



January 2026

South Middle

The mission of South Middle School is to provide a high quality education for all students in a safe, equitable learning environment. This mission is best accomplished through a partnership including students, family, community, teachers and staff, preparing students to become life-long learners in an ever-changing world.

Principal Message

The beginning of a new semester is a fresh start, where everyone has to opportunity to hit the reset button, learn from past mistakes and improve throughout the remainder of the school year. We encourage our students to prioritize organization and timely completion of school work. We challenge each student to make a commitment to completing assignments by the due date and staying updated on their grades. Consistent effort and meeting teacher deadlines will guarantee success.

This month also brings an exciting shift in our extracurricular calendar. Our students will transition to Boys Basketball and Girls Wrestling. Additionally, our Scholar's Bowl team will have their season in the month of January.

The home to school partnership remains crucial for student achievement. Students perform best when they arrive at school well-rested, nourished, and emotionally ready to learn. Taking time to unplug, engage in relaxing activities, and communicate openly with students about stress, anxiety and wellness are crucial for students at this age. When our students prioritize physical and mental health, they are best equipped to take advantage of the opportunities the semester holds. I hope we can work together to make the second half of the school year a success for all of our students.

Dustin Dooley, Principal

Sixth Grade Reading

Our sixth graders recently wrapped up their Natural Allies unit and the novel *Touching Spirit Bear*. Throughout the quarter, students explored the relationships between humans and animals while examining themes such as conflict, forgiveness, and personal growth.

As we move into the next quarter, our focus shifts to Technology and the question: Is it helpful or harmful? Students will read a series of shorter texts from our myPerspectives curriculum and finish the unit with the novel *The Giver*. Through these readings, they will discuss the benefits technology can bring to our lives, as well as the potential risks when it is used for control rather than support.

We encourage you to continue these conversations at home. Ask your student how technology affects their daily routines—what makes it valuable, what challenges it can present, and how we can all use it responsibly.

Seventh Grade Reading

Students are kicking off second semester with a new unit exploring the relationship between people and nature. This quarter, students will also be using the iReady Reading program. Each week, they are expected to complete two iReady Reading lessons outside of class, and these will count toward their grade.

In Quarter 4, students will dive into our next class novel, *Refugee*, returning to weekly assigned reading and question sets. Vocabulary remains an important part of our curriculum, with quizzes scheduled every other week. Please continue to support your student by reviewing vocabulary regularly. A link to the flashcards can be found at the top of the Reading Classwork page in Google Classroom.

Sixth Grade Intensive Reading

Students in our modified reading classes work with adapted texts, receive targeted phonics instruction, and practice key comprehension strategies to help close learning gaps and move closer to reading at grade level. Throughout the semester, students set goals, tracked their progress, and put in consistent effort to strengthen their reading skills.

Recently, students completed the i-Ready Reading diagnostic assessment, which measures proficiency through fiction and nonfiction passages and related comprehension questions. Their results showed strong growth in vocabulary, phonics, and overall comprehension. Several students even demonstrated the skills necessary to transition into a regular reading class for the second semester.

We are incredibly proud of the progress all students have made!



Seventh and Eighth Grade Intensive Reading

Students in Ms. Turner's seventh and eighth grade Intensive Reading classes have been hard at work building their literacy skills. They are engaging with leveled texts, strengthening phonics skills, and practicing key comprehension strategies. A central goal of the class is to ensure every student follows an individualized pathway for reading growth. Each week, students also dive into current events through Scholastic News articles.

In December, all students completed the i-Ready Reading diagnostic, which assessed phonics, high-frequency word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension of both literary and informational texts. These results help students set personalized reading goals and guide targeted instruction in the classroom.

You can support your child at home by encouraging them to read books or articles that match their interests and by having them complete their i-Ready lessons on their individual pathway. Your support helps them continue growing as confident, capable readers!

Dillons Rewards

SMS families can support the South Middle School PTO by using their Dillons Plus shopper's card. A percentage of all purchases are allotted to our PTO. Here's how to enroll in the Dillons Community Rewards program:

- Sign in to your existing online account or create an account
- Find and select South Middle School PTO or organization #VN011 and click save
- Shop at Dillons and scan your existing Plus shopper's card



Visit Dillons Community Rewards

Keep Your Child Healthy and in School

Daily attendance is essential to help your child stay on track and engaged in learning. Please send your child to school each day they are feeling well enough to participate in classroom activities. Many mild symptoms do not require students to stay home.



Children can still attend school if they have:

- A mild cold (such as a runny nose or cough)
- Watery eyes without fever, eye pain, or redness of the eyelids
- A mild stomachache
- A mild rash with no other symptoms
- Have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication

Unsure if your child should stay home? Additional guidelines are available on our website at www.usd305.com.

As a reminder, please call your school office to notify them anytime your child will be absent. Greatness grows when you're here!

Food Service

Please review your student's food service account balance regularly to keep your account current and prevent overdue payments. To view your current balance, log into Skyward Family Access and click the Food Service Tile.

You may pay in person at South Middle, the district office or online in Skyward:

<https://skystu.usd305.com/StudentSTS>



Student Council

December was a busy month for Student Council! We kicked off the month by holding concessions for the Boy's Wrestling event on December 2. STUCO members also dedicated time on December 4 to Christmas shop for local families, helping ensure everyone has gifts this holiday season. We offered a cool treat with our slushy sale during lunch on December 5, and wrapped up the semester by spreading festive spirit with a Christmas Welcoming Committee, handing out various candies to students.



Girls Wrestling

Girls' wrestling is gearing up for its second season this January, and excitement is building. After an impressive inaugural year filled with determination, improvement, and strong sportsmanship, our athletes are ready to take the next step. Practices begin January 6 and will run daily from 3:00–5:00 p.m. The team's first dual is set for January 20 at Derby North. We encourage everyone to come out and cheer on our wrestlers as they continue to represent COUGAR pride this season.



Boys Basketball

The Middle School Boys Basketball season is right around the corner, with tryouts scheduled for December 15–17. Team selections will be announced after practice on December 17, and the final seventh and eighth grade rosters will be posted on our school athletics page on December 18. This year's eighth grade team will be led by Head Coach Jeff Vogt with Assistant Coach Devon Cooper. The seventh grade team will be coached by Thaine Willer and Assistant Coach Darren Pittenger. Practices begin January 5, and our athletes are excited to prepare for a strong and successful season. Go Cougs!



Teacher of the Month

SMS is proud to announce that eighth grade English teacher, Mrs. Jordyn Cook, has been selected as the January teacher of the month. Mrs. Cook is in her first year of teaching and has made an exceptional start to her career. She fosters a positive learning environment by building strong student relationships, creates dynamic and thought-provoking lessons and enthusiastically contributes to our school's mission and culture.

Congratulations Mrs. Cook!

Students of the Week

Week 13

Congratulations to Levi Furgison for earning student of the week. Levi is an eighth grader at South Middle School. At school, he is involved in FCA, football, wrestling and track. His favorite parts of school are FCA and weightlifting class. After high school, he wants to go to Pennsylvania State University for wrestling. Some fun facts about him are that he enjoys playing sports and hanging out with his friends around town.



Week 14

Congratulations to Sebastian Smith for earning student of the week. Sebastian is a sixth grader at South Middle School. At school, he is involved in Student Council. His favorite parts of school are spending time with his friends and learning new things every day. His favorite subjects are math and reading because, he says, "Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Boyles are the best." After high school, Sebastian wants to go to college for football or basketball and hopes to play a sport professionally. Some fun facts about him are that he enjoys playing sports, learning, video games and playing outside with friends.



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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Important Dates in January

- 1 - No School
- 2 - No School
- 5 - No School / In-Service
- 19 - No School
- 21 - Site Council Meeting
- 21-22 - Dental Screenings

Contact Us

Dustin Dooley Principal
Tina Akers Assistant Principal
Stacy Garnett Assistant Principal
Jamie Jackson Secretary

Main Office Phone Number: 785-309-3900

#SMSCougars
#305GrowsGreatness



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@USD305

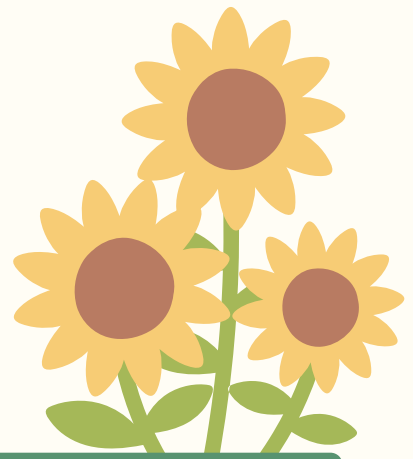
School Website

District Website

Unified School District #305 does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Any person having inquiries concerning Unified School District #305 compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, ADA, Title IX, or Section 504 is directed to contact the Unified School District #305 Executive Director of Human Resources, P.O. Box 797, Salina, Kansas 67402, 785-309-4726.

SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2025



Attendance

Attending school regularly is crucial to the academic success and social emotional development of a student. School is not only a place to learn but also a place to build relationships with peers and adults. When students miss even 1-2 days of school, they can fall behind in lessons which effect their grades. If too much is missed, it can lead to gaps in their learning, effecting future opportunities.

SMS is committed to ensuring students are at school and follow the Chronic Absenteeism model. When a student has missed 10% of school (excused or unexcused), guardians will begin to receive communication from the school in the form of a letter or phone call. If students need to miss school, be sure to notify the school immediately for any reason.



Try a coping skill

Deep Breathing

Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds

Hold that breath for 4 seconds

Exhale breath for 6 seconds.

*Exhale longer than inhale

Practice this for 3-5 minutes

Dates to Remember:

- **Jan. 1 -5: No School**
- **Jan. 19: No School**
- Jan 21: Squirrel Appreciation day
- Jan 24: Compliment Day

Contact Info

Social Worker:

Rachel Mudloff

785-309-3854

rachel.mudloff@usd305.com

