

2025-2026 South Middle School Needs Assessment for 2026-2027 Budget Considerations

Due Date: 12/19/2025

Board Presentation: 1/27/2026



School Improvement - Fundamentals

The four fundamentals are interconnected and associated with actions that each school system must implement so students can meet our state's rigorous standards.

Structured Literacy	Standards Alignment	Balanced Assessment	Quality Instruction
We apply an explicit, systematic, diagnostic, and cumulative approach to teaching literacy that acknowledges the value of both word recognition and oral/written language comprehension as evidenced in all grades and disciplines. ● Phonemic Awareness ● Phonics ● Fluency ● Vocabulary ● Comprehension	We align lessons, instruction, and materials to Kansas standards and clearly identify what students must know and be able to do. This includes interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive skills in preK-12. ● Learning Intentions ● Success Criteria ● Academic Rigor ● Scope & Sequence	We assess students for risk and standards in preK-12 and use data to adjust instruction. We have a deep understanding of the purpose of each assessment and how to use the data to raise achievement. ● Formatives ● Summatives ● Progress Monitoring ● Screening ● Diagnostic	We have a culture of high expectations in our classrooms and provide each student access to grade level standards and content through high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) in preK-12. ● High Expectations ● Culturally Responsive ● Differentiation ● Academic & SEL ● Student Dispositions

Structures: Reinforce lead indicators and sustain fundamentals within the system: resource allocation; education evaluations; professional learning; professional collaboration; tiered system of supports; and family, community and business partnerships.

For each data review section include data that is important for your building. Highlights areas of success and growth as well as data that indicates areas of concern or need. You can use narrative statements and/or quantitative representations depending on data type.

- **Current State:** identify data trends, highlight successes, and concerns. Include references to achievement gaps for subgroups where applicable.
- **Desired State:** include goals and/or actions to address aggregate and subgroups when applicable.

Communication Goals – Data Review:

	Current State:	Desired State:
KSA ELA	South Middle decreased the number of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas State ELA assessment by 10.3% from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year. In 2024-25 we had 23.7% of our students score in the level 1 range. South Middle increased the number of students performing at levels 3 and 4 on the Kansas State ELA assessment by 12.3% from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year. We had 42.3% of our students score in the level 3 or level 4 range. We are aware that the State Board of Education made changes to the cut scores for all the state assessments prior to releasing the 2024-25 scores. However, South Middle still showed remarkable growth in decreasing the students at level 1 and increasing the students at levels 3 and 4 regarding our school and district communication goal.	Our school improvement goal is for students to have the communication skills necessary to achieve postsecondary success as measured by a decrease of 13% in the number of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas ELA assessment, resulting in a decrease from 44.2% to 31.2% by 2027. We also desire for students to have the communication skills necessary to achieve postsecondary success as measured by a 10% increase in the number of students performing at level 3 or 4 on the Kansas ELA assessment, resulting in an increase from 23.22 % to 33.2%.
Complex Communication Rubric	South Middle School had a 9.8% increase in students performing at the demonstrating level on the complex communication rubric from 2023-24 to 2024-25.	Our desired state is to increase the percentage of students who score in the demonstrating level of the communication rubric by 4% each school year.
Other Data		

Critical Thinking Goals – Data Review:

	Current State:	Desired State:
KSA Math	South Middle School had 32.0% of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas State Math assessment for the 2023-24 school year. For the 2025-26 school year SMS had 23.0% of students score in level 1, resulting in a 9.0% decrease from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year. South Middle School had 29.0% of students performing at levels 3 and 4 on the Kansas State Math assessment for the 2023-24 school year. For the 2025-26 school year SMS had 40.0% of students score in levels 3 and 4, resulting in an 11.0% increase from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year.	Our school improvement goal is for students to have the critical thinking skills to achieve postsecondary success as measured by a 12% decrease in the number of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas State Math assessment resulting in a decrease from 36.4% to 24.4% by 2027. Our goal is also to have a 10% increase in the number of students performing at a level 3 or 4 on the Kansas State Math Assessment, resulting in an increase from 20.7% to 30.7% by 2027.
KSA Science	South Middle School had 50.0% of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas State Science assessment for the 2023-24 school year. For the 2025-26 school year SMS had 37.0% of students score in level 1, resulting in a 14.0% decrease from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year. South Middle School had 21.0% of students performing at levels 3 and 4 on the Kansas State Science assessment for the 2023-24 school year. For the 2025-26 school year SMS had 35.0% of students score in levels 3 and 4, resulting in a 14.0% increase from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year.	Our school improvement goal is for students to have the critical thinking skills to achieve postsecondary success as measured by a 11% decrease in the number of students performing at level 1 on the Kansas State Science assessment, resulting in a decrease from 45.2% to 35.2% by 2027. Our goal is also to have a 10% increase in the number of students performing at a level 3 or 4 on the Kansas State Science assessment, resulting in an increase from 22.1% to 32.1% by 2027.
Critical Thinking Rubric	South Middle School had a 0.1% increase in students performing at the demonstrating level on the critical thinking rubric from 2023-24 to 2024-25.	Our desired state is to increase the percentage of students who score in the demonstrating level of the critical thinking rubric by 4% each school year.
Other Data		

Behavior and Social-Emotional – Data Review:

	Current State:	Desired State:
Social Emotional Behavior Offenses	South Middle School had 718 office behavior referrals in the 2023-24 school year and had 653 office behavior referrals in the 2024-25 school year. This resulted in a 9.0 decrease from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year.	Our school improvement goal is for students to have the social and emotional skills to achieve post secondary success as measured by a 15% decrease in the number of office behavior referrals, resulting in a decrease from 813 office referrals to 710 by 2027.
Chronically Absent	SMS had a chronic absenteeism rate of 20.75% in the 2023-24 school year and an 18.94% chronic absenteeism rate in the 2024-25 school year. Resulting in a decrease of 1.0% from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year.	Our school improvement goal is that students will have the social and emotional skills to achieve postsecondary success as measured by a 15% decrease in the number of students who are chronically absent, resulting in a decrease from 28.60% to 13.6% by 2027.
Self-Directed Learning Rubric	South Middle School had a 4.8% increase in students performing at the demonstrating level on the self-directed learning rubric from 2023-24 to 2024-25.	Our desired state is to increase the percentage of students who score in the demonstrating level of the self-directed learning rubric by 4% each school year.
Other Data		

State Outcomes – Data Review:

Use the chart below to record needs and/or actions for each area that will support your school improvement work and impact student performance. The needs assessment for each school will be reviewed by the Board of Education as part of the annual budget decision process.

KESA Fundamental & SI Structures	Need Areas		
	Academics	Behavior	SEL
Standards Alignment (KESA Focus Fundamental)	As we move toward adopting a new middle school mathematics curriculum, it is essential that any selected resource is fully aligned to state standards and supports the development of students' critical-thinking and problem-solving	South Middle School needs a dedicated facilitator to implement a structured drug and alcohol prevention curriculum. A trained facilitator would ensure students receive accurate information,	SMS will continue implementing Character Strong, a comprehensive SEL curriculum aligned with state social-emotional learning standards and developmentally appropriate for middle school

	skills. It remains essential to sustain our curriculum academy work in order to keep curriculum aligned with updated state standards. Continued collaboration will allow us to refine learning intentions and success criteria and ensure instructional coherence across grade levels and content areas. Ongoing curriculum development will strengthen instructional practices and improve student outcomes. Beginning in the 2027–2028 school year, we will look at piloting an 8th grade Algebra class, this has yet to be determined at the district level. This shift will require adjustments to the existing 7th- and 8th-grade math curriculum. A key need is the development of a transitional curriculum for the 2026–2027 school year to ensure all students are adequately prepared for the expectations of Algebra I. We continue to face challenges in recruiting qualified science teachers. There is growing concern that fewer highly prepared candidates are graduating from accredited teacher preparation programs, resulting in a shrinking pool of applicants for our district. We will continue to explore additional elective course options to incorporate into the middle school schedule.	meaningful skill-building experiences, and early intervention support, all of which promote safe and healthy decision-making. Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, SMS will implement a “teaming” structure in which each grade level is organized into two interdisciplinary teams. This model is designed to strengthen monitoring of student progress and behavior, while providing teachers with regular opportunities to collaborate. Each team will have a dedicated 49-minute daily meeting block to discuss student strengths and areas for growth, coordinate supports, and engage parents or other stakeholders as needed. SMS will transition away from our HONOR code to our Ci3T SMS Behavior Matrix. This matrix will provide specific expectations and procedures for behavior in all areas of our building. Teachers will reinforce these expectations daily, supported by our Character First SEL lessons delivered during advisory time. Classroom management is grounded in the CHAMPS framework, though	students. This curriculum supports the teaching and reinforcement of essential skills that contribute to students’ overall well-being and success. This year, we administered the SRSS-IE screener for the first time. The data generated from this tool provides insight into students’ internalizing and externalizing risk factors, enabling us to identify building-level trends and offer targeted support for individual students based on their specific needs. We are also continuing our work with Visible Learning learner dispositions—traits and characteristics associated with effective learners. Teachers highlight and reinforce these dispositions throughout instruction, and they are explicitly taught during advisory at the start of the school year to establish a strong foundation for learning.
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	Expanding elective offerings will provide students with greater choice in programs and pathways that align with their interests as they move through their academic careers. Increasing access to diverse electives supports student engagement, career exploration, and personalized learning.	additional professional development—particularly for newer teachers—would further strengthen consistency and effectiveness. Our behavior interventionist plays a vital role in providing support for classroom behavior challenges, including operating the reset room, which allows students to regain focus before returning to instruction. Starting in the 2026–2027 school year, SMS will also implement a SWIS (School Within a School) program to offer an alternative setting for students who require more intensive behavioral support.	
Professional Learning	Our teachers require additional training in data analysis. While we have access to a wealth of student data, breaking it down and interpreting the information for instructional decision-making remains a challenge. We aim to continue providing professional development opportunities and dedicate PLC time for intentional reflection and planning to enhance instructional rigor, facilitate meaningful student discussion, and promote higher-level	Staff would benefit from additional training in brain science, trauma-informed practices, and the ways in which student dysregulation affects learning. Strengthening knowledge in these areas will enhance teachers’ capacity to support students’ emotional and behavioral needs. Targeted professional development in the CHAMPS classroom management framework is also needed to promote consistent	Teachers need additional training on how to effectively address students’ social–emotional needs within the classroom. Providing practical, on-the-spot strategies will help reduce reliance on counselors, the behavior interventionist, and administrators for immediate intervention, and will empower teachers to respond proactively to student challenges. With the implementation of the SRSS-IE screener, staff would also

	questioning. Reading and ELA teachers would benefit from LETRS training to deepen their understanding of the science of reading, as our students continue to face challenges with comprehension and vocabulary, according to iReady reading results. Ongoing training in Visible Learning is also critical. While we have effectively implemented teacher clarity through Learning Intentions and Success Criteria, the next areas of focus include questioning, student discussion, and feedback. Targeted professional development in these areas will be essential for sustaining instructional growth. Additionally, renewed training in poverty-informed practices and family engagement would be beneficial. Although this training has been offered district-wide in the past, several years have passed, and our students continue to face challenges related to poverty and family systems. Strengthening staff understanding in this area will support the whole-child development and better address student needs.	expectations and positive behavior across the building. Teachers currently demonstrate varying levels of familiarity and implementation, which can lead to inconsistent routines and student confusion. Focused CHAMPS training would help establish a more cohesive schoolwide approach, enhance classroom climate, and improve student engagement. Staff have also received introductory training in Conscious Discipline and Ross Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving model. Additional investment in these approaches would further support teachers in implementing effective behavior interventions and responding to student needs proactively.	benefit from professional learning on how to interpret the data and use it to guide next steps for student support. Understanding what the data reveals and how to act on it will strengthen our overall SEL framework. While the Character Strong curriculum offers strong Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL resources, forming a team to review these supports and develop implementation plans would enhance consistency and ensure students receive the appropriate level of intervention.
Professional Collaboration	South Middle would benefit from increased professional collaboration time to support the effective implementation of	Dedicated time during the school day is needed for teachers who share common students to implement behavior plans and SIT interventions,	Providing common planning time for interdisciplinary core teachers will allow for more effective implementation of behavior plans

	academic teaming structures that promote student-centered learning. Teachers have expressed a need for shared planning time and guidance on best practices for facilitating collaborative, academically focused teams. Establishing an academic teaming structure will strengthen instructional coherence, increase student engagement, and foster a collective responsibility for student success. Additionally, dedicated collaboration time is needed for staff to explore strategies for integrating learner dispositions into the school's overall learning culture. Teachers report limited opportunities to discuss methods for cultivating curiosity, ownership, understanding, and growth mindset in students. Providing regular time for this work would support a shared vision and ensure more consistent implementation of these dispositions across classrooms. Beginning next school year, the implementation of academic teaming will enhance teacher collaboration in addressing student academic needs and provide opportunities to develop cross-curricular, interdisciplinary learning activities.	supporting student progress toward academic and social goals through interdisciplinary teaming. Additional time would allow our behavior interventionist to meet with teams to review RESET data trends and develop targeted intervention strategies. Increased collaboration with CKCIE and CKMH would ensure that all staff receive comprehensive training in behavior management. Additionally, stronger collaboration with the district cooperative Special Education coordinator is needed to better support students with specialized needs.	and SIT interventions. This dedicated time will give teachers greater opportunities to collaborate and address students' social-emotional learning needs. Additionally, having staff trained in observing, assessing, and addressing classroom behaviors would support teachers in developing and implementing effective strategies to improve student behavior.
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Tiered System of Support	South Middle School requires a cohesive and consistently implemented MTSS framework across all grade levels. Staff have identified gaps in intervention processes, data use, and common practices, which have led to inconsistent student support. A unified, schoolwide MTSS system would enhance intervention effectiveness, strengthen progress monitoring, and ensure equitable access to academic supports for all students. Through the Ci3T model, we aim to gain strategies for strengthening Tier 1 supports and implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions effectively, even with limited staffing. SMS currently has a strong intensive reading program, where students are placed based on iReady reading results. Groups and classes are reorganized each semester to provide instruction that aligns with students' current reading levels. Similarly, Math Foundations classes are offered for students performing below grade level, based on iReady Math diagnostics, though limited class	All students (Tier 1) participate in the Character Strong curriculum during advisory once a week. Students exhibiting dysregulated behavior have access to the RESET room, which provides immediate support to help them return to the classroom and learning as quickly as possible. Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are provided through two full-time case managers from Central Kansas Mental Health, who work with select students. Our social worker and counselors also facilitate social skills groups and provide resources to families to support students at home. Additionally, we partner with Hope in 3D and Big Brothers Big Sisters to further support Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Starting next school year, we will implement a SWIS (School Within a School) model, primarily for Tier 3 behavior students, as long-term suspension programs have proven to be ineffective.	● Tier 1: All students participate in the Character Strong curriculum during advisory. ● Tier 2: Small group interventions facilitated by counselors and the social worker, along with targeted Tier 2 Character Strong lessons. ● Tier 3: Students with intensive behavioral needs participate in the SWIS (School Within a School) program.

	space prevents all students from receiving these supports. Tiered supports during advisory time for grades and reading have proven effective. Additionally, Modified Math and English classes for Special Education students, as well as para-supported classrooms for IEP students, provide targeted interventions. Ideally, we need to examine scheduling and staffing to optimize the implementation of tiered interventions during the school day. A robust after-school program is also available to support students with homework and additional academic assistance.		
Family, Community and Business Partnerships	We would like to host an Academic Open House where families can participate in learning activities and games aligned to our reading and math curriculum. This event has been impactful and well-attended in the past; however, current funding does not support its continuation. We plan to continue the 7th-grade Career Hunt and 8th-grade Pathway Fair, both funded at the district level. One suggested improvement is providing lunch for 7th-grade students at the event venue before returning to	South Middle School currently partners with community programs to provide mentorship and support for at-risk students. Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Hope in 3D program connect students with young adult mentors who provide guidance, support, and positive role modeling. Additionally, our KAY Club has played an instrumental role in the community, providing multiple services, and we aim to continue	The needs addressed in the behavior category apply to SEL as well.

	school. Additionally, we aim to create more opportunities for parents and families to engage with the school outside of sports and concerts. Potential topics include using Skyward, Google Classroom, social media, and family homework support. Expanding these opportunities will help increase parent engagement and provide families with practical ways to support their students' learning.	growing this program within our building. We maintain a strong partnership with CKMHC, which provides two full-time case managers on campus and offers therapy services for students and parents during the school day. Our PBIS celebrations are well-attended and provide an excellent opportunity to recognize and reward positive student behavior; two of our four celebrations are held at The City, which students enjoy. Some programs, such as the juvenile justice program, have proven ineffective, as students do not consistently experience consequences for their actions. While we have utilized CAPS in the past, there is a continued need for additional external resources to support family and student interventions.	
Resource Allocation	We need additional teaching staff to support smaller class sizes, provide tiered interventions, and maintain effective interdisciplinary teams. Extending the length of summer school—and requiring attendance for students who do not meet the district's promotion	The behavior interventionist has proven to be an invaluable member of our team, and we are committed to retaining this position. We are also interested in exploring ways to expand the role to support additional	The needs addressed in the behavior category apply to the SEL category as well.

	and retention criteria—would also strengthen academic outcomes. Our school would benefit from a staff member dedicated to providing School Within a School (SWIS) services and coordinating credit recovery during the school day. In addition, both ELA and Science would benefit from access to IXL, similar to the resource currently available in Math. We would also benefit from an alcohol and drug coordinator—perhaps not full-time, but someone who can consistently provide these services throughout the school year. Finally, parent engagement opportunities were significantly enhanced through ESSER funds. Since those funds have expired, we are no longer able to sustain many of those important activities.	administrative tasks related to behavior prevention. Having a classified staff member dedicated to the RESET room is essential to sustaining this intervention. We also plan to implement a SWIS program, which will require an additional staff member, as well as support for credit recovery. Maintaining our collaboration with Central Kansas Mental Health and continuing the services of our Social Worker is critical to supporting our students' social-emotional needs. Our Social Worker provides tremendous support to our chronic absenteeism process. Without this position we would not be as effective at identifying attendance concerns and supports.	
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Rose Capacities:

Educational Capacities (pursuant to K.S.A 72-3218): How are you ensuring every child in your school is provided at least the following capacities?	
1. Sufficient oral and written communication skills to enable students to function in complex and rapidly changing civilization.	Current State Oral and written communication skills are embedded within the ELA standards and taught across our English Language Arts classes. Based on current assessment results, our 6th-grade students have an average score of 536, which is four points above the state average. Our 7th-grade average is 532, one point below the state average, and our 8th-grade average is 530, two points below the state average on the state English Language Arts assessment. Desired State To improve student outcomes, increased opportunities for oral and written communication are needed across all content areas. By 2027, our goal is for 33.19% of students to score at Levels 3 and 4 on the state English Language Arts assessment, with 29.17% or fewer students scoring at Level 1.
2. Sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable students to make informed choices.	Current State Economic, social, and political systems are embedded within our state social studies and history standards and are taught in our social studies and history classes. Eighth-grade students further explore social and political concepts through the Five-Star Leadership program at the start of the school year. Additionally, all 8th graders participate in a civics essay contest, in which they identify and propose changes to aspects of our local community. Desired State To enhance student learning, we aim to increase exposure to economic, social, and political concepts through additional community speakers and targeted field trips. These experiences will provide real-world context and deepen students' understanding of civic engagement.
3. Sufficient understanding of governmental processes to enable the student to understand the issues that affect his or her community, state and nation.	Current State In 6th grade, the social studies curriculum emphasizes ancient world civilizations and the governmental structures that shaped those societies. In 7th grade, students study Kansas History, which includes an embedded focus on state-level government. In 8th grade, students learn about the structure and functions of the federal government. Desired State Maintain the current curriculum structure.

4. Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness.	Current State Students are required to complete a full year of Physical Education in 6th grade and one semester in both 7th and 8th grades. In 8th grade, students also receive sexual education instruction. Our school provides extensive mental wellness supports through our partnership with Central Kansas Mental Health, which allows qualifying students to access case management and therapy during the school day. Additionally, each grade level has a dedicated counselor, and a school social worker provides further support. We have also introduced weightlifting as a Physical Education option for 7th- and 8th-grade students, which has helped some students develop a strong interest in strength training. Desired State Increasing PE and health instructional time for 7th- and 8th-grade students—including expanded in-school weight training opportunities—would further support student wellness. Additional access to family counseling services is also an identified need.
5. Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.	Current State SMS offers a robust arts program that includes music, band, orchestra, and guitar. Art is also available as an elective at each grade level. Students have opportunities to participate in community-based arts programs outside the school day, and we partner with local organizations to provide an Art Infusion program for students with strong interest in the arts. Desired State We aim to maintain and strengthen our collaboration with community partners and the high school arts programs, while also increasing integration between the arts and core academic classes. Digital literacy is being incorporated into Career & Life Planning to expand elective options for students. Additionally, keyboarding instruction would be more effective if it were introduced at the elementary level.
6. Sufficient training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently.	Current State Eighth-grade students are required to take Career & Life Planning as a semester course, where they further develop their Individual Plans of Study and explore a wide range of college and career pathways. We also offer Introduction to Technology Education, which introduces students to project-based learning and Computer-Aided Drafting. In 6th and 7th grades, students engage with their Individual Plans of Study through XELLO lessons. Additionally, 7th graders participate in a districtwide career hunt, and 8th graders attend a district career pathway fair.

	Desired State Maintain the current structure while expanding technology education options or redesigning the existing Technology Education program to provide a more exploratory experience for students.
7. Sufficient levels of academic or vocational skills to enable students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.	Current state: SMS students participate in Scholars Bowl, math relays, music competitions and a spelling bee. Desired state: Continue with the current state and add additional STEM based clubs or activities.

Building Barrier Statement:

What are the barriers that must be overcome to have all students achieve proficiency above level 2 for grade level academic expectations on state assessment?
To optimize learning, students need to arrive at school regulated and ready to engage academically. Support strategies include smaller class sizes, additional time for Tier 2 math and reading instruction, leveled classes, and continued math and reading interventions. Increased special education funding is also critical to better support students with disabilities, many of whom are currently underperforming on state assessments. Additionally, adjusting the busing cutoff to allow transportation for students living closer than 2.5 miles could help reduce absenteeism. The implementation of interdisciplinary teams would enable teachers to focus on shared students and address common behavior challenges, ensuring that SIT and Behavior Intervention plans are implemented with fidelity. A sustainable solution is also needed for Tier 3 behavior students, as current general education strategies and long-term suspension programs have proven ineffective. Implementing a SWIS (School Within a School) model would provide a more supportive and structured environment for these students.