



I am

prepared
curious
motivated
globally minded
supported
confident
achieving
inspired
empowered
connected
innovative
a leader

I am Kearney Public Schools



Annual Report
2026

Bearcat Nation United in Excellence

Dear Kearney Community,

As we reflect on another successful year at Kearney Public Schools, I am filled with gratitude for our students, staff, families, and community partners who make KPS such a special place. Together, we continue to provide outstanding opportunities that help every student learn, grow, and succeed.

This year brought continued progress in academics, activities, and community engagement. Our dedicated staff and remarkable students exemplify what it means to be part of Bearcat Nation: striving for excellence, embracing innovation, and supporting one another every step of the way.

Thank you for your ongoing trust and partnership. Because of your support, KPS remains strong, connected, and focused on preparing students to own their future—**Bearcat Nation, United in Excellence!**



With gratitude,

Dr. Jason Mundorf
Superintendent of Schools
Kearney Public Schools

District Leadership

Superintendent	Dr. Jason Mundorf
Associate Super	Dr. Kent Edwards
Finance Director	Meagan Kershner
HR Director	Dr. Melissa Herrmann
Special Ed Director	Sara Paider
Student Services & Safety	Jeff Schwartz
PK-5 Ed Director	Jenn True
6-12 Ed Director	Clint Edwards
Communications	Tori Stofferson

Board of Education



Amy Barth



Drew Blessing



Niki Deeds



Paul Hazard



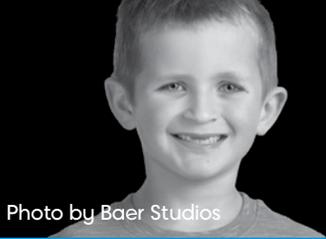
John Icenogle



Amanda Smallcomb

The Kearney Public Schools Board of Education is composed of six highly dedicated community members who volunteer countless hours in support of our students and the pursuit of providing a high-quality education to all students. These positions are uncompensated and require a tremendous amount of work, far beyond the monthly board meetings seen by the public. Our board members represent a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives, and remain steadfast in championing the needs of children and guiding a supportive educational system.

I am Kearney Public Schools



I am encouraged.

Positive feedback helps me continue improving my skills and performance. Caring, thoughtful teachers and counselors have my best interest in mind and challenge me to do my very best.

I am Kearney Public Schools



KPS Earns **Diamond Recognition** for School Safety

Kearney Public Schools is recognized for exceptional commitment to school safety by earning the prestigious Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Diamond Badge Certification.

The Diamond Badge system acknowledges Nebraska public schools that go above and beyond

in providing a safe environment for students, staff, and visitors.

Kearney Public Schools is honored to have achieved this certification, reaffirming our commitment to the four pillars of safety: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

KPS Students **Rise to the Challenge**



"We are proud of our students for their scores on standardized testing. Their strong performance reflects not only their dedication and resilience, but also the support of our families and the exceptional instruction provided by our teachers and staff. These results demonstrate that our students are growing academically, rising to challenges, and proving that they are well-prepared for future success." ~ Dr. Jason Mundorf

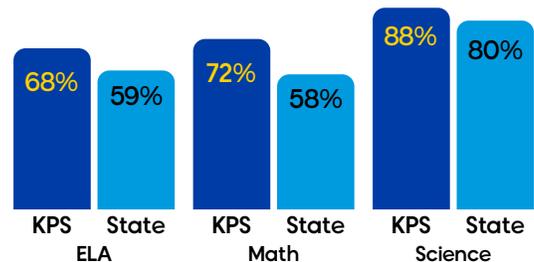
STATE ACCOUNTABILITY TESTS measure how well schools support student learning by using indicators such as achievement, progress, and readiness to ensure continuous improvement and transparency.

American College Testing (ACT)

A standardized test for 11th graders that is used for college admission in the USA.

	English	Math	Science
State	43%	41%	48%
KPS	51%	57%	55%

NSCAS (Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System) is the statewide test that measures student learning and academic growth in English language arts, math, and science to help ensure Nebraska students are on track for success.



STATE RATING SYSTEM The state rating system provides a clear snapshot of school performance by combining multiple measures.

AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow) is a rating of continuous improvement, measuring student achievement, growth, graduation rates, and readiness for college and careers.

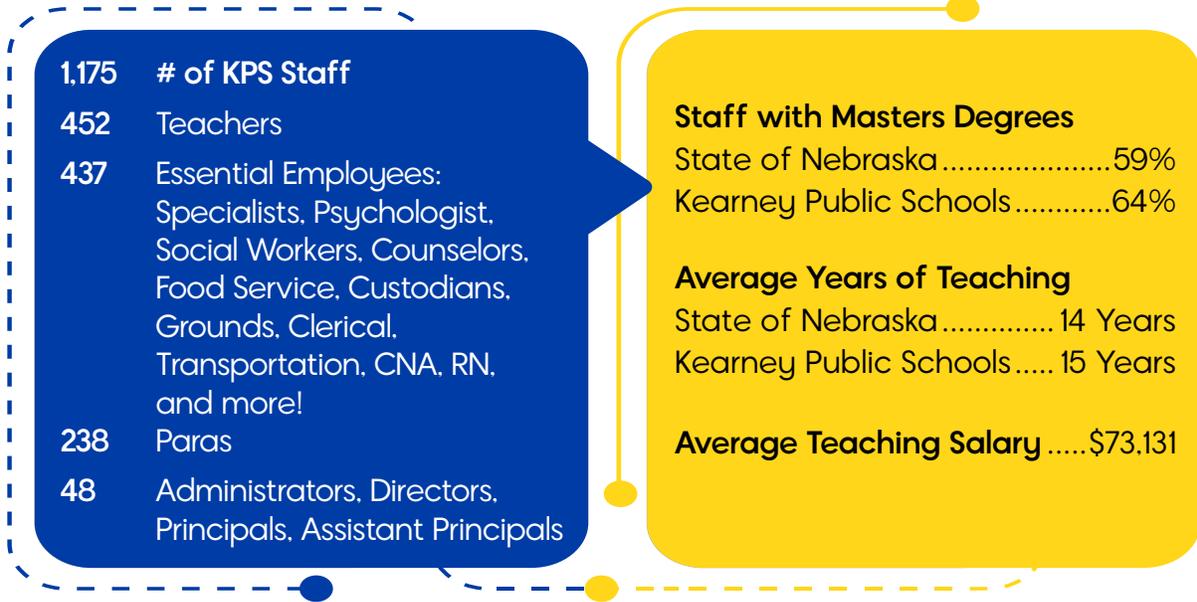
Excellent

HMS, Bryant, Buffalo Hills, Meadowlark, Northeast, Park, Windy Hills

Great

KPS, KHS, SMS, Central, Emerson, Kenwood

Who We Are: Staff by the Numbers



What We Do: Staff Recognitions

- National Distinguished School: Central Elementary
- Nebraska Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year: Erin Jones, Sunrise
- Region IV Superintendent of the Year: Dr. Jason Mundorf
- Region IV Middle School Principal of the Year: Amber Lewis, Horizon
- Region IV Outstanding New Principal of the Year: Jason Owens, Hanny Arram Center for Success
- Region IV Distinguished Principal of the Year - Park: Chance Waggoner
- National Most Valuable Athletic Trainer: Brian Haas, KHS
- NASES Friend of Special Education Award: Missy Dobish, KPS
- Nebraska State Bandmasters Association, Nate Metschke Creative Teacher Award for 2025: Nathan LeFeber, KHS Band
- Nebraska Music Education Association Exemplary Program award: KHS Music Department
- National Blue Ribbon School: Park Elementary
- KPS Outstanding Educators: Chris Pocock, KHS; Randi Kuhn, HMS; Karmen Grant, Emerson & Park
- KPS Outstanding Support Staff: Thomas Prentice, KHS; Amy Phye, HACS; Cindy Brown, HMS
- Outstanding Orchestra Teacher of the Year: Jeana Peterson, KPS
- VFW Teacher of the Year: Brooke Boroff, HACS
- NFHS Outstanding Middle Level Music Teacher of the Year: Tori Glandon
- Geographic Educators of Nebraska Bertolas, Gildersleeve, Stoddard, Stone Award: Kevin Witte, KHS Social Studies



I am engaged.

My lessons are interesting and have fun activities that encourage my active participation. Innovative projects and opportunities in classes like Art, Music, and Digital Media allow me to express myself and think outside the box. My school fuels my imagination and helps me bring new ideas to life.

I am Kearney Public Schools

I am driven.

Teachers have High expectations and encourage me to reach my goals and exceed my potential.

I am Kearney Public Schools

Photo by Baer Studios

Who We Are: Students by the Numbers

K-12 5,580
Preschool 131

English Learners
State 10%
KPS 4%

Gifted
State 13%
KPS 10%

Free & Reduced
State 50%
KPS 31%

Mobility Rate
State 4%
KPS 5%

With Disabilities
State 17%
KPS 16%

Race Ethnicity
White 77%
Hispanic 17%
Black 2%
Other 4%

Languages Spoken (17)
English 84%
Spanish 7%
Not Reported 8%
Other >1%

Attendance Rate
State 93%
KPS 94%

Graduation Rate
State 88%
KPS 93%

College Rate
State 76%
KPS 72%

Drop Out Rate
State 1%
KPS <1%

Transportation Buses:
541 Students daily
8 Regular routes
12 Special Ed routes
13 Big yellow buses

Bearcat Diner
Served Daily
6,198 Lunches
1,237 Breakfasts

What We Do: Student Recognitions

Not all awards are listed

- CTE Award for Excellence in Career & Technical Education: KHS
- Class A NE State College Multi-Activity Student Award: KHS
- Congressional Art Competition Honors - KHS: Ella Bokenkamp, Emma Harwood
- Nebraska Young Artist Award - KHS: Mia Lindstrom, Addison Jezbera, Madison Mather
- Top Honors at Nebraska Theater Academy Showcase: KHS Seussical Musical
- SkillsUSA Celebrates First State Medalist - KHS :Kaden Riekenberg
- First-Ever Class A State Girls Wrestling Champion - KHS: Carsyn McBride
- KHS Dance Catz claims State Dance Championship
- National K12 Ceramic Exhibition - KHS: Corey Fields, Emma Harwood
- KHS 'Log' earns Cornhusker Award
- Middle School Band Selected to Perform at National Veterans Ceremony
- FCCLA State Champions and National FCCLA silver medalists- KHS: Kassidy Clark and Ty Royal
- KHS Soccer Academic Award Excellence Award
- KHS Football Academic Award Excellence Award
- KHS Dance Catz Academic Excellence Award
- KHS Girls Basketball Academic Excellence Award
- KHS Swimming & Diving Academic Excellence Award
- KHS Boys and Girls Tennis Academic Excellence Award.
- DARE Graduations: Emerson, Northeast, Park, Bryant
- Grand Prize at KPS District Spelling Bee - Central: Delilah Darr
- President's Education Awards SMS:31 and HMS:58
- KHS Presidents Academic Fitness Awards: 85
- KHS 4.0 Scholars: 77
- KHS 30+ ACT Honor Roll: 35
- Perfect ACT Score - KHS: Drew Welch
- Quill and Scroll, the International Honorary Society for High School Journalists - KHS: Raghad Elfawal
- Omaha World Herald Academic All West Central Academic Team: Emma Heacock, Annsie Goff
- KHS Cheer runner-up at State NCA Championship
- FFA Vet Science Team State Champs and National Qualifier (1st time in school history)
- Central Elementary 4th Grade recognized in National Publication - Scholastic News
- KHS Wind Ensemble invited to play in the Lied Center
- Nebraska School Nutrition Art contest winner - Park Elementary: Tinley Ott
- US News & World Report Ranks 8 KPS Elementary Schools and both Sunrise & Horizon Middle Schools among the Best in State.

New Learning Spaces **Inspire Excellence**

KPS continues to invest in facilities that enhance student learning, growth, and opportunity. Two new projects, the Performance and Activity Wing (The PAW) at Kearney High School and the new Cottonwood Elementary School, highlight the district's ongoing commitment to innovation and student success.



The PAW: Performance and Activity Wing

The new Performance and Activity Wing (The PAW) at KHS expands opportunities for students to learn, train, and perform year-round.

On the lower level, The PAW features a spacious indoor field, providing room for physical education classes, athletic practices, and marching band rehearsals regardless of weather conditions. The addition also includes a dedicated girls' wrestling practice room, coaches' office, locker rooms, classrooms, and meeting areas that support a wide range of academic and co-curricular programs. On the upper level, students benefit from a JROTC air rifle range and a studio for cheer and dance team practices.



"The PAW enhances performance and opportunity, whether students are working toward athletic goals, rehearsing with the band, or developing leadership skills through JROTC."

~ Dr. Jason Mundorf, Superintendent



Cottonwood Elementary School

The new Cottonwood Elementary School will serve students in grades K-5 who benefit from a more personalized and flexible approach to learning through a nontraditional elementary school setting. The design emphasizes small class sizes, social emotional support, and explicit behavioral instruction, all creating an environment where students can build confidence and rediscover a love for learning. The building includes collaborative classrooms, sensory and counseling spaces, and personalized learning areas designed to support the whole child.



"Cottonwood reflects our belief that every child learns differently. This school provides a nurturing, individualized environment where students can thrive both academically and emotionally."

~ Sara Paider,
Director of Special Education

The general education classroom doesn't always support the significant behavioral needs some students require. The benefits extend beyond just the student needing the support, but the entire classroom environment for other students is also enhanced.

Investing in the Future Both of these projects align with the KPS mission to inspire and empower students for success in a changing world. By creating modern, purpose-built learning environments, Kearney Public Schools continues to ensure that every student – at every level – has access to the tools, spaces, and support needed to own their future.

I am **compassionate**.

Through service projects, teamwork, and supportive teachers, I've learned to care deeply for others. My school encourages kindness and teaches me how to make a positive difference.

I am **Kearney Public Schools**

I am accepted.

I feel comfortable participating fully in my school environment. At my school the positive learning environment nurtures me and engages my family and community and creates a culture where I thrive.

I am Kearney Public Schools

Photo by Baer Studios

Every Dollar. Every Decision. is Focused on Student Success

KPS remains committed to being a responsible and transparent steward of our community's resources. We work diligently to maximize every tax dollar by carefully prioritizing student needs, maintaining efficient operations, and planning strategically for the future. Through thoughtful budgeting, long-term financial planning, and consistent fiscal oversight, we ensure that KPS can continue providing excellent educational opportunities while honoring the trust our patrons place in us. Your support allows us to deliver high-quality programs in a way that is sustainable, accountable, and focused on what matters most—our students.

Revenue

Sources of KPS Funding

State Aide 48%
Local Taxes 46%
Federal Income 5%
County Receipts 1%

Property Tax Levy

\$1.14 per \$100 of
assessed valuation

Expenditures

How KPS Uses School Funds

Salary/Benefits 81%
Services 6%
Supplies 5%
Capital Assets 4%
Miscellaneous 1%

Cost per Pupil

\$14,906 KPS
\$17,204 STATE



"At Kearney Public Schools, we are committed to being thoughtful stewards of public funds. Every budgeting decision is guided by what is best for students while maintaining long-term financial stability for our district and taxpayers."

~Meagan Kershner, Finance Director



For a more detailed
look at the KPS budget

Use the QR Code or
log on to:
kearneypublicschools.org/finance



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Kearney, NE 68845

Student photo taken by



baerstudios.com

Nondiscrimination Notice

Kearney Public Schools is an equal opportunity employer and educational institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected status.



I am a leader.

My leadership skills - critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork - are strong because of KHS, there are unlimited opportunities to excel. Through sports, clubs, organizations, and classroom activities, I am gaining skills to become a strong and effective leader.

I am Kearney Public Schools