

Regular Monthly Meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education
Kearney Public Schools Board of Education
Monday, November 13, 2023 at 5:30 PM
2nd Floor Staff Development Room, Administration Building
320 W 24th St
Kearney, NE 68845

1. Routine Business

2. Call to Order

President Blessing called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

3. Open Meetings Act Announcement

This is an open, public meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education, and a copy of the Open Meetings Act is posted in this room.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

5. Roll Call

Attendance Taken at 5:32 PM.

Paul Hazard: Absent

Drew Blessing: Present

Dave Brandt: Present

Steve Gaasch: Present

Kathy Gifford: Present

John Icenogle: Present

5.A. Excuse Absent Board Member

- Mr. Hazard joined the meeting via Zoom.

Move to excuse absent Board member Paul Hazard from the meeting. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Steve Gaasch, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

6. Approval of the Agenda

Move to approve the agenda for the meeting, as presented. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

7. Recognitions

7.A. Recognition of the KHS Football Team for Team Academic Excellence Award

- Mr. Jeff Ganz, Kearney High School Principal, spoke about his pride in the KHS football team and coaching staff for their work on and off the field. He stated that KHS

was the only class A school that was awarded the Nebraska Coaches' Association Academic Excellence Award. The KHS football team is receiving this award for the second year in a row. He introduced Coach Brandon Cool.

- Coach Cool thanked the Board for the recognition of the KHS football team and acknowledged all of the people involved in the nomination process. He noted that this award was presented to the team for the 2022-2023 season. Students on the team achieved an overall GPA of 3.62, and it was noted that a number of the students were in honors and AP classes, on the KHS honor roll, on the 4.0 scholar list, and some of them received All Conference/All Academic awards. Coach Cool stated that volunteerism was a category of qualification for this award and referenced some of the many things that these students volunteer for. He stressed the longstanding KHS football culture that emphasizes the importance of academics and noted that conversations, encouragement, and extra support is provided to those who may be struggling in the classroom. This was also exemplified in the team goal of receiving this award every year.
- Mrs. Gifford thanked him for all of his work on helping students achieve this, noting that it was great to hear that encouragement was being given to ALL students.
- Mr. Belssing congratulated Coach Cool, the KHS football team, and Mr. Ganz. He thanked them for all of their efforts, stating that it was clear that this was a priority for students and leadership as well.

7.B. Recognition of the KHS Boys Soccer Team for Team Academic Award

- Mr. Jeff Ganz, Kearney High School Principal, spoke about his pride in the KHS boys soccer team and coaching staff for their work on and off the field. He stated that this team is the only team in the state of Nebraska that was honored with the Team Academic Award as presented by the United Soccer Coaches organization for the 2023 season and for the 8th consecutive year. He stated that tonight's recognitions tell a lot about what is valued at Kearney High. He introduced Coach Scott Steinbrook.
- Coach Steinbrook spoke about this award being strictly GPA-driven, the qualifying threshold being a 3.25 and the KHS boys soccer team achieving a 3.57. He acknowledged those who helped him prepare and submit information for the award, as well as the fact that he feels fortunate to work with some of the best student athletes at KHS. Coach Steinbrook voiced the usefulness of the list that Kearney High puts out to teachers as a means for helping them identify and have conversations with those students that need extra help and encouragement to improve their grades. He stated that of the 24 students on the KHS soccer roster last year, 16 of them had received Academic All Conference or Academic All State recognition.
- Mrs. Gifford congratulated the KHS boys soccer team and thanked Coach Steinbrook for all of his work.

7.C. Resolution of Support of Military Students and Families

Move to adopt the resolution of support for military families in our schools. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Kathy Gifford, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy

Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

8. Presentations

8.A. Presentation by Northeast Elementary on Morning Meeting Implementation

- Mrs. Cathy Gundersen, Northeast Elementary School principal, spoke to the Board about morning meeting implementation as it relates to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at Northeast Elementary. Through the use of visual aids (posters) throughout the building, videos, and various incentives, the expectations are made clear to the students. Staff continually work to reinforce positive behavior at all times. Mrs. Gundersen stated that while she does not feel that all of the improvement at Northeast can be attributed directly to the morning meeting time, she does feel that it has significantly helped to improve the overall school climate, increase student achievement, reduce the suspension and referral rates, as well as increase student attendance.
- Mrs. Gifford voiced her appreciation for the system and how it gives the students the opportunity to see what positive, respectful behavior looks like in a diverse student population.
- Mr. Brandt inquired if other building principals had reached out about this program.
- Mrs. Gundersen stated that one principal had observed the morning meeting and others had asked various questions in regard to it and most specifically how long it took to implement it.

8.B. Announcement of "American Education Week"

- American Education Week is being observed this week in the Kearney Public Schools and throughout the country. On Tuesday, November 14, Kearney Public Schools and UNK will co-host a reception for new staff members and members of the community in the atrium at the new Discovery Hall on the UNK campus, from 4:00 to 5:30 PM. Other activities will be conducted in the school buildings to observe this special week.
- Mr. Mundorf stated his appreciation for the KPS collaboration partnership with UNK and emphasized the great opportunity for new and current KPS staff to meet and talk to colleagues at UNK.

9. Public Participation/Comment

- Mrs. Brooke Ritter again voiced her concern about books in the Kearney Public Schools libraries. She stated that after receiving the emailed response from Mr. Blessing, it was clear to her that the Board still does not understand what is being asked of them. She noted that she felt it had been made very clear by the Kearney community that they want a defined standard for what is and is not acceptable for minor children to read, and not just that a child finds it entertaining. She expressed her abhorrence of some of the information that she feels glorifies certain behaviors that are against all moral standards. She stressed that she has not yet had anyone explain to her what the literary value of these books is.

10. Board Reports - None

11. Consent Agenda

Move to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, as presented. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Steve Gaasch, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

11.A. Approval of Minutes of the October 9, 2023 Regular Meeting and the November 8, 2023 Board Committee of Whole Meeting

11.B. Approval of the November, 2023 Claims

11.C. Approval of the November, 2023 Financial Reports

11.D. Acceptance of the Park Elementary PTO Annual Self-Audit Report for the 2022-2023 School Year

11.E. Acceptance of the KHS Athletic Boosters Annual Self-Audit Report for the 2022-2023 School Year

11.F. Acceptance of the Bryant Elementary PAC Annual Self-Audit Report for the 2022-2023 School Year

11.G. Approval of the FBLA National Leadership Conference Trip to Orlando, Florida, June 27 through July 3, 2024, with no direct costs incurred by the school district

12. Regular Agenda - Personnel

12.A. Acceptance of Resignations and Retirements

- Dr. Herrmann stated that it is always bittersweet to accept retirements and resignations and expressed her thankfulness for all of the staff and their years of service with Kearney Public Schools.
- Mrs. Gifford thanked these teachers and expressed her appreciation for their commitment and all of their years of service, whether with Kearney Public Schools or another school. She noted that hopefully someone will be found to take their place, but their amount of experience cannot be replaced.
- Mr. Blessing echoed Mr. Gifford's sentiment and noted that the reason for the large number of resignations and retirements at this time of year is because the district requests that if they know that they will be leaving, please give as much notice as possible so advertising for their positions can begin. This is not something that is required, but it is appreciated.

Move to accept, with regret, the resignations of Jessica Day, social studies teacher at Kearney High School; Trevor Clark, woods teacher at Kearney High School; and Taylor Jensby, SPED teacher at Buffalo Hills Elementary School, effective the end of the 2023-2024 school year. Accept with regret, the retirement resignations of Tami Frye, Title I teacher at Central Elementary School; Teresa Cordes, counselor at Central Elementary School; Chris Weis, 4th grade teacher at Emerson Elementary School; Ginny Klingelhofer, counselor at Emerson

Elementary School; Kelly Peak, kindergarten teacher at Buffalo Hills Elementary School; John Weis, 6th grade teacher at Horizon Middle School; Betty Smith, 6th grade math teacher at Horizon Middle School; Jill Clevenger, principal at Kenwood Elementary School; Kathleen Erickson, SPED teacher at Bryant Elementary School; Kelli Teahon, business teacher at Horizon Middle School; Hallie Hagan, school librarian at Sunrise Middle School; Maria Beucke, art teacher at Central and Bryant Elementary Schools; and Kathy Petri, alternative education teacher at Kearney High School, effective the end of the 2023-2024 school year. This motion, made by Dave Brandt and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.
Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

12.B. Approval of the Employment of Certificated Staff

- Dr. Herrmann stated that these are three hires that she could not be more excited about bringing into the KPS fold.
- Mr. Blessing thanked Mr. Herrmann for bringing these new teachers before the Board so early. He stated his appreciation for all staff members at KPS and the importance of filling all of these positions. He noted that he believed everyone to be especially pleased with the employment of a construction tech teacher, as this type of career-centered position at Kearney High has historically been challenging to fill.

Move to approve the employment of Kelsey Borowski, BA, Step 3, 1.0 FTE kindergarten teacher at Buffalo Hills Elementary School; Erik Sutterfield, BA, Step 7, 1.0 FTE construction tech teacher at Kearney High School; and Austin Mishou, BA+18, Step 4, 1.0 FTE 4th grade teacher at Emerson Elementary School, for the 2024-2025 school year. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

13. Regular Agenda - Business

13.A. Approval of EduPoint as the New School Information System

- Mr. Mondorf stated that, as explained in the committee meeting, EduPoint produces a student information system called Synergy. Kearney Public Schools has been using Infinite Campus for the last 8 years, and there is concern about the number of districts moving away from it and that we should look at going in another direction. Mr. DeHaven has brought forward a quote from EduPoint in the amount of \$543,992 over the next 5 years. He noted that student information systems are never cheap, and while this quote does seem pricey, this amount actually accounts for a savings of around \$160,000 over the 5 years. Mr. Mondorf stated, for those that don't know, that our student information system is where we house grades, attendance, and student demographic data. Synergy also has modules that will help with data analytics for tracking behavioral and academic progress and other data tools that will aid in special education meetings, to name a few. He noted the service, support, and coherence with other districts as additional points that he believes will serve us well. This quote

accounts for all implementation services, licensing, and modules needed, as well as professional development for staff.

- Mrs. Gifford expressed her thankfulness for Mr. DeHaven seeking out this opportunity for the district so that we can stay ahead of data security issues and the overall importance of keeping the student information system updated.
- Mr. Icenogle stated that it has been advantageous to be one of the latter districts to move over to Synergy so that this platform could be evaluated to determine if it's a good fit for KPS, noting the added benefit that it will ultimately save us money as well.
- Mr. Belssing thanked Mr. DeHaven and Mr. Mundorf, stating that this has been a multi-year process for the district since 2019-2020. He emphasized the fact that this system will benefit technology staff and teachers alike, as well as saving the district money.
- Mr. Hazard said that he felt that the most important information on this topic is the fact that there are only two Nebraska education systems still using Infinite Campus. Noting that if Omaha Public Schools decided to make a change, KPS would be left in a vulnerable position, and adding to that the additional cost savings and customer support from this company, the decision was obvious. Mr. Hazard thanked Mr. DeHaven and Mr. Mundorf for their work bringing this to KPS.

Move to change our school information system vendor from Infinite Campus to EduPoint with the approval of a 5 year quote from EduPoint in the amount of \$543,992 over the next 5 years. This quote accounts for all implementation services, licensing and modules needed, as well as professional development for staff. This motion, made by Dave Brandt and seconded by Kathy Gifford, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

14. Regular Agenda - Miscellaneous

14.A. Adoption of the 2024-2025 School Calendar

- Mr. Mundorf stated that the proposed 2024-2025 school calendar has been vetted through the Executive Cabinet, Leadership Council, KEA, and the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee, as well as various staff members, during today's professional development meetings. He noted that through that process, changes had been made, some of which are as follows:
 1. Moving the first day of school to later in August
 2. KHS adjustment of conference times in September to accommodate coaches and their practices
 3. PK-8 conference time adjustment per parental feedback
 4. There will not be a professional development day in November
 5. Two full weeks of holiday break in December/January
 6. Spring break will be a week later to coincide with State Speech (KPS has a contract with NSAA to host this)

7. Graduation will be on May 18th, avoiding Mother's Day and Kearney Catholic graduation, per community feedback

- Mrs. Gifford pointed out that creating the school calendar is not an easy job, due in part to the way the days fall. She praised the administration for considering feedback from several sources, noting that many other districts do not do this.
- Mr. Blessing acknowledged all of Mr. Mundorf's efforts in creating the best possible calendar for the 2024-2025 school year. He made special note of the adjustments to conference times, stating that, through parent feedback over the past couple of years, there have been efforts made to accommodate a variety of parent schedules.
- Mr. Mundorf closed by saying that he feels that conferences, which provide time for conversations with parents and teachers, are critically important for student success. He stated his appreciation for the Board's support of this as well.

Move to adopt the school calendar for the Kearney Public Schools for the 2024-2025 school year, as presented. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

14.B. Conduct a Performance Evaluation of the Superintendent

- Mr. Blessing expressed his appreciation for Mr. Mundorf's willingness to be evaluated in open session, noting that this is not how evaluations are done for most people, but it is an expectation of superintendents in the state of Nebraska. In the Board's efforts to maintain transparency, the first portion of this evaluation will be in open session, but a closed session is reserved for anything that they may need to follow up on. Mr. Blessing clarified that the reason for the seemingly numerous evaluations that have been done is due to state statute which, requires first-year superintendents to be evaluated twice within the first year. After today's evaluation, Mr. Mundorf will be evaluated annually at this time of the year.
- Mrs. Gifford praised Mr. Mundorf for his strong communication with the Board and all of his work with Dr. Loofe in creating the budget with a mindfulness of making our schools safer for staff and students.
- Mr. Brandt expressed his appreciation for Mr. Mundorf's focus on being visible throughout the community at events and in the multiple presentations that he and Dr. Loofe gave to different groups in the community, informing them of how the school budget works. He requested that Mr. Mundorf continue to be active at local school and community events, as well as the other organizations that he is a part of, such as the Greater Nebraska Schools Association, and to continue to advocate for Kearney Public Schools.
- Mr. Icenogle noted that he felt that the last five years have been challenging times in the community, in education, and culturally. In light of the aging infrastructure in the district, teacher shortages, and ever-changing budgets, Mr. Icenogle stated that he was very impressed by Mr. Mundorf's ability to balance all of this and still be able to

maintain a long-term vision for the district. He praised Mr. Mundorf's drive and pursuit to make the district better, citing tonight's proposal and acceptance of a new student information system as an example.

- Mr. Gaasch praised Mr. Mundorf for his approachability and his willingness to address concerns and questions promptly and fairly. He thanked Mr. Mundorf for being consistent and fair in all situations.
- Mr. Blessing praised Mr. Mundorf's visibility in the community and noted that he scored at the top in community relations in the evaluation process. He commended Mr. Mundorf for his approachability and willingness to have difficult conversations, and in meeting them headon it tends to alleviate a lot of situations. Mr. Blessing noted his transparency, citing the example of the budget presentations that were given to different groups. Through the evaluation process, Mr. Blessing stated that policy was an area that saw some of the biggest growth in that the Board sought to empower Mr. Mundorf through the confines of policy, allowing him to make more decisions and, in turn, having fewer issues come before the Board. He stated that an area of potential growth for Mr. Mundorf would be in educational leadership, acknowledging that Mr. Mundorf has built a great leadership team within the district, but there is an opportunity available for him to direct and assist them in carrying out policy. Overall, a very good evaluation.
- Mr. Hazard stated that he supports Mr. Mundorf and his administrative team and that they are doing a great job. He expressed his wishes to make sure that Mr. Mundorf and his team feel that they are empowered to make decisions, many of which they already make, knowing that they are supported by him. Mr. Hazard praised Mr. Mundorf for his communication skills, approachability, and openness to all, as well as his proactiveness when opportunities are presented or problems arise. He cited examples of new programs within the district that are targeted at meeting students wherever they are educationally throughout the district. Mr. Hazard voiced his appreciation for Mr. Mundorf's understanding of the need for KPS to adapt to retain quality teachers.
- Mr. Blessing closed by stating his appreciation for all that Mr. Mundorf is doing for Kearney Public Schools.

14.C. Closed Session

- Mr. Blessing made it clear that there would be no action taken tonight upon the return to either open session; the closed sessions would be for further evaluation and the beginning of contract negotiations, and any action taken on Mr. Mundorf's contract will take place at the next board meeting.
- The Board moved to closed session for the purpose of conducting a performance evaluation of the Superintendent, and to prevent needless injury to the reputation of the person, and if the person has not requested a hearing at 7:28 PM.

Move to enter closed session for the purpose of conducting a performance evaluation of the Superintendent, and to prevent needless injury to the reputation of the person, and if the person has not requested a hearing. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy

Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

14.D. Return to Open Session

- The Board returned to open session at 7:53 PM.

Move to return to open session. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

14.E. Closed Session

- The Board moved to closed session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in regard to the Superintendent's contract negotiations for the 2024-2025 school year at 7:55 PM.

Move to enter closed session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in regard to the Superintendent's contract negotiations for the 2024-2025 school year. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

14.F. Return to Open Session

- The Board returned to open session at 8:56 PM.

Move to return to open session. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

15. Next Meeting

- The next regular meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education will be held on December 11, 2023 at 5:30 P.M. in the Staff Development Room in the Administration Building at 320 West 24th St, Kearney, NE 68845.

16. Adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Move to adjourn the meeting. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Paul Hazard: Absent, Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy

Gifford: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

Notice of Meeting

This meeting was publicized in the Kearney Hub on November 9, 2023; radio stations KGFW and KKPR; and KSNB and KHGI T.V.

Dave Brandt, Secretary