



*September 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 September, the school year is officially in full swing! Our students and staff have established routines, standards and expectations, and we are seeing great things happening throughout our building. One of the most important factors in student success is consistent attendance. Every day of classroom instruction matters, and we encourage parents and students to stay actively engaged with their academic progress. Skyward will provide families with an up-to-date look at grades and assignments. In addition, Google Classroom is our primary digital learning platform, and students should be checking it consistently for class assignments, announcements and other information.

September is also a busy time for many of our students as they become involved in extracurricular activities both at school and in the community. We are proud of the many opportunities our students have to participate in athletics, clubs, activities and other organizations. Those opportunities will continue to grow as students reach high school. These experiences provide valuable opportunities for students to develop leadership, teamwork, responsibility and perseverance. At the same time, we want to remind students and families of the importance of finding a healthy balance between extracurricular commitments and schoolwork. Managing time effectively, staying organized, and keeping up with coursework are important skills that will benefit students well beyond middle school.

Finally, our school-wide World's Finest Chocolate Fundraiser will kick off on Wednesday, September 16, and run through Friday, October 2. Once again, our students will have the opportunity to sell World's Finest Chocolate, with all the funds raised directly supporting our students and their classroom activities and supplies. We greatly appreciate the support of our families and community as we work together to provide opportunities and resources for our students. Thank you for your continued partnership and support as we begin the school year.

Dustin Dooley

Principal

# School Attendance

Do you need to call in your student's attendance or let us know of an upcoming absence or tardy?

**If so, please call the Attendance Office directly at 785-309-3904 or email [southmiddle.attendance@usd305.com](mailto:southmiddle.attendance@usd305.com).**

The attendance office hours are 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Please communicate with the school if your child will be absent.



[southmiddle.attendance@usd305.com](mailto:southmiddle.attendance@usd305.com)

## Greatness Grows When You're Here

Greatness Grows When You're Here! And every day at school is a new opportunity for students to learn, grow and connect.

Being at school each day helps students feel more positive about school and themselves while supporting their academic and social success. Consistent daily attendance helps students stay engaged, build a sense of belonging and develop strong habits that support success in the classroom and beyond.

Starting the year strong by building good attendance habits reinforces the importance of being on time and present each day. Families play an important role by making attendance a priority, staying connected with their student's school and planning ahead to reduce absences.

Use our 2026-2027 Attendance Success Guide to help schedule family trips, appointments and other activities during school breaks and days off.

Attend today—Achieve tomorrow!



[Download the Printable Attendance Success Guide](#)

## Receive Important Alerts

In order to receive important alerts from South Middle and USD 305, including cancellations, emergencies and other educational communications, please make sure your contact information is up to date in Skyward.

Contact information entered in Skyward is used by SMS and ParentSquare, our district-wide communication platform, to send notifications by text message, email and phone call.

If your phone number or email address is missing or outdated in Skyward, you may not receive important notifications from South Middle or the district.

If you notice that your contact information needs to be updated, please call the SMS office for assistance.



## Parent Square: Our New Communication Platform!



Beginning this school year, Salina Public Schools will use ParentSquare as our primary communication platform for families, students and staff across all of our schools.

ParentSquare brings classroom, school and district communication together in one place, making it easier to receive urgent alerts and everyday updates through email, text or app notifications—all based on your notification preferences.

Families, keep an eye out for your ParentSquare account invitation email. Once you've logged into your account you can stay connected through the ParentSquare website, [www.parentsquare.com](http://www.parentsquare.com) or by downloading the free mobile app for easy access on the go!

Download the free mobile app from the Apple App store or the Google Play Store, or by scanning the QR code:



[Learn More About ParentSquare](#)

# Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are scheduled for Wednesday, October 14 (3:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.) and Thursday, October 15 (7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.)

- Advisory teachers will be scheduling conferences with students and parents / guardians.
- Parents will visit with their student's team of core teachers (math, english, science, social studies). After visiting with the team, parents and guardians may visit reading and specials teachers.

Parent-teacher conferences provide an invaluable opportunity for adults at home and school to come together and discuss how to help students succeed. This open dialogue is an important support in students' school progress. Conferences provide space for communication with parents in a more personal manner, giving them insight into their student's strengths and weaknesses that they may not otherwise see from test scores or grades alone.

We look forward to visiting with parents and guardians at parent teacher conferences and working together to build a strong foundation that will help student's learn and grown. With continued communication between home and school, we can make sure our students get the support they need to succeed.

## PTO / Site Council

The South Middle School PTO plays a vital role in supporting both students and staff. In the past, PTO has provided \$100 staff grants, meals during parent-teacher conferences, student snacks for state testing, banners, mascots and much more.

We invite all parents and guardians who wish to be more involved in their child's education to join us for our monthly PTO and Site Council meetings.

These meetings will alternate each month, with Site Council offering an excellent opportunity to share input on key school initiatives, plans and programs. Below are the scheduled meeting dates for the 2026–27 school year.

- September 16 - Site Council
- October 21 - PTO
- November 18 - Site Council (*Superintendent Presentation*)
- December 16 - PTO
- January 20 - Site Council
- February 17 - PTO
- March 24 - Site Council
- April 21 - PTO

## 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**

## Student Council

Our Student Council (StuCo) is excited for the 2026–2027 school year and looks forward to bringing the South Middle School community together! We kicked off the year with a half-day leadership workshop at SMS focused on team building, leadership development and planning for the year ahead.

On September 24, all StuCo members will have the opportunity to attend the KSHSAA Student Council Regional Conference at Minneapolis High School, where they will learn alongside student leaders from other schools and bring new ideas back to South Middle.

Throughout the year, StuCo will continue many of our favorite traditions, including spirit weeks, pep assemblies, a Veterans Day breakfast and Christmas shopping for SMS families. We also hope to expand our involvement beyond the school and find new ways to make a positive impact in the Salina community.

Want to see what StuCo is up to? Follow us on Instagram at southmiddle.stuco and on TikTok at SMS.Stuco1!

## Student Attendance at South Middle Events

We're excited to share that all South Middle School students will receive free admission to all SMS home events during the 2026-27 school year.

Please note that this offer applies only to SMS hosted events. Admission fees will still apply for parents, family members and events held at other schools within the district.

## Middle School Attendance at High School Events

At Salina Public Schools, we prioritize creating a safe and enjoyable environment for all who attend our high school athletic events. To ensure that this remains the case, we would like to remind our families about our guidelines for middle school students who wish to attend these events. Importantly, all middle school students must be accompanied by an adult in order to enter.

While there is not a specific section for middle school students, we absolutely encourage them to attend - as long as they are under the supervision of a parent or guardian.

These events are an excellent opportunity for our community to come together and celebrate the accomplishments of our students, and we want to make sure that everyone enjoys themselves in a positive atmosphere. We truly appreciate your help in ensuring that our events remain a rewarding experience for all.



## Sixth Grade Math

We are excited to get the school year off to a great start and look forward to working with your student! In sixth grade math, we will begin the year with expressions and equations, along with decimals and fractions.

Students will learn new strategies while continuing to strengthen and reinforce previously learned skills. As the year progresses, we will explore ratio reasoning, algebraic thinking, positive and negative numbers and statistical thinking. We are looking forward to a fantastic year of learning, growing, and developing confidence together in mathematics!

## Seventh Grade Math

We are excited to begin a new school year and introduce i-Ready math our new seventh grade curriculum. Many students are already familiar with i-Ready as a tool we have used to assess current skill levels and identify areas for growth. This year, i-Ready will also support our daily instruction through engaging lessons, problem-solving, meaningful discussions and real-world applications.

We will begin the year studying proportional relationships, including ratios and rates. Students will learn how to compare quantities, recognize equivalent relationships and apply these concepts to everyday situations.

We encourage students to come to class prepared each day with their math materials, stay organized, complete assignments on time and ask questions whenever they need additional support. We are looking forward to a great year of learning and growth in seventh grade math!

## Eighth Grade Math

Our eighth grade math students are off to a fantastic start this school year! They have jumped right into important concepts that will build a strong foundation for success in algebra and beyond.

To begin the year, students have been working on solving equations with variables on both sides of the equal sign. This essential skill strengthens algebraic reasoning and prepares students to tackle increasingly complex problems throughout the year. As we move forward, our focus will shift to proportional relationships and their connection to linear relationships. Understanding these concepts is an important step as students prepare to explore graphing, slope and real-world applications of algebra. It has been wonderful to see students back in the classroom, engaged, motivated and eager to learn. Their positive energy and effort create a great learning environment each day. We are excited for a year filled with growth, problem-solving and new mathematical discoveries! Thank you for your continued support and partnership in helping our students succeed.

## Girls Tennis

The tennis season is officially here! Our Cougar tennis team began competition, Thursday, August 27, at 4:00 p.m. at Derby. This was an exciting opportunity for our athletes to put their hard work and preparation into action. The start of a new season brings excitement, nervousness and plenty of opportunities to learn and grow. We look forward to watching our players compete, encourage one another, and represent our school with pride.

One of our team's greatest strengths this season is the experience of our returning athletes. These players understand the expectations, challenges and excitement that come with competing at the middle school level. Their experience will be invaluable as they help establish a strong foundation for this year's team and demonstrate to our newer athletes what it means to be a positive teammate and competitor.

Our returning athletes also have an important leadership role. They can lead by example through their effort, attitude, sportsmanship, and willingness to encourage others. We want our players to help build a team culture centered around hard work, respect, teamwork and perseverance.

The foundation our athletes establish this season can have an impact well beyond this year. By supporting and encouraging one another, our experienced players can help our younger and newer athletes grow into confident competitors and future leaders of the Cougar tennis program.

Please join us in wishing the Cougar Tennis Team a successful season!

## Cross Country

Our cross country team is off to a fantastic start with one of our largest groups in recent years! Our athletes have been working hard, building endurance, improving consistency and preparing for the season ahead.

We're looking forward to our first meet at Bill Burke on September 8, where our runners will have the opportunity to put all of their hard work and training to the test.

If you see our team running around town during practice, be sure to give us a friendly honk or wave! Our athletes appreciate the encouragement and love the support from our school and community.

# Volleyball

The school year is officially underway, and our South Middle School volleyball team is already making an impact on the court! Practices are in full swing, and our players and coaches are excited to get the season started.

This year's team is looking stronger than ever. Many of our athletes spent the winter and summer playing club volleyball, participating in summer leagues and camps and putting in extra time at open gyms. Their dedication and hard work are already showing! Our coaches have been extremely impressed with the team's energy, effort, teamwork and positive attitude during practices.

Our first home game is September 10 against Lakewood. We encourage our students, families and South Middle School community to come out and cheer on our team!

We have an exciting and challenging season ahead, and our athletes are ready to work hard, compete and represent South Middle School with pride. Go Cougars!

# Football

The Salina South Middle School football program is ready to kick off another exciting season, with 75 athletes taking the field to compete and proudly represent the Cougars!

Our eighth grade team is looking to build on last season's 3-4 record and continue growing together as a team. With another year of experience under their belts, the eighth graders are ready to compete, improve their skills, and finish the season stronger than ever.

Our seventh grade athletes are ready to take on middle school football and continue the success our program has experienced over the past three years. For many of these athletes, this season is an exciting opportunity to learn the game at a higher level, develop their skills and become part of the Cougar football tradition.

Both teams have been working hard throughout the preseason! Practices have focused on strengthening fundamentals, developing position-specific skills and building the teamwork and communication needed for success. From tackling and individual skill work to team drills and game preparation, our athletes have continued to challenge themselves and encourage one another each day.

We are also excited to welcome two new coaches to our football staff this season. They bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the program and will be valuable additions as we continue to develop our athletes and build on the strong foundation of Cougar football.

We are excited about what this season has in store and can't wait to see our athletes take the field! Thank you to our families, school community, and Cougar supporters for helping make middle school football such a positive and memorable experience for our athletes.

Be sure to follow SMS Football on Facebook at [smsfootball](#) for updates, scores, pictures and everything happening with Salina South Middle School football.

## After School Program

Our After-School Program will begin on Tuesday, September 1. The program runs Monday through Thursday from 2:55–3:45 p.m.

Please note that school transportation is not provided and families will need to arrange transportation.

Students may participate in the program only if referred by a classroom teacher or school counselor. Once a referral is made, parents/guardians will be contacted directly.

While attending, students are expected to behave appropriately and focus on assignments and activities that support academic improvement.

The program is coordinated by Bianca Adams. For questions, please contact her at [bianca.adams@usd305.com](mailto:bianca.adams@usd305.com).

## Teacher of the Month



Congratulations to SMS, seventh and eighth grade Art teacher, Darla Hassler for earning September teacher of the month!

Mrs. Hassler has made an immediate and positive impact on our students and school community. Although she is new to teaching in our building, she brings previous teaching experience and a strong connection to our school, having served as a library aide for the past two years.

She has established a classroom environment built on strong management, high academic and behavioral expectations and a genuine commitment to student success. At the same time, she demonstrates an exceptional level of empathy and understanding of the social and emotional needs of middle school students.

Congratulations Mrs. Hassler!

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| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |

## Important Dates in September

7 - No School Labor Day

16 - Fundraiser Kick-off

## 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.

## Greatness Grows When You're Here!

Support your student's success by planning ahead and reducing absences. Use this Attendance Success Guide to schedule family trips, appointments and other activities during school breaks and days off.



### Labor Day Recess

3 Day Opportunity  
Saturday, September 5 - Monday, September 7



### No School/ Inservice

4 Day Opportunity  
Thursday, October 8 - Sunday, October 11



### No School/ Conferences

4 Day Opportunity  
Thursday, October 15 - Sunday, October 18



### Thanksgiving Recess

9 Day Opportunity  
Saturday, November 21 - Sunday, November 29



### Winter Recess

18 Day Opportunity  
Friday, December 18 - Monday, January 4



### No School

3 Day Opportunity  
Saturday, January 16 - Monday, January 18



### No School/ Conferences

4 Day Opportunity  
Thursday, February 4 - Sunday, February 7



### No School

3 Day Opportunity  
Saturday, February 13 - Monday, February 15



### Spring Recess

10 Day Opportunity  
Friday, March 12 - Sunday, March 21



### No School

3 Day Opportunity  
Friday, March 26 - Sunday, March 28



### No School

3 Day Opportunity  
Friday, April 16 - Sunday, April 18

### Student-Athlete Buffer Weeks

No practices, contests, team travel, or workouts are allowed.



### Fall Buffer Week

Monday, November 9 - Sunday, November 15

Transition week between fall and winter sports.



### Winter Moratorium

Wednesday, December 23 - Sunday, December 27

Mandatory 5-day holiday block during Winter Recess.



### Summer Moratorium

Monday, June 28 - Sunday, July 4

Statewide pause at the conclusion of the school year.



View the full 2026-2027 school year calendar anytime on our district website: [www.usd305.com/calendars](http://www.usd305.com/calendars)

## Attend today—Achieve tomorrow!

Consistent daily attendance helps students stay engaged, build a sense of belonging and stay on track for success in the classroom and beyond.