

Salina Public Schools USD 305

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Media Release

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Salina Public Schools Recognizes Horizon Teachers

Salina Public Schools (SPS) recognized two Horizon Teachers at the February 10 Board of Education meeting. An elementary and a secondary teacher is selected each year for the Horizon Award and recognized for excellence during their first full year of teaching.



Elementary Horizon Award – Grace Baughman, Pre-K Teacher

Grace teaches Pre-K at Heusner Elementary School and is known for her warm, empathetic and caring personality, as well as her ability to create consistent and strong connections with her students and their families.

Grace's teaching style features engaging, creative and developmentally appropriate lessons that balance academic rigor with opportunities for play-based, fun learning. Her classroom is well organized and thoughtfully arranged to foster student independence, support inclusion, promote confidence and aid in smooth transitions.

Positivity, compassion and creativity radiate throughout Grace's classroom. From establishing clear routines and teaching through themed lessons to incorporating hands-on activities, classroom stations and a commitment to social-emotional and visible learning, Grace enriches her students with experiences and practices that prepare them with essential life skills.

Grace is a South High School alumni and a past LIFT recipient. She attended Hutchinson Community College and Wichita State University, earning a bachelor's degree in early childhood unified and elementary education. She continues to further her education by attending professional development conferences and implementing those learnings in her classroom.



Secondary Horizon Award – Gavin Blehm, Band Director

Gavin is the band director at South Middle School and the assistant band director at South High School. He holds high regard for open communication with his students, taking time to build relationships and create a classroom centered on mutual respect, belonging, accountability and passion.

Gavin approaches his teaching with a variety of instructional strategies, including an emphasis on bringing abstract concepts into the physical realm and deepening students' understanding and interaction through interactive activities such as marching to the tempo to master rhythm, clapping and

counting in relation to the beat of the music and peer assessment and check-ins that create a sense of community and boost confidence and trust among his students.

Gavin attended Fort Hays State University, where he earned bachelor's degrees in music education, secondary education and trumpet performance. He continued his education by earning a master's degree in trumpet performance from the University of North Texas. As a Salina Public Schools (SPS) alumni, he now has the opportunity to serve SPS students alongside South Bands' colleague Darren Brooks, his first trumpet teacher during his seventh through ninth grade years.

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