

Regular Monthly Meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education
Kearney Public Schools Board of Education
Monday, December 11, 2023 at 5:30 PM
2nd Floor Staff Development Room, Administration Building
320 W 24th St
Kearney, NE 68845

1. Routine Business

1.A. Holiday Music Provided by Central Elementary Under the Direction of Kandi Stelling

2. Call to Order

President Blessing called the meeting to order at 5:41 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 5:41 PM.

Drew Blessing: Present

Dave Brandt: Present

Steve Gaasch: Present

Kathy Gifford: Present

Paul Hazard: Present

John Icenogle: Present

5.A. Excuse Absent Board Member

6. Approval of the Agenda

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

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

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

7. Recognitions - None

8. Presentations

8.A. Annual "State of the Schools" Report

- Dr. Dan Endorf cited the implementation, over twenty years ago, of the No Child Left Behind federal law and how it has affected what the state of Nebraska now has as its system of accountability for schools. This system is known as AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality System, Today and Tomorrow). Currently, schools and districts are classified as excellent, great, good, or needs support to improve. Kearney Public Schools, as a district, is classified as great. Dr. Endorf presented a list of the

KPS schools and how they are currently classified. He made special note of Bryant Elementary and Horizon Middle School and their great strides of improvement to achieve excellent status. He stated that Kearney High School was just short of achieving a great classification but noted that their ACT scores have improved significantly.

- Mrs. Paider spoke about the tiered system of school support and compared the results of the 2021-22 school year with the 2022-23 school year noting that overall there have been great gains across all schools.
- Mr. Edwards spoke about the comparison of Kearney High School to other peer districts and stressed the fact that Kearney High has a graduation rate of 93% due to all the hard work of Jeff Ganz and Jason Owens and their teams at Kearney High and the Hanny Arram Center. He also stated that he feels that the Hanny Arram Center has boosted our graduation rate. He presented a comparison of ACT scores for KHS with their peers and with the state, boasting improvements in English, Math and Science. He noted attendance as an area that needs improvement and work is being done to make change in this area. Mr. Edwards cited the work of Ty Swarm and Jason Owens in making sure that every student takes the test and makes an effort to do their best. At the middle school level, students take the NSCAS and a comparison was shown between KPS middle school students and the state average; KPS scoring well above the state average. He noted the work of Amber Lewis and Mark Johnson and their teams at the middle school level for all of these improvements, as well as the support of the Board.
- Mrs. Paider spoke about the NSCAS scores for grades 3-5 and also presented a comparison between KPS and the state, in which KPS scored higher in all areas. She attributed all of this growth to the work of the administration, teachers and paras in the buildings.
- Dr. Endorf stated that brainstorming has begun on targeted improvement at Horizon Middle School in the areas of EL and special education.
- Mr. Brandt asked if the information in the comparisons were benchmark scores or if they were comparisons to other years.
- Dr. Endorf stated that a +1 rating can be achieved if there is tremendous growth, but ultimately, the results come down to the scale scores on the NSCAS and the ACT.
- Mr. Hazard asked if the comparison to the other schools listed in the presentation were our array schools.
- Dr. Endorf clarified that the schools listed were non-metro class A schools, except for Elkhorn and not our array schools.
- Mr. Hazard asked how many students take zeros on the ACT.
- Dr. Endorf stated that there were 3, which was 27 less than the year before.
- Mrs. Gifford asked for clarification on the CSI (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) status of Horizon Middle School in the areas of EL and special education.
- Dr. Endorf stated that it comes down to the fact that HMS, in these areas, has not shown enough growth over the years to be moved out of this category.
- Dr. Loofe summarized the budget information, noting that KPS ranks between the 5th and 7th lowest spending school district in the state, which is due to maximization of resources and great support from the community.

- Mr. Blessing stated that the audit was reviewed (by the auditor) in a committee meeting so that the Board could better understand it.

9. Public Participation/Comment

- JD Carson spoke about his recent resignation as coach of the Kearney High School girls basketball team. He stated that he had been a coach at KHS for the last 16 years. JD noted that in communicating with others about his story the prevailing theme has been described as a tactical witch hunt. He cited his reason for coming before the Board this evening as remaining true to his core values in protection of his students, players, fellow coaches, and his own children and family as well. JD stated that all coaches in the district are terrified that they will not be able to be themselves, that no one has their backs, and that they might be next. He urged the Board to listen to the facts that are presented tonight and to hold the administration accountable.
- Nicole Straka spoke to the Board about the accusation that her 17-year-old daughter was in an inappropriate relationship with her basketball coach. She voiced her concern for her own daughter's well-being as well as all the girls who were questioned in regard to this matter. Nicole stated that she felt that information was obtained by the administration's use of repeated, leading questions which included the use of her daughter's name specifically. As a result, she feels that all players, including her daughter, and coach Carson have suffered severe damage, anxiety and stress. Nicole referenced her email to the Board which details her requests for an unbiased investigation and the opportunity to meet with the designated committee or person.
- Missy Hatcher expressed her concern about the way in which her daughter was questioned in regard to the investigation of an inappropriate relationship between a fellow player and their coach. She inquired as to why she, as a parent, and other parents were not called to sit in during the questioning of their children, noting that policy does not require this, but in this case, was it warranted. She requested that information obtained from the students not be used against their coach due to the manner in which it was obtained. She asked that someone be held accountable for the mismanagement of this situation.
- Melissa Franzen stated concern for her daughter, who is a player on the Kearney High School girls basketball team, citing the lack of transparency and communication between KPS administration and parents in this incident. She stated that the handling of this situation will be one of the reasons that KPS will have trouble filling teacher openings. She voiced concern about the timing of these accusations coming forward and questioned the motives of those bringing the information forward. She questioned the way in which the information was gathered, its accuracy and whether administration acted hastily. Melissa asked the Board to provide insight on the policy for holding someone accountable in a situation like this, one that has forever changed the lives of all involved.
- Roz Sheldon stated that she has come before the Board today as a concerned community member, both as a parent and as a professional. She questioned the unfounded allegations, inappropriate, leading questions and the appearance of a forced resignation of a respected coach. She stressed that she feels that it is important for staff to adhere to policies and procedures for the protection and trust of students and staff. She noted that she feels that the girls basketball team is owed an apology and genuine understanding that

this issue was handled improperly. Roz urged the Board to investigate this issue and to take action.

- Karisa Province stated that she has seen a number of issues mishandled at Kearney High School in her time here, citing that in none of these instances was a coach fired or asked to resign. She expressed her concern about what seemed to be a pronouncement of guilt of the coach and young lady involved which has soiled their reputations. Karisa voiced her uneasiness about the number of issues (citing other additional issues) that have been mishandled and the perceived precedent that KPS is setting that will allow disgruntled parents to make any accusation they choose.
- Brooke Ritter spoke about her insistence that the Board should write a curation policy for books in the KPS libraries in which there is no promotion of rape and pedophilia to our students. She asked for the reinstatement of the policy that would allow the public to review materials and then challenge the appropriateness of them. She stressed her point that, ultimately, the Board is responsible for affecting change in this area and for holding staff accountable for what is placed in the school libraries. Brooke spoke about the perversion that she believes is available for children to see and read as they choose in the school libraries. She stated that if the Board was not willing to do their job and follow what their constituents want, then they should step down.
- Bradley Rodgers spoke about his history in education and that he is a Kearney High School alum himself. He stated that "you all are being paid for common sense and judgment" and questioned whether they were using it. He cited a number of other quotes from his past professionally and in his history in education, one of which was "do your job" and concluded by questioning whether everyone was doing their job.

10. Board Reports

10.A. Follow-up Report from Attendees of the 2023 NASB Annual State Education Conference

- Mr. Brandt said that he attended the session regarding the shortage of teachers and administrators and the fact that there are fewer students entering college that are pursuing the field of education. Ideas that UNL, ESU and Milford have been working on were brought forward, and he noted that UNK has been doing some similar things. He felt that there were some ideas that could be considered here, but noted that programs that we already have here, such as the ASCEND program and the work being done at KHS with Educators Rising, are good programs that could be made even better and more highly promoted, in turn making the future brighter for education.
- Mrs. Gifford noted that she listened to a keynote speaker that she found to be very inspiring, and one of her main takeaways was the emphasis on focusing on where you can make the biggest difference. She also attended the State School Board session, where there was talk of streamlining NSCAS testing for students, which would decrease the amount of classroom time spent testing. In this session, there was also talk of NDE eliminating one of the Praxis tests to help combat the teacher shortage, noting that teachers would still be tested on their content area, but they would not be required to take the all-subject-area test. She said another change that was discussed was in regard to accommodating military families that have to move from state to state, making it easier to become certified to continue teaching wherever they are. Kathy also

attended the session, which focused on educating children from birth to 5 years old and the importance of funding for this stage of education. She noted her appreciation that people are recognizing the importance of this time in a child's development.

- Mr. Icenogle stated that he attended a couple legal sessions in which one topic was about boards protecting themselves, how agendas are drafted, and public participation. He expressed his wish that some of the people who had exited after tonight's public participation had remained to hear that the Board is not required to have public participation every month. This is a courtesy that the KPS Board has always prided itself on extending in an effort to be transparent with the community. He noted that he also attended the session regarding the education of children, from birth to 5 years old, in which it was mentioned that daycare and preschool may be provided through schools for staff and the community. This was taken a step further in that tuition was provided for staff members in an effort to retain quality teachers. This has actually been done in some of the small schools with the help of community partners and businesses. He said that he felt like this was an avenue worth exploring at KPS. John attended another session where there was talk of new legislation that may be coming in regard to the student dress code. This new policy would require the administration to contact the parent before a student can be asked to remove or change inappropriate clothing. Staff would only be allowed to confront students during non-classroom time, between classes, lunch, etc, about dress code issues.
- Mr. Mundorf stated that he sits on the Nebraska Association of School Administrators Executive Board, so he attended that meeting on Wednesday. Some topics discussed were as follows:
 - Epic Tax Initiative - which would require the move to a consumption tax and eliminate all other tax forms.
 - Parent notification legislation - which would require teachers to post any changes made to their lesson plans within two hours of making the change. It would also give parents more access to the classroom, watching the teacher teach. He noted that this may or may not be the best way to maintain teachers in a teacher shortage.
 - Transgender athletic participation and the Safe Sports Act
- Mr. Mundorf also attended a presentation by Millard Public Schools regarding different things that they are doing to help with the teacher shortage. One example is paying (\$4,000) student teachers while they are teaching and they also do a remote teacher workday. Mr. Mundorf noted his attendance at the sessions on Board and Community Culture in Challenging Times; and also How Much Can I Really Know (how much school boards should be involved in personnel); and one in regard to legal updates in athletics, all of which were informative. He thanked the Board for allowing him and Dr. Loofe to attend the conference alongside Board members and take advantage of the opportunity to learn and be involved with other leaders around the state.
- Dr. Loofe, who is a member, attended the Nebraska Association of School Business Officials session. His main takeaway from this was that the majority of schools fear that there will be a 3% hard cap. It was noted that, during discussions with other schools (specifically those in our array) in regard to their negotiations, North Platte has settled at 3.21% for the upcoming year, and then they did a two-year contract, settling

on 2.95% in year two. He stated that Grand Island has made the decision to add \$950 to their base salary. Dr. Loofe also led a session called Student Voices in which six bright students were asked a series of questions and then given time to answer them before opening the discussion up to a group of board members and superintendents to ask them questions as to the state of the schools in their community. He noted his pride that one of our own, Mitchell Brandt, was a part of this group and represented KPS and the community well.

11. Consent Agenda

Move to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, as presented. This motion, made by Dave Brandt and seconded by Paul Hazard, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

11.A. Approval of Minutes of the November 13, 2023 Regular Meeting and the December 6, 2023 Committee of the Whole Meeting

11.B. Approval of the December 2023 Claims

11.C. Approval of the December 2023 Financial Reports

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

11.E. Set the Date for the January Special, Public Retreat Meeting of the Board of Education as January 29, 2024, 6:00-9:00 PM, in the Staff Development Room, Administration Building, 320 W 24th St, Kearney, NE

11.F. Approval of the KHS FFA Missouri Welding Institute, 14th Annual Welding Competition Trip to Nevada, Missouri, January 24-25, 2024, with no direct costs incurred by the school district

12. Regular Agenda - Personnel

12.A. Acceptance of Resignations

Move to accept, with regret, the following resignations: Ross Berggren, math teacher at Kearney High School; Megan Pahl, 1st grade teacher at Kenwood Elementary School; and Christopher Smithell, orchestra teacher at Kearney High School, effective the end of the 2023-2024 school year. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.
Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

12.B. Approval of the Employment of Certificated Staff

- Mr. Blessing stated that it was good to be securing these positions well in advance of the next school year.

Move to approve the employment of Shawna Reger, MA, Step 14, 1.0 FTE first-grade teacher at Central Elementary School and Jacqueline Kalkwarf, BA, Step 3, 1.0 FTE

business/computer teacher at Horizon Middle School, both pending certification, and Madison High, BA+18, Step 10, 1.0 FTE 6th grade math teacher at Horizon Middle School, for the 2024-2025 school year. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Dave Brandt, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

12.C. Approval of Administrative Employment Recommendation

Move to employ Michelle Dutcher as the Principal of Kenwood Elementary School for the 2024-2025 school year. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by Paul Hazard, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

13. Regular Agenda - Business - None

14. Regular Agenda - Miscellaneous

14.A. Closed Session

- Mr. Blessing made it clear that upon returning to open session the Board would be taking action on Mr. Mundorf's contract.
- 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 7:08 PM.

Move 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. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

14.B. Return to Open Session

- The Board returned to open session at 7:21 PM.

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

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

14.C. Discuss, Consider and Take Possible Action on the Superintendent's Contract Commencing July 1, 2024

Move that the Board should and does hereby approve the contract for the Superintendent of Schools, Jason Mundorf, a copy of which is incorporated herein by this reference and

maintained in the records of the School District, and authorizes and directs the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract of employment on behalf of the School District, and cause such contract to be posted on the School District's website, along with a reasonable estimate and description of all current and future costs to the School District that will be incurred as a result of said contact, pursuant to the Superintendent Pay Transparency Act, Nebraska Revised Statutes 79-2401 to 79-2405. This motion, made by Kathy Gifford and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

14.D. Closed Session

- The Board moved to closed session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in regard to negotiations for the 2024-2025 school year at 7:25 PM.

Move to closed session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in regard to negotiations for the 2024-2025 school year. This motion, made by Dave Brandt and seconded by John Icenogle, Passed.

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

14.E. Return to Open Session

- The Board returned to open session at 8:51 PM.

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

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

15. Next Meeting

- The next regular meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education will be held on January 8, 2024 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 8:53 PM.

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

Drew Blessing: Yea, Dave Brandt: Yea, Steve Gaasch: Yea, Kathy Gifford: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Notice of Meeting

This meeting was publicized in the Kearney Hub on December 7, 2023; radio stations KGFW and KKPR; and KSNB and KHGI T.V.

Dave Brandt, Secretary