



Rooted in Tradition. Rising in Excellence.



Kannapolis City Schools Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Rising in Excellence. Rooted in Tradition

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Superintendent's Message



Kannapolis City Schools has always been more than a school district; it is a community grounded in pride, perseverance, and possibility. For generations, KCS has been shaped by educators who believe deeply in children, families who entrust us with what matters most, and a community that understands the power of strong public schools. That history is our foundation. It is something we honor, protect, and carry forward. At the same time, our work cannot be defined by tradition alone. In an ever-changing world, we must continue to grow, adapt, and rise together. This is the heart of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan: Rising in Excellence, Rooted in Tradition.

This plan reflects both who we are and who we are committed to becoming. It aligns intentionally with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's statewide vision, Achieving Educational Excellence, and translates that vision into action for Kannapolis City Schools. Our Big Rock Priorities; Engaging and Aligned Instruction, Future-Ready Graduates, Safe, Secure, and Inclusive Learning Environments, and Family and Community Partnerships represent the outcomes we believe every student deserves. Equally important, our Operating Principles; Building Systems of Support, Leveraging Feedback, and Empowering Collective Action define how we will do this work: thoughtfully, collaboratively, and with purpose.

The development of this strategic plan was not a top-down exercise. It was built through listening and learning. Over the past year, we engaged in numerous focus groups with staff representing every school, department, and role across the district. Teachers, support staff, school leaders, central office teams, family members, and community members shared their experiences, challenges, hopes, and aspirations for KCS. Their voices shaped the priorities, language, and commitments found in this plan. The result is a roadmap that is authentic to our district, grounded in real experiences and collective wisdom.

At the core of this plan are our values: Excellence, Collaboration, Innovation, Inclusivity, and Integrity. These are not aspirational words on a page; they are expectations for how we show up every day, for students, for one another, and for our community. This strategic plan is both an invitation and a charge. It invites us to celebrate what is strong in Kannapolis City Schools while challenging us to confront areas where we must grow. It asks each of us, educators, staff, families, students, and community partners, to take ownership of our role in the future of KCS. Progress will require focus, courage, and consistency over time. Excellence is not accidental; it is the result of shared commitment and sustained action.

As we move forward together, let us remain proud of our roots and unwavering in our pursuit of excellence. The next five years represent an opportunity to strengthen our schools, elevate outcomes for students, and ensure that Kannapolis City Schools continues to be a place where every learner is supported, challenged, and prepared for what comes next. Together, we will honor our past and rise to meet our future.

Sara E. Newell

Dr. Sara E. Newell
Superintendent- Kannapolis City Schools



KCS Strategic Plan

In Kannapolis City Schools, our history is not just a collection of dates; it is the foundation of our future. For generations, this district has been the heartbeat of our community. KCS is a place where small-town values like hard work, loyalty, and resilience are passed down.

As we embark on this five-year strategic journey, we are not moving away from our traditions; we are using them as a springboard. We believe that a district with such a proud past owes its students a future of unparalleled academic outcomes. The 2025-2030 strategic plan is our guiding document for transforming practice, raising expectations, and ensuring every graduate is prepared to lead.

Strategic Anchors

To reach these heights, we must define the pillars (*Core Values, Vision, Mission, Operating Principles, Big Rock Priorities, Instructional Framework, and Performance Measures*) that guide our daily work.

Core Values



Our Core Values are the non-negotiable beliefs that shape our culture. They act as our compass, guiding how we treat one another, how we make decisions, and the character we model for our students.

Vision and Mission

Our Vision is our "North Star," describing the future we are working to create for every student. Our Mission is our daily "Why," defining our fundamental purpose and the unique role Kannapolis City Schools plays in the lives of our children and community.



Operating Principles



Our Operating Principles are the "How" of our work. They describe the specific behaviors and mindsets (Building Systems of Support, Leveraging Feedback, and Empowering Collective Action) that we use to move our strategic work forward.

Big Rock Priorities

Our Big Rocks are our highest-leverage focus areas. By narrowing our attention to these four critical priorities, we ensure that our time, energy, and resources are dedicated to the initiatives that will have the greatest impact on student success.



Performance Measures



Performance Measures are our "Scorecard." These are the specific, data-driven metrics we use to track our progress, maintain transparency, and hold ourselves accountable for achieving the goals outlined in this plan.

Instructional Framework

The Instructional Framework is our district's "Playbook" for the classroom. It outlines the research-based strategies (Clarify Learning, Bringing Rigor into Thinking, Engage Learners, Check Learning Often) that ensure teaching is consistently engaging and aligned across every school.



KCS Core Values

Relentless Excellence

Every decision begins and ends with what is best for the student. We refuse to settle for "good enough." We are student-centered in our approach, ensuring that our high expectations and academic standards are designed to unlock the unique potential of every child.

Intentional Collaboration

We are stronger together than we are alone. We foster a culture of collaboration among staff, families, and the community. We break down silos to share best practices and work as a unified team to ensure the "Academic Explosion" reaches every classroom.

Innovation Rooted in Tradition

Respecting our past while boldly embracing the future. We use the latest instructional innovations and "future-ready" tools, but we keep them grounded in the personal, face-to-face relationships that have always defined KCS.

Inclusive Community

All means all. We provide the specific supports, resources, and opportunities needed for every student to thrive. Our student-centered focus means we see the individual needs of each child and meet them with equity and care.

Integrity in Action

Character is the foundation of high performance. We act with transparency and hold ourselves accountable to our students and our partners. We do what we say we will do, ensuring our daily work aligns with our mission of academic rigor.

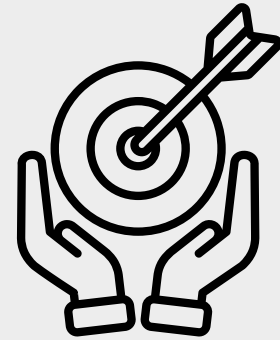
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KCS Vision



Creating future-ready graduates through a tradition of innovation and a standard of academic excellence.

KCS Mission



Empowering every student to maximize their potential through rigorous, equitable learning within a culture of safety and belonging.



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Big Rock Priorities and Operating Principles

2025-2030 Operating Principles

**Building
Systems of
Support**



**Leveraging
Feedback**



**Empowering
Collective
Action**



2025-2030 Big Rock Priorities

**Engaging and
Aligned
Instruction**



**Future-Ready
Graduates**



**Safe, Secure,
and Inclusive
Learning
Environments**



**Family and
Community
Partnerships**



Rising in Excellence. Rooted in Tradition

The KCS Strategic Plan aligns directly with North Carolina’s Achieving Educational Excellence, ensuring our local priorities support high achievement, equity, and excellence for every student.



NC Strategic Plan Pillar	KCS Big Rocks KCS Operating Principals
1. Prepare Each Student for Their Next Phase in Life	
2. Revere Public School Educators	
3. Enhance Parent, Caregiver, and Community Support	
4. Ensure Healthy, Safe, and Secure Learning Environments	
5. Optimize Operational Excellence	
6. Lead Transformative Change	
7. Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education	
8. Galvanize Champions to Fully Invest in and Support Public Education	

Rising in Excellence, Rooted in Tradition

Big Rock Priority 1

Engaging & Aligned Instruction

Goal 1: Accelerate academic growth and achievement for all students through high-quality instruction, bold expectations, and a relentless commitment to excellence.

Engaging and Aligned Instruction



In KCS, engaging aligned instruction begins with clarifying learning so students connect with the ‘why’ of their work. We deepen this experience by bringing rigor into thinking through complex tasks and checking learning often, allowing for the real-time feedback and support necessary to engage every learner.

Building Systems of Support



BUILDING SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT: We align district departments, school leaders, specialists, and teachers to provide a unified foundation for every classroom. This partnership ensures teachers have direct access to high-quality materials and expert coaching, creating the infrastructure needed to make rigorous instruction a daily reality.

Leveraging Feedback



LEVERAGING FEEDBACK: We use real-time data and observations to constantly refine our practice. By listening to student voices and providing timely, actionable feedback to all employees, we foster a culture of continuous improvement that directly drives student success.

Empowering Collective Action



EMPOWERING COLLECTIVE ACTION: We foster shared responsibility for student growth across every school and department. By working as one team to solve challenges and share best practices, we ensure that high-quality, engaging instruction is the consistent standard for every child in our district.



Big Rock Priority 1

Engaging & Aligned Instruction

Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
100% of KCS schools will exceed growth as measured by EVAAS	Target		44%	55%	77%	88%	100%
	Actual	22%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of students scoring proficient in reading on the end-of-grade assessment in grades 3-5	Target		35%	39%	43%	47%	51%
	Actual	31%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of students scoring proficient in grade 6 math	Target		35%	39%	43%	47%	51%
	Actual	31%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of students scoring proficient in grades 7-8 math	Target		31%	35%	39%	43%	47%
	Actual	27%					



Big Rock Priority 1

Engaging & Aligned Instruction

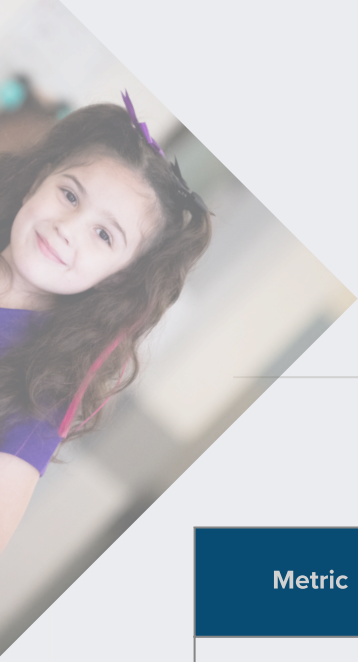
Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of students scoring proficient in HS Math 1	Target		12%	16%	20%	24%	28%
	Actual	8%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of ML students scoring proficient in grades 3-5 EOG subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		26%	30%	34%	38%	42%
	Actual	22%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of ML students scoring proficient in grade 6 EOG subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		10%	13%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	7%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of ML students scoring proficient in grades 7-8 EOG/EOC subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		10%	13%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	7%					



Big Rock Priority 1

Engaging & Aligned Instruction

Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of EC students scoring proficient in HS EOC subjects (Math 1, Math 3, Biology, English 2)	Target		8%	12%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	<5%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of EC students scoring proficient in grades 3-5 EOG subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		8%	12%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	<5%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of EC students scoring proficient in grade 6 EOG subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		8%	12%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	<5%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of EC students scoring proficient in grades 7-8 EOG/EOC subjects (math, science, reading)	Target		8%	12%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	<5%					



Big Rock Priority 1

Engaging & Aligned Instruction

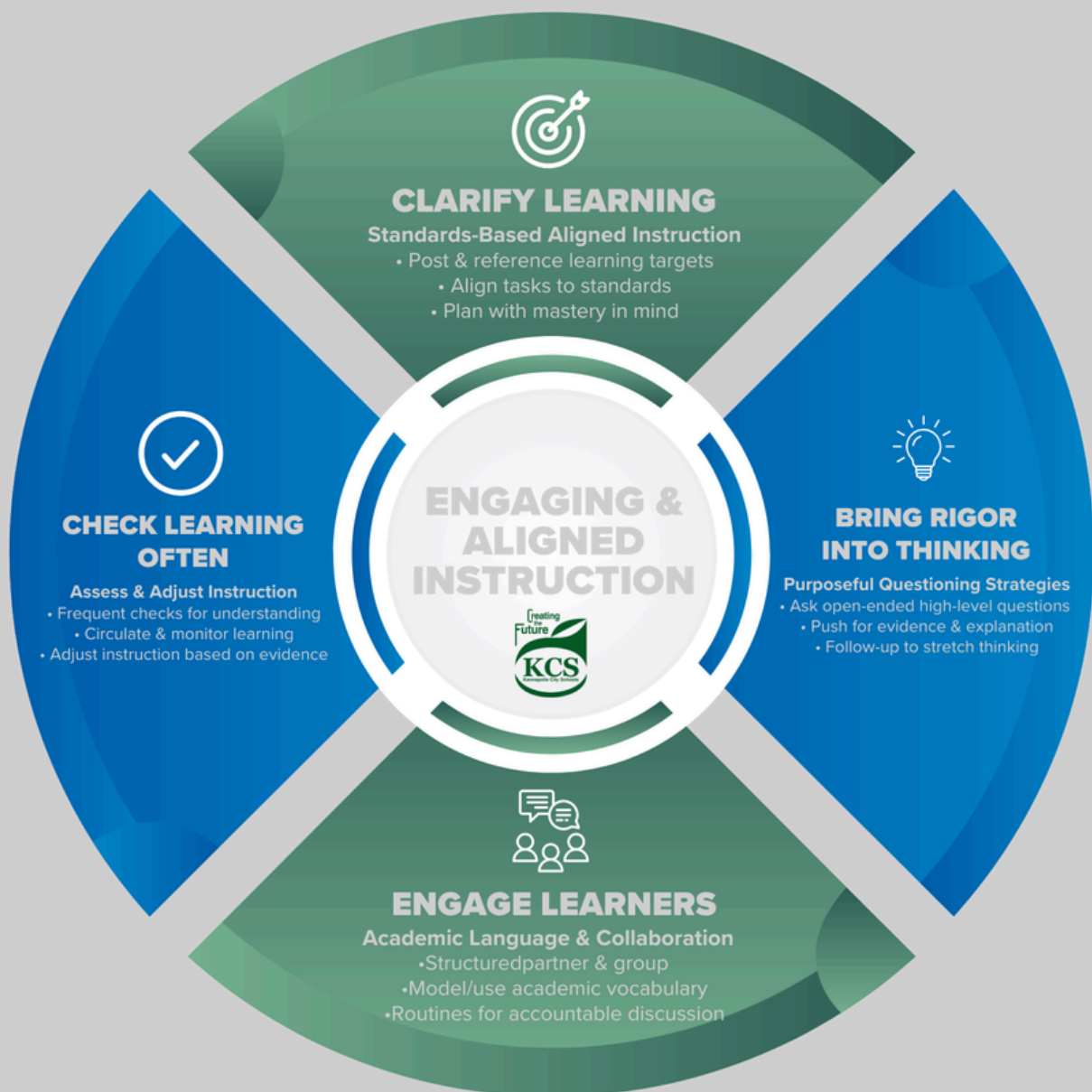
Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of ML students scoring proficient in HS EOC subjects (Math 1, Math 3, Biology, English 2)	Target		8%	12%	16%	20%	24%
	Actual	<5%					



The KCS Instructional Framework is our district's "Playbook" for address Big Rock Priority 1, Engaging and Aligned Instruction. It outlines the research-based strategies that ensure teaching is consistently engaging and aligned across every school. This framework outlines specific, research-based strategies, such as Clarifying Learning, Bringing Rigor into Thinking, Engaging Learners, and Checking Learning Often, to provide common support for effective teaching practices.

KCS Instructional Framework



Big Rock Priority 2

Launching Future Ready Graduates

Goal 2: Prepare every student for post-graduation enrollment, enlistment, employment, and entrepreneurship by building knowledge, confidence, well-being, and strong habits for success.

Future-Ready Graduates



In KCS, launching future ready graduates means ensuring every student matriculates with a clear purpose and the competencies needed for enrollment, employment, enlistment, or entrepreneurship. We empower students to take ownership of their journey by expanding access to diverse pathways, industry credentials, and real-world experience.

Building Systems of Support



BUILDING SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT: We create robust pathways by aligning NC Portrait of a Graduate, career and technical education (CTE), and social-emotional learning. By providing students with consistent transition support and early exposure to college and career opportunities, we build a reliable pipeline that guides every learner toward a successful future.

Leveraging Feedback



LEVERAGING FEEDBACK: We use data, workforce trends, community stakeholder input, and student goal-setting to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. By engaging with industry partners and understanding evolving skill requirements, we continuously refine our pathways to ensure students are prepared for the high-demand careers.

Empowering Collective Action



EMPOWERING COLLECTIVE ACTION: We mobilize the community, including families, local businesses, and higher education partners, to invest in our students. By working collectively to provide internships, mentorships, and community-based learning, we ensure that graduating "future-ready" is a community-wide commitment and a reality for every KCS student.



Big Rock Priority 2

Launching Future Ready Graduates

Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students in K-5	Target		20%	18%	16%	14%	12%
	Actual	22%	20%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students in grade 6	Target		26%	24%	22%	20%	18%
	Actual	30%	25%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students in grades 7-8	Target		26%	24%	22%	20%	18%
	Actual	28%	33%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students in HS	Target		35%	32%	29%	26%	23%
	Actual	37%	*22% (new metric)				



Big Rock Priority 2

Launching Future Ready Graduates

Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase ACT proficiency rate	Target		28%	32%	36%	40%	44%
	Actual	34%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase WorkKeys proficiency (silver and above)	Target		63%	65%	67%	69%	71%
	Actual	54%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the district's four-year high school graduation rate	Target		90%	91%	92%	93%	94%
	Actual	89%					

Metric	Measure	Baseline 25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Graduating seniors complete a documented post-graduation plan - enrollment, enlistment, employment, or entrepreneurship	Target		100%	100%	100%	100%
	Actual					

Big Rock Priority 3

Safe, Secure, Inclusive Learning Environments

Goal 3: Cultivate a learning environment where every student feels seen, valued, and supported by promoting belonging, elevating diverse voices, and prioritizing practices that nurture well-being, growth, and equity.

Safe, Secure,
and Inclusive
Learning
Environments



In KCS, we prioritize a culture of belonging where every student and staff member feels physically safe and emotionally valued. We believe that an inclusive environment built on mutual respect and high expectations is the essential foundation that allows students to take the academic risks necessary for growth.

Building
Systems of
Support



Building Systems of Support:

We integrate comprehensive safety protocols and multi-tiered social-emotional supports to protect our school communities. By aligning district-wide security measures with mental health resources and restorative practices, we ensure that every building has the necessary infrastructure to maintain a stable, welcoming, and secure climate.

Leveraging
Feedback



Leveraging Feedback: We actively monitor school climate data, safety audits, and student surveys to identify and address potential barriers to a positive environment. By providing staff with timely feedback on classroom management and inclusive practices, we continuously refine our approach to meet the evolving needs of our diverse student body.

Empowering
Collective
Action



Empowering Collective Action: We foster a shared commitment to safety and inclusion among students, staff, families, and community agencies. By working together to uphold high behavioral standards and celebrate our community's diversity, we ensure that maintaining a safe and inclusive culture is the collective responsibility of everyone in the KCS family.

Big Rock Priority 3

Safe, Secure, Inclusive Learning Environments

Performance Measures

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of K-5 students who receive zero or one office referral	Target		90%	92%	93%	94%	95%
	Actual	88%	89%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of 6th grade students who receive zero or one office referral	Target		69%	73%	77%	81%	85%
	Actual	65%	78%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of 7th-8th grade students who receive zero or one office referral	Target		69%	73%	77%	81%	85%
	Actual	65%	63%				

Metric	Measure	Baseline 24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Increase the percentage of HS students who receive zero or one office referral	Target		72%	76%	80%	84%	88%
	Actual	68%	70%				

Big Rock Priority 4

Family and Community Partnerships

Goal 4: Strengthen trust and collaboration with families and community partners by fostering transparent communication, shared responsibility, and meaningful engagement that supports student success and well-being.

Family and Community Partnerships



In KCS, we believe that student success is a shared journey that extends beyond the classroom walls. We actively cultivate authentic, two-way partnerships that invite families and community stakeholders to be co-designers of our students' educational experiences, ensuring every child is supported by a strong network of advocates.

Building Systems of Support



Building Systems of Support: We establish, accessible pathways for engagement by providing streamlined communication tools and dedicated family resources. By standardizing how we communicate, welcome, and support families, we ensure every household, regardless of language or background, has the information and resources needed to champion their child's education.

Leveraging Feedback



Leveraging Feedback: We systematically seek the perspectives of our families and community partners through surveys, focus groups, and advisory councils. By listening to the needs and aspirations of our stakeholders, we refine our programs and services to ensure our district remains responsive to the unique community we serve.

Empowering Collective Action



Empowering Collective Action: We mobilize the collective strength of local businesses, faith-based organizations, and civic leaders to create a "wrap-around" support system for our schools. By working together on shared initiatives and volunteer efforts, we ensure the responsibility for nurturing the next generation of Kannapolis citizens is a unified community mission.

Big Rock Priority 4

Family and Community Partnerships

Performance Measures



Metric	Measure	Baseline Fall 25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Families surveyed will report low barriers to school engagement and a positive school climate, as measured by annual district family engagement and climate surveys.	Target		75%	80%	85%	90%	95%
	Actual	70%					
Metric	Measure	Baseline Fall 25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Reduce the percentage of chronically absent staff	Target		17%	15%	13%	11%	10%
	Actual	19%	16%				



KCS Department Improvement Plans

Each district department has a Department Improvement Plan to ensure its work directly supports schools, students, and the goals of the KCS Strategic Plan. These plans provide clarity, alignment, and accountability by connecting daily work to measurable outcomes that matter most for student success.

[Career and Technical Education](#)

[Communications](#)

[Chief of Schools](#)

[Curriculum and Instruction](#)

[Exceptional Children](#)

[Finance](#)

[Human Resources](#)

[Instructional Technology](#)

[Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#)

[Operations and Facilities](#)

[School Nutrition](#)

[Student Services](#)

[Transportation](#)

Rising in Excellence. Rooted in Tradition

STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE

Stakeholder Input in Planning KCS Future



1st

DETERMINE OUR FOCUS

We identified our Big Rocks and Operating Principles to clarify what matters most and where we will concentrate our efforts over the next five years. This step ensures focus, coherence, and shared understanding across the district.

ALIGN PRIORTIES AND ACTION

Next, KCS priorities were aligned with North Carolina's priorities to ensure consistency with statewide expectations. We identified specific actions, behaviors, and systems needed to reach those priorities and outlined clear next steps for departments to drive meaningful progress.

2nd



3rd

CLARIFY DIRECTION AND INSTRUCTIONAL ALIGNMENT

We set and solidified the district's Vision, Mission, and Core Values to reflect who we are, what we stand for, and the direction we are committed to moving. We also reviewed the KCS Instructional Framework and the Vision for Teaching and Learning to ensure strong alignment and clarity for instructional practice.



ALIGN DEPARTMENT WORK

Each department developed a Department Improvement Plan that aligns its work to the KCS Strategic Plan. These plans translate district priorities into focused actions that directly support schools, students, and measurable outcomes.

4th



Thank you to the following KCS employees that developed the 2025-2030 KCS Strategic Plan: *Alex Elliott, Alison Dwire, Andrea Wolfe, August Howerton, Brittany Banks, Chloe Gentry, Eric Anderson, Erin Anderson, Evelyn Carrasquillo, Felicia Shepard, Garrett Cooperman, Janis Durgin, Jennifer Brinson, Jennifer Ward, Joshua Sherrill, Julia Kraft, Kennedy Phillips, Kristi Miracco, Lisa Strahan, Logan Barrier, Megan Deal, Melissa Little, Michelle Tiesi, Paula Robinson, Sara Newell, Stacie Bunn, Stephanie Brooks, Tyler Buckwell*

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Acronym Glossary

ACT	<u>American College Testing</u> - a standardized test for to assess college readiness
CTE	<u>Career and Technical Education</u> - teaching specific career skills to students
EC	<u>Exceptional Children</u> - an umbrella term for students with diverse needs
EOC	<u>End of Course</u> - state testing in specific courses (Math 1, Math 3, English 2, Bio)
EOG	<u>End of Grade</u> - state testing in math and reading given in grades 3 - 8
ES	<u>Elementary School</u> - grades Kindergarten through 5
EVAAS	<u>Education Value-Added Assessment System</u> - tracks student academic growth
HS	<u>High School</u> - grades 9-12
ML	<u>MultiLingual Learner</u> - students who are learning english in addition to their native language
MS	<u>Middle School</u> - grades 6-8





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For additional information regarding student enrollment or
employment opportunities, please contact us.

Thank you for your interest in Kannapolis City Schools.