



March 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

As we move into March, we are entering an important and exciting stretch of the school year. The fourth quarter is right around the corner, and this time of year provides a great opportunity for students to reflect on their progress, set goals, and finish the school year strong.

Following Spring Break, we will transition into our state assessment window, which begins on March 24. State assessments provide valuable information about student learning and help us measure growth in key academic areas. While tests are only one measure of student achievement, they do allow us to celebrate growth and identify areas where we can continue to help students improve. We encourage families to help their student prepare by ensuring a good night's sleep, eating a healthy breakfast and arriving to school on time during testing days.

This time of year also marks the start of our boys tennis and track and field seasons. We are excited to see our student-athletes represent our school positively. As we near April and May, coaches and sponsors from both the middle and high school will visit with groups of students interested in their sport or extra-curricular activity for the following school year. We encourage all of our students to participate in extracurriculars as they play an important role in building confidence and responsibility.

As always, strong communication between families and the school remains essential to student success. We encourage parents and guardians to stay connected with teachers, monitor student progress, and reach out whenever questions or concerns arise.

Thank you to all of our families for your continued support. We look forward to a strong finish to the school year and all the accomplishments that lie ahead this spring.

Dustin Dooley, Principal

Digital Literacy

Eighth-grade Digital Literacy gives students the opportunity to strengthen their keyboarding skills while gaining an introduction to Microsoft applications. The course also explores what it means to grow up in today's digital world and how technology impacts our daily lives.

As part of the curriculum, students study *The Amazing Generation* by Jonathan Haidt and Catherine Price (Haidt is also the author of the bestseller *The Anxious Generation*). Through this book study, students learn how tech companies design platforms to capture attention, collect data and generate profit.

Throughout the course, we emphasize digital responsibility and safety by teaching students how to protect their personal information, recognize and avoid online scams and use their digital footprint in positive ways that will benefit them now and in the future.

Eighth Grade History

Eighth grade history students are exploring major issues of the 1800s that still connect to the world we live in today. They recently concluded a unit on the Industrial Revolution, a period marked by inventions that transformed work and increased efficiency. To make these concepts relevant, students designed creative posters advertising products invented in the early 1800s, bringing history to life through artwork, imagination, and innovation.

The next unit will shift focus to the South and the Pre-Civil War era. Students will examine the political, economic and moral issues surrounding the institution of slavery, as well as its significant impact on the South's economy and infrastructure.

During the Civil War unit, students will study the war from multiple perspectives, both on and off the battlefield. They will learn about key battles, where they occurred and why they were important, while also exploring the daily lives of soldiers. Through hands-on classroom activities and the analysis of primary sources such as photographs, diaries and letters, students will gain a deeper understanding of the personal experiences and challenges faced during this pivotal time in history.

Sixth Grade Social Studies

Sixth-grade students are exploring the fascinating world of Ancient History this year! Throughout the course, students study civilizations from around the globe using the GRAPES framework—Geography, Religion, Accomplishments, Politics, Economics and Society—to better understand how each civilization developed and what made it unique.

Recently, students wrapped up a unit on Medieval Africa, learning about powerful trade networks, the wealth and influence of Mansa Musa, and the important role the Niger River played in daily life and economic growth. Students are now studying Medieval Japan, where they are exploring the lives of samurai, the tradition of sumo wrestling, the art of origami and other cultural achievements.

As this is many students' first formal introduction to Ancient World History, the focus is on helping them view the past through a new lens while making meaningful connections between ancient civilizations and the modern world.



Seventh Grade Social Studies

Seventh-grade students have officially launched their Kansas History unit, which will continue through the end of the school year. Throughout this study, students will explore the people, cultures, natural resources and pivotal events that have shaped the Sunflower State and influenced westward expansion across the United States.

Students will examine the experiences and contributions of Native American tribes, the impact of the Indian Removal Act and the arrival of Spanish and French explorers. They will also study the significance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the importance of the Louisiana Purchase in expanding the nation's borders. Additional topics include the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the burning of Lawrence and William Quantrill's raid—events that highlight the tension and conflict leading up to the Civil War.

As the unit progresses, students will learn about the vital role of the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon-California Trail in westward migration and the pursuit of Manifest Destiny. To conclude the year, students will focus on the turbulent era known as Bleeding Kansas and the challenges surrounding Kansas's path to statehood.

Studying Kansas history helps students build a deeper understanding of their state's rich heritage while fostering civic awareness and responsibility. By examining these defining moments, students gain insight into how Kansas's past continues to shape our nation today.

Scholar's Bowl

The SMS Scholars Bowl Team traveled to Maize South to compete in the final tournament of the season against six other schools in the WSL Division 1. Both our seventh and eighth grade teams had outstanding performances, finishing second in the league with 4–2 records. SMS was the only school to place in the top three in both grade levels, a tremendous accomplishment and a testament to the depth of our program.

Overall, it was a fun and highly successful season for our Scholars Bowl teams. The eighth grade team earned an impressive four first-place finishes and two second-place finishes, while the seventh grade team posted an outstanding 22–4 overall record, placing first in four meets, second in one meet, and third in another. Throughout the season, several students competed in meets, and many more contributed through participation on our practice squad. We are incredibly proud of all they accomplished.

Looking ahead, Mrs. Burke and Mrs. Chamberlain plan to continue coaching Scholars Bowl next season. They hope to maintain practices through the remainder of this school year and begin recruiting and training interested sixth graders this spring.

Seventh Grade Competitors:

Solomon Ault-Duell, Ava Chrisman, Wade Roths, Alvin Peters, Vasper Sallee, Blakely Chamberlain, Honahlayah Armer, Lincoln Rawline

Eighth Grade Competitors:

Colin Burke, Addie Fowler, Noah Weber, Aiden Marshall, Amelia Morris, Jiarong Wang, Anna Holliday

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

Teacher of the Month

Congratulations to Lauren Turner for earning March teacher of the month. Lauren is an intensive reading teacher and a special education case manager at South Middle School. She has been teaching for 18 years, spending 12 years in special education. This is her second year at South Middle. Lauren grew up in a family that valued education, with her father being a teacher, but she did not discover her love for working with children until she became a mother. Her favorite part of teaching is watching students progress in their reading skills and being able to support each student's reading pathway until they reach their goals. A fun fact about Lauren is that she loves learning and has six college degrees with the hopes of becoming a college professor.



Spring Break

South Middle School and USD 305 will observe spring break, Friday, March 13 through Friday, March 20. Staff will be in the building Friday, March 13, however there will be no staff available during the week of March 16. We hope all our students have a fantastic Spring Break!

Quarter 3 PBIS Celebration

The quarter 3 PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) celebration will take place at The City on Friday, April 10, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The City is located at 129 N. 7th St.

To qualify for this event, students must have maintained a minimum Grade Point Average of 3.0 during quarter 3 (January 6 – March 12) and must not have received any office referrals during that period. Eligible students will receive an armband during the school day, which they must wear for entry into The City.

Once a student leaves the event, reentry will not be permitted. Activities available include pool, dodgeball, basketball, video games, dancing, and more. SMS looks forward to celebrating our students' positive behavior and achievements at this event!

Quarter 4 Assessments

As we move into quarter four of the school year, students will take various assessments, to test knowledge gained over the course of the academic year. The Kansas State Assessment will be a primary focus for us again this school year.

- All SMS students will take the English-language arts and math assessment.
- Grade 8 students will take the science state assessment.
- The Kansas State Assessment, in all subjects, will consist of two parts, each part lasting approximately 45 - 60 minutes.
- Students will take their state assessments in gym #2, similar to the type of testing environment the would experience with the high school ACT or SAT.
- Grade 7 students will take the history and government assessment. This is a writing assessment, done during regular class time and scored by our staff.
- After state assessments conclude we will administer other local assessments to gauge progress over the academic year.

Yearbooks

The 2025-2026 yearbook is on sale now! We don't want our students to miss the chance to relive the laughs, friendships, big moments and unforgettable memories from this school year. Yearbook orders are due by May 1. To order a yearbook, log into your Skyward account, click on fees and payments, click on the plus sign (add to fees) Yearbook, click make a payment to finalize your purchase.



Spring Activity Meetings

As we move into the spring, coaches from South Middle and South High will be meeting with prospective students interested in various sports and extracurricular activities. These meetings will take place during advisory on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays from 8:00 to 8:20 a.m.

Students who wish to participate in any activities next school year should pay close attention to morning announcements to ensure they attend their scheduled meeting.

Take Our Belonging Survey

During conferences, families were invited to complete our Belonging Survey. If you have not yet had the opportunity, please take a few minutes to do so by using the link below. The survey will close on March 20.

This survey helps our district and schools understand how connected families feel to their student's school and guides efforts to strengthen belonging for students, families and staff. If you have students at more than one school, please complete a separate survey for each school by reopening the original link.

English Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParentSurvey2026>

Spanish Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParentSurvey2026Spanish>

Greatness Grows When You're Here!

As we move into the spring months, consistent attendance remains essential for student success. Missing even a few days of school can make it more difficult for students to stay on track academically and socially.

This is a great time to refresh daily routines such as consistent bedtimes, morning preparations and transportation plans to help students finish the year strong. While spring often brings busy schedules and changing routines, making school attendance a daily priority makes a meaningful impact.

If your family is experiencing challenges with attendance, please reach out so we can work together to support your student. Greatness Grows When You're Here!

SPS Preschool Information and Eligibility Event

If your child will be aged three on or before August 31, 2026, and meets the criteria in one of the following areas:

- CKCIE Special Education, Head Start, Preschool Age At-Risk

Learn about Salina Public Schools Preschool programs, eligibility requirements and the application process for the upcoming school year at the SPS Preschool Information and Eligibility Event.

When: Thursday, March 26, 2026, from 6:00 –7:00 p.m.

Where: All SPS elementary school locations

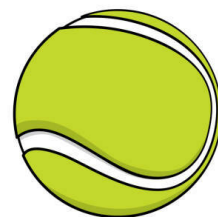
If you have questions, please call 785-309-5000.

Boys Tennis

The SMS Boys Cougar Tennis team is excited to build on the success of a strong 2025 season. With several key returners providing both leadership and talent—Easton Anderson-Kepley, Jackson Crow, Locke Michel, Ridge Morris and Maverick Finnell—the team is poised for another competitive year.

We are also excited to welcome a new assistant coach to the program, Coach Thaine Willer. Coach Willer is no stranger to SMS, having served as the 7th grade boys basketball head coach at South Middle for the past five years. He steps into the role following Coach Duncan's retirement at the end of last season and will work to continue the positive traditions the program has established.

This season marks Coach Pittenger's fifth year leading the Cougar tennis program. Each year, participation has continued to grow, and this spring more than 30 boys are out for the team—an exciting sign of the program's momentum and enthusiasm. Go Cougs!



Boys Basketball

As the 2026 boys basketball season enters its final stretch, our teams are finishing the year with great effort and pride. From the opening tip-off, the boys have demonstrated determination and resilience while competing through a challenging league schedule. Along the way, they have earned several impressive victories while representing SMS with outstanding sportsmanship and class.

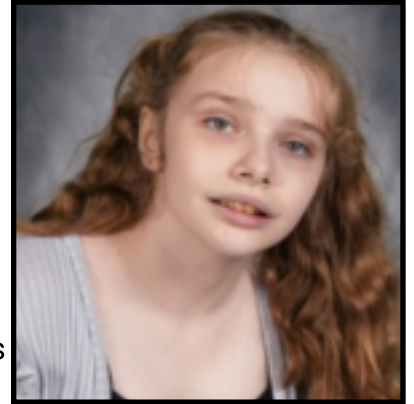
Both teams are excited to compete in the league tournament on February 28 and look forward to the opportunity to bring home some hardware. As the season comes to a close, there is much to celebrate. While wins are important, the friendships built, lessons learned and memories created will last far beyond the final buzzer. These young men have done an exceptional job representing our school.



Students of the Week

Week 19

Congratulations to Grace Lee for earning student of the week. Grace is a seventh grader at South Middle School. At school, she helps with coffee delivery and school recycling and her favorite class is music with Mrs. Thelen. Outside of school, Grace enjoys spending quality time with her family. After high school, she plans to pursue endeavors involving singing, dancing and technology, three of her main interests. Some fun facts about Grace are that she likes listening to country music in her free time, she loves meeting new people and she has an older sister who also attending South Middle.



Week 20

Congratulations to Emma Rodriguez for earning student of the week. Emma is a sixth grader at South Middle School. At school, her favorite class is music because she finds it fun and interesting. After high school, Emma plans to attend the University of Kansas and study interior design. Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with her family and playing with her two sisters. Some fun facts about Emma are that she likes to read and draw and she has one dog.



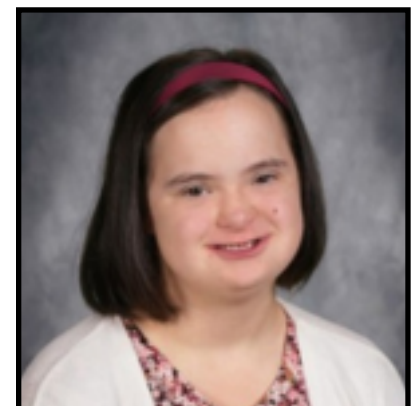
Week 21

Congratulations to Isaak Esparza for earning student of the week. Isaak is an eighth grader at South Middle School. At school, he is involved with guitar and enjoys learning about nature and the human body in Science class. Outside of school, he likes to spend his free time drawing and jumping on his trampoline. After high school, he plans to attend college and start a career. Some fun facts about Isaak include that he has one older sister, one older brother and a cat named Dugan.



Week 22

Congratulations to Quinn Poland for earning student of the week. Quinn is a sixth grader at South Middle School. At school, she helps with concession stand setup, delivers teachers their coffee on Wednesday's and assists with the recycling program. She enjoys painting in art classes. Outside of school, she plays basketball. Quinn is keeping her options open and exploring all possibilities after high school. A fun fact about Quinn is that she has been to London and Paris.



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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 March

- 4 - NAEP Assessment (Eighth Grade)
- 4 - League Vocal Festival at KWU
- 5 - Orchestra Concert - 7:00 p.m.
- 9 - First Day of Practices (Track / Boys Tennis)
- 13 - No School / Teacher In-Service
- 16 - 20 - Spring Break
- 25 - Site Council Meeting

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



South Middle



@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

MARCH 2026

NEWSLETTER

SLEEP HYGIENE

Sleep hygiene refers to the habits we create to help ensure good sleep. It is easy to go to bed on time but are we taking the proper steps to enable ourselves to fall asleep on time.

Nighttime routines are important!

Whatever your routines are, do them the same way every night and as close to the same time as possible. Your body and mind will begin to remember and know it is time for sleep.

How to create positive sleep hygiene:

Sleep Schedule: Be consistent with your sleep and wake times. Even on the weekends and school breaks!

Bedtime Routine: Try a warm bath/shower, listen to calming music, or read

Bedroom Environment: Create a cool, dark, quiet environment

Limit Napping, Caffeine, and screen time

Regular Exercise can release tension and promote better sleep

NEWS

MARCH IS NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH!

SOCIAL WORKERS CAN BE FOUND IN MANY DIFFERENT AREAS OF WORK; SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, MENTAL HEALTH CARE, CORPORATIONS, AND EVEN WITH PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAMS.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS ACT AS A CONNECTION FOR SCHOOL, HOME, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES TO HELP STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL, DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.

STUDIES SHOWS THAT HAVING SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS HELPS IMPROVE ATTENDANCE AND ENABLES STUDENTS TO OVERCOME LIFE'S HURDLES TO GET THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Mar 1: World Compliment Day
- **Mar 13-20: No School**
- Mar 30: Take a walk in the park day

CONTACT INFO

Social Worker:

Rachel Mudloff

785-309-3854

rachel.mudloff@usd305.com

WHAT'S GOING ON ~ YEARBOOK

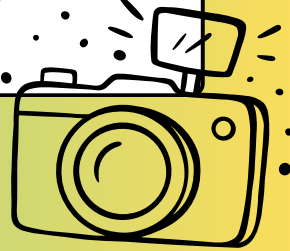
DON'T

Miss Out



The 2025–2026 Yearbook is on sale now! Don't miss your chance to relive the laughs, friendships, big moments, and unforgettable memories from this school year. Make sure to order yours by **May 1** — you won't want to miss out!

HOW TO ORDER YOUR YEARBOOK:



- Log into your Skyward account.
- Click on fees and payments
- Click of the plus sign (add to fees) Yearbook
- Click on Make a Payment to finalize your purchase.

Click on Fees & Payments

Click on the plus sign

Due Date	Fee Description	Fee Amount	Amount Due	Source Description	Comment
08/29/2025	Curriculum Fees	\$50.00	\$0.00		Early Enrollment

Fee Description	Fee Amount	Fee Category
PRIDE Ticket	\$25.00	G - General
Yearbook	\$35.00	G - General

CUSTOMER FEE DETAILS

Fee: Yearbook

Amount: 35.00

LAST YEAR'S
YEARBOOK

#yearbook



K-STATE SALINA OPEN HOUSE



SATURDAY MARCH 28

JOIN US FOR:

- Flight Team Breakfast (*free will donation*)
- Visit the Centennial Bookstore
- Academic Displays, including simulators, drones, virtual reality, robotics, lab tours, project demonstrations and more!
- Tours of Campus
- Centennial Dining

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Salina

These materials are neither sponsored
nor endorsed by the Board of Education
of U.S.D. 305, the Superintendent or this school.

VISIT FOR
Full Details



salina.k-state.edu/open-house

EARN CASH FOR SCHOOLS WITH BOX TOPS

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

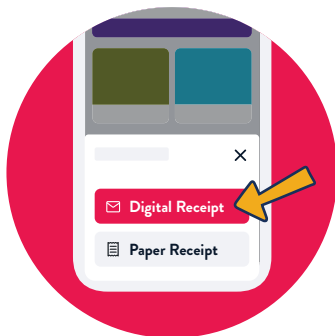
For over 29 years, Box Tops for Education has given families an easy way to earn for schools with products they already buy. Today, you can find hundreds of participating products throughout the store — and all you need is the Box Tops app.



HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:



SCAN
qualifying receipts
in the app



SUBMIT
qualifying digital
receipts in the app



CONNECT
your Walmart and
Box Tops accounts



ONLINE SHOPPERS CAN EARN WITH BOX TOPS, TOO!

Whether you order groceries for delivery or pickup, shop through your store's app, request an email receipt at checkout or shop with your Walmart connected account, you can earn for your school no matter where you shop.

SEE PRODUCTS & LEARN MORE ABOUT
THE BOX TOPS APP AT [BTFE.COM](https://www.btf.com)

DON'T HAVE THE BOX TOPS
APP YET? DOWNLOAD IT NOW:

