Academies and proudly wear their stoles as they say farewell to Middle School and eagerly move forward to their high school pursuits.

FROM FIRST STEPS TO FINAL STRIDES: CELEBRATING EVERY MILESTONE IN PIPER

Spring in the Piper School District is more than just a season—it's a celebration. From the youngest learners taking their first leap into education to seniors preparing to launch into the world, each moment is filled with pride, promise, and purpose.







We begin with Kindergarten Discovery Day, where our newest Pirates make it official! In a heart-warming tradition, incoming kindergartners sign their "Letters of Intent" to play, learn, grow, and achieve in the Piper School District. With wide eyes and eager smiles, these bright young learners mark the beginning of their educational journey—and we couldn't be more excited to welcome them into our school family.

At the other end of that journey, our incredible seniors take center stage during Academic Signing Day, a new tradition that started this year. In a celebration mirroring the fanfare of athletic signings, the Class of 2025 proudly declares their next steps—whether it's college, trade school, military service, or launching straight into a chosen career path. Each signature represents years of effort, dreams pursued, and goals achieved. We are beyond proud of their accomplishments and can't wait to see how they shape the world.





Meanwhile, 8th Grade Promotion Day marks a meaningful rite of passage for our middle school students. As they say farewell to Piper Middle School, they step into their high school futures with excitement and purpose. Students declare their chosen Academies—Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation; Health & Life Sciences; Arts & Media; Design, Production & Aviation; Human Services; and Public Services—and don Academy stoles that signify their path ahead. It's a powerful moment that affirms their potential and launches their next chapter with pride.



Before graduation day arrives, the district gathers for the cherished tradition of Senior Breakfast—a time to honor students who have earned scholarships for their academic excellence, service, and leadership. This special event celebrates the hard work, dedication, and resilience that paved the way for their future success.



And finally, the moment that brings it all full circle: the Grad Walk. Dressed in their caps and gowns, Piper seniors return to their elementary and middle schools for one last walk through the halls. They're met with cheers, high-fives, and signs from younger students—many of whom dream of walking in their footsteps one day. It's a powerful visual of what a Future Ready education looks like, and a fitting sendoff for the Class of 2025.

From first-day kindergartners to final-year seniors, spring in Piper is a powerful reminder of our mission: to inspire every learner to grow, achieve, and thrive. Here's to the journeys ahead—and the incredible moments that make us Piper Proud.



#FUTUREREADY

PIPER USD 203 EARNS KANSAS PURPLE STAR SCHOOL DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Piper Unified School District 203 has officially been named a Kansas Purple Star School District, a recognition awarded by the Kansas State Board of Education to districts that show an exceptional commitment to supporting military-connected students and families. Piper is one of only four districts in the state to earn this honor in 2025, joining Spring Hill (USD 230), Emporia (USD 253), and Rose Hill (USD 394).

The Kansas Purple Star School Recognition Program helps schools respond to the educational and social-emotional challenges military-connected children face during transitions between schools, often due to a parent's change in duty station. The designation reflects a district's major commitment to ensuring these students feel welcomed, supported, and set up for success in college, careers, and life.

During the Kansas State Board of Education's April meeting, Dr. Dain was joined in presenting on behalf of Piper by Megan Riggs, librarian at Piper Prairie Elementary and a military spouse, and her daughter, Dakota Riggs, a freshman at Piper High School. Also representing the district was Kristin Miller, an administrative assistant at Piper Prairie Elementary and a military spouse, along with her daughter Morgan, who helped share their family's perspective on the importance of military-connected student support. Their voices and experiences were instrumental in showcasing Piper's efforts to the Board.

Piper's inclusion on the Purple Star list highlights the district's dedication to creating a welcoming, supportive environment for all students, especially those navigating the unique challenges of military life.



LIGHTING THE WAY WITH CREATIVITY



Pictured is Lilly Dupree, (now) eighth grader at Piper Middle School and winner of the Entrepreneurship Education Initiative (EEI)

The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well at Piper Middle School, and it shines brightly through (now) eighth grader Lilly Dupree—winner of the Entrepreneurship Education Initiative (EEI) Logo Design Competition. Selected from a pool of talented student designers across Wyandotte County, Lilly's innovative design was chosen to represent a regional coalition focused on embedding entrepreneurial thinking into education and strengthening career-connected learning from high school to college and beyond.

The Piper School District is proud to be part of the EEI, one of six Collective Impact Grant coalitions funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The coalition brings together schools, businesses, and community organizations to support students through creative and forward-thinking programming. Lilly's design will now serve as the visual identity for this important work—an accomplishment that came with a $500 prize and well-deserved recognition.

Lilly's journey to the winning design began after a track practice, when she jumped into the car and her mom showed her a message on her phone: "Congratulations, you're the winner." Shocked and overjoyed, Lilly said she "jumped up and down—even though I was still buckled in my seat!"

Her final design—a light bulb constructed from connecting dots and lines—symbolizes the essence of entrepreneurship: collaboration, growth, and innovation. "The shape of the light bulb represents ideas, and the connecting lines show how we improve together over time," Lilly explained. The gradient color scheme, flowing from dark purple and black at the base to light blue at the top, was carefully chosen to reflect progress and upward momentum. She developed the design using

Canva, balancing creativity with feedback from the selection panel and her teacher, Ms. Davis.

But the creative process wasn't without challenges. Juggling schoolwork, sports, and her artistic vision, Lilly often found herself working between classes and battling creative blocks. She turned to online inspiration, school tools like ClassLink, and helpful feedback from her teachers to refine her work. "My teacher showed me the 60-30-10 color rule, which helped a lot. I also looked at other logos for ideas. It was hard, but it made the final design even better."

When asked what entrepreneurship means to her, Lilly reflected on the value of building and improving over time—not always from scratch, but with intention and innovation. "You take something and make it better," she said. "That's how I thought about the logo."

Lilly's love for graphic design began early. Whether for fun, school, or even church projects, she enjoys expressing herself through digital art. The experience has already helped shape her future aspirations. She's considering careers in architecture, design production, or business entrepreneurship—fields that combine creativity, strategy, and innovation.

Also recognized in the EEI competition was Piper Middle School student Natalie Shealy, whose outstanding submission earned her a place among the Top 7 finalists. Her design was a testament to the remarkable talent of Piper students and the power of project-based learning.

To her fellow students thinking about entering a design competition, Lilly has a message: "Don't be scared to try something new. Even if it doesn't seem fun at first, you'll grow from it. And don't give up—you never know what you'll achieve."

Congratulations to Lilly, Natalie, and all the students who participated. Your designs and dedication reflect the bold future of Piper and the promise of an entrepreneurial generation.

PIPER SELECTED AS KEY PARTNER IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION INITIATIVE FUNDED BY EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

Piper has been selected as one of only two districts in the region to join the Entrepreneurship Education Initiative, a bold new effort funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. As part of a select coalition of six organizations—including Kansas City Kansas Community College, UMKC, Babson College, and others—Piper will help design a strategic plan that embeds entrepreneurship education into local schools, fostering innovation and workforce readiness across Kansas City.

For more information, visit https://www.kauffman.org/currents/six-coalitions-awarded-collective-impact-funding/

SPRING SPORTS: STATE SUCCESS AND HISTORIC FIRSTS

State Boys' Tennis

In just their second season, the Piper Boys' Tennis team had a historic run, capturing the program's first-ever Regional Championship. Senior Blake Taylor capped off a strong season by winning the Regional Singles title. Teammate Chri Htoo showed grit and determination, battling through a sprained ankle to finish 4th at Regionals and qualify for state.



Doubles partners Johnny Vogel and Baird Greenamyre (pictured to the right) dominated late in the season—first winning the UKC Doubles Championship, then claiming the Regional title. The duo was named First Team All-UKC and made program history as the first Piper boys to earn a state medal, finishing 7th at the KSHSAA State Tournament in Salina with a stellar 33-5 record.

Congratulations to Head Coach Bryan Shelley, named Regional Coach of the Year, and Assistant Coach Matt Storrer. To Blake Taylor, Chri Htoo, Johnny Vogel, and Baird Greenamyre—thank you for putting Piper Tennis on the map!

State Girls' Swimming

The Piper Girls Swim team, led by Head Coach Amy Bartlow and Assistant Coach Courtney Johnson, turned in another incredible season. The team repeated as Wyandotte County Champions and placed 2nd at the UKC Championships.

At the KSHSAA 1A–5A State Championship, three relays reached the finals. The 200 Medley Relay team of Savannah Carstensen, Ella Heininger, Megan Kindle, and Alice Allen placed 13th. The 200 Free Relay (Carstensen, Kindle, Emerson Jeffries, Allen) also placed 13th, while the 400 Free Relay (Kindle, Jeffries, Heininger, Allen) placed 18th.





Savannah Carstensen also qualified individually in two events, finishing 18th in the 100 backstroke and 17th in the 500 freestyle. Alternates who traveled with the team included Leah Heininger, Chloe Wyrick, Ava Boyd, and Kate Lockamy (who was a relay team member but competed in the regional track meet held the same day as swim prelims).

A special shoutout to Coach Amy Bartlow, who was named UKC Coach of the Year!

State Track & Field

The Piper Track & Field team had a record-setting season, sending 26 athletes to the 5A State Championships and bringing home the program's first-ever 5A state team trophy with a 3rd-place finish for the boys team. The team also won both the UKC and Regional Championships—a triple crown of accomplishments!

State Qualifiers included:
Lucy Traffis – Pole Vault
Boys 4x400: Shinji Pollard, Eric Seigel, Quinn Hanson, Skyler Little
Boys 4x800: Conner Johnson, Justus Lockamy, Oliver Bass, Quinn Hanson
Alamar Brooks – Long Jump & High Jump
Ronin Trusskey – Discus
Westin Haworth – Discus

State Medalists (Top 8 Finish):
Ella L'Heureux – 7th Long Jump
Da'Mon Jamierson – 7th 100m Dash
Girls 4x800: 7th – Kate Lockamy, Elizabeth Arenas, Breckyn Shaw, Ella Eads
Girls 4x400: 6th – Kate Lockamy, Kylie Rice, Ella Eads, Nora Turney
Kole Schaunaman – 5th Javelin
Carsen Avery – 4th 300m Hurdles, 7th 110m Hurdles

Kylie Rice – 3rd 100m Dash
Skyler Little – 3rd 100m Dash, 3rd 200m Dash
Boys 4x100: 2nd – Shinji Pollard, Da'Mon Jamierson, Eli Watts, Skyler Little
Shinji Pollard – 2nd 110m Hurdles, 8th 300m Hurdles
Max Clark – 2nd Javelin
Nora Turney – State Champion 100m Hurdles, 3rd 300m Hurdles

The coaching staff played a vital role in the program's success:
Josh Baxter (Head Coach, Sprints) – UKC Coach of the Year
Avery Kamienski – Hurdles
Bob Lockwood – Vertical Jumps
Cassie Dolinar – Distance
Julie Friesen – Throws
Justin Richmond – Sprints
Miles Lockridge – Horizontal Jumps
Tom Beebe – Throws

State Baseball

The Piper Baseball team, under Head Coach Randy Robertson and assistant coaches Pat Kirwan, Mike Robertson, and Andy Seal, had a season to remember—finishing with a 17-11 record and qualifying for the 5A State Tournament for the first time in school history after winning their first 5A Regional Championship.

The team placed 4th in the UKC, with seven players earning All-League recognition:
Myles Ross – First Team
Mason Porter – Second Team
Jovahni Perez, Kaiden Simons, Judah Monhollon, Carter Laird, and Dylan Eikenbary – Honorable Mention

Additional varsity contributors included Jack Bakarich, Kellen Heier, Eli Utter, Roch Emanuel, Connor Musil, Ian Hubbel, Jonathan Gregory, Jaxon Riggs, Easton McCarty, Owen McVay, and Blake Wiss. Congratulations to the entire team for an unforgettable season!



DISTRICT DOWNLOAD



Piper Ed Foundation Announces 2025 Hall of Fame Inductee: Mr. Larry Breedlove

The Piper Educational Foundation was proud to announce Mr. Larry Breedlove as the 2025 inductee into the Piper Hall of Fame. A 1972 Piper graduate and longtime principal, Mr. Breedlove devoted decades to public education and the Piper community. After beginning his career in Kansas City, Kansas, he returned to Piper in 1985, serving as principal at both Piper Elementary and Piper Middle School, where he led with heart and consistency for over two decades. His legacy continues through his daughter, Stasi Willmon, now principal of the Piper Early Childhood Center.



Kailey Mortell Wins WyCo Election Office "I Voted" Sticker Design Contest

Piper High School student Kailey Mortell, a standout in the Arts & Media Academy, has won the Wyandotte County Election Office's first-ever "I Voted" sticker design contest! Kailey's creative and thoughtful design—driven by her strong passion for graphic design—will be distributed to thousands of voters throughout Wyandotte County during the 2025 elections. Her work is not only a celebration of artistic talent, but also a powerful reminder of the role young people can play in shaping our democracy. Congratulations, Kailey! We can't wait to see your sticker at the polls next year.

Piper's Communications Wins NSPRA Golden Achievement Award

Piper's Communications Department has earned a prestigious 2025 Golden Achievement Award from NSPRA for its Secure the Ship campaign. This strategic initiative, aimed at raising $2 million to support Piper's new Wall-to-Wall Academy High School, has already generated nearly $500,000 in business and community support. Through powerful storytelling, student and educator voices, and creative outreach, the campaign showcases Piper's commitment to real-world learning and innovative education. Communications Director Katelyn Kaminski will accept the award this July in Washington, D.C.

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11 A.M. - 6 P.M.
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- DRIVER'S LICENSE
- STUDENT BIRTH CERTIFICATE
- IMMUNIZATION RECORDS