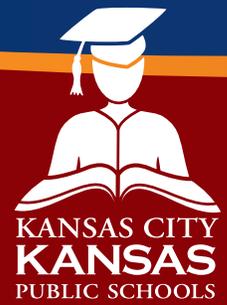


EDUCATION CONNECTION



NEWS FROM THE KANSAS CITY, KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FALL 2013

BACK TO SCHOOL FOR KCKPS STUDENTS

SPARK GRANT INCREASES PRESCHOOL OFFERINGS

STUDENTS TO "BATTLE" BY READING

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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Cynthia Lane
Superintendent of Schools

Welcome to the second edition of *Education Connection*, a newsmagazine designed to inform our community about the activities and accomplishments of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) as we strive to become one of the top 10 school districts in the nation. In each edition, readers can

expect to learn about the various programs and initiatives going on in our schools.

By design, we do things differently in KCKPS. We know that our students represent the teachers, musicians, doctors, inventors, artists, plumbers, entrepreneurs, electricians, chefs, and, perhaps, presidents of the future. Every day, we see the tremendous capabilities and talents emerging from our students, who are ready to be empowered, encouraged, and inspired. There is no doubt that our uniquely diverse school district has and will continue to take bold steps to propel our students forward.

These bold steps include implementing a college and career preparatory curriculum (also known as the Common Core, see page 11). Our singular goal is that “each student will exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society, and at every level performance is on-track and on-time for success.” Reaching our goal, it will be evident that our students have a solid academic foundation, anchored by strong literacy skills, and will be prepared for their professions.

At PreK and Elementary

KCKPS is working with urgency to prepare students for their rapidly changing futures. Enter our preschools and you will find four-year-olds learning to read, write and illustrate simple stories. These youngsters are learning basic math and science concepts through hands-on experiences and activities. Classroom libraries fill our elementary classrooms to promote massive amounts of reading. Our kids are writing about what they are reading, discussing books and authors’ points of view, making connections to their own experiences, and taking positions in argumentative writing. Every classroom teacher crafts experiences so students learn to reason, develop a love of science and discover that mathematical thinking is empowering.

At the Secondary Level

Middle school students are delving deeply into complex texts, are engaging in technical reading and writing, and

are immersed in activities that require the use of evidence to justify responses. Teachers are masterfully facilitating activities that require students to work together, defend their ideas, and solve real world problems as a team. Stepping into any one of our five high schools, you will find our students challenged with assignments that require application of the concepts, not just memorizing facts for a test. All students are expected to successfully complete higher-level math classes and career and technical education courses along a specific career pathway, and participate in internships. All of these actions are purposefully crafted so our students are fully prepared for their futures.

College and Career Readiness

I encourage you to talk with our teachers and staff about what we are doing to support our students to be on-track and on-time for success. I anticipate you will learn that the district is committed to early childhood education, literacy (reading, writing, thinking, speaking) and early college and career experiences. Staff will likely share that we focus on grade level performance and then stretch our students to exceed grade level and be on-track with skills needed for college and careers. You will learn that KCKPS is among a small number school districts in the nation that expect our students to achieve college readiness benchmarks on measures like the ACT-EXPLORE (8th and 9th grade), ACT-PLAN (10th grade), and ACT (11th and 12th grades) and demonstrate readiness for employment on measures like the “WorkKeys” employability assessment.

Preparing Students for Their Futures

Our actions today are designed to provide a world-class education for our kids. We know the future holds promise for those who are prepared. What is certain is that we can’t take the American dream for granted. Earning a high school diploma is critical BUT it’s not enough to make a livable wage. Reaching the middle class lifestyle more often than not requires credentials beyond a high school diploma. Employers are looking for candidates with industry recognized certifications, and often expect at least an associate’s degree, along with evidence of work readiness or employability skills.

We are cultivating partnerships to promote our students graduating from high school with associate’s degrees, technical certifications, completed internships, or the foundation for their own small business. It’s exciting, and more than ever requires the support of families, our community and businesses to make these bold actions a reality for all students. Our students will meet our expectations. Join us as we “Inspire Excellence: Every Grownup, Every Child, Every Day.”

Check out Dr. Cynthia Lane’s
blog, “It’s Up to Us” at
blog.kckps.org

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KCKPS-TV Has Moved from Channel 18 to 98.18

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools' television network, KCKPS-TV, has switched channels. It has been moved from channel 18 to channel 98.18 through Time Warner Cable. This move allows the network to be transmitted in a digital format.

KCKPS-TV is only available to Time Warner customers who reside in Wyandotte County. In the coming months, the district will be working on a plan to broadcast the network through Google Fiber as well. Remember that the network is streamed 24-7 through the district's website, www.kckps.org (click on KCKPS-TV on the homepage).

Education Connection is a quarterly newsmagazine of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS). Editorial copy and photography are created by the KCKPS Communications Department and produced by NPG Printing. To receive a copy of the magazine, call (913) 279-2242. A Spanish translation of the stories included in *Education Connection* is available on the district's website at <http://kckps.cloudaccess.net/community/education-connection.html>.

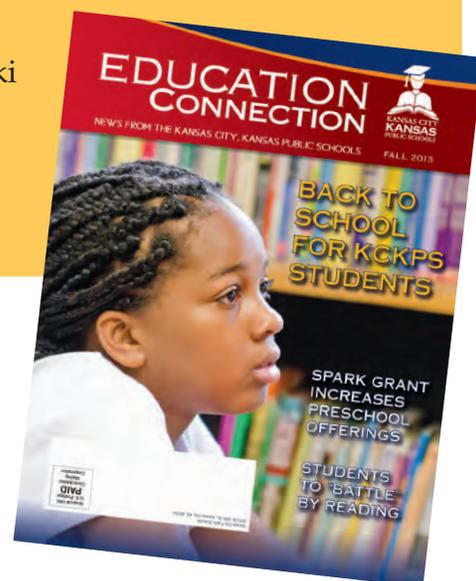
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CELEBRATING PUBLIC EDUCATION . . .

AND THE TALENTED PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT POSSIBLE

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve as the president of the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education. Our Board is proud of the work we have accomplished to date, and committed to the goal of becoming one of the top 10 school districts in the nation. The story of our transformation echoes the transformation that is happening in this community, and none of it would have been possible without the dedication of our talented staff, and this wonderful community.

This year, we celebrate American Education Week November 18-22, 2013. This is a special time and opportunity for us to celebrate public education, and to honor the individuals and groups who are making a difference in ensuring that every child receives a quality education.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to thank:

- Our Superintendent, Dr. Cynthia Lane, for her strong leadership and guidance to staff, and her continual push for academic excellence.
- District administrators, who work to implement the Board's vision, and manage all of the details of educating more than 20,000 students a day.
- All of our accomplishments are based on what happens in schools, and so we offer a huge thank-you to teachers, support staff and school administrators. You are the heart and soul of this organization, and we could not do what we do without you.
- There are so many people who work in "support" functions in the district, including bus drivers and Transportation staff, custodians and Shop staff, campus officers, Central Office staff, Nutritional Services workers and many others. The rest of us stand on your shoulders, and we really appreciate you.

- We are privileged to work shoulder-to-shoulder with an outstanding public library staff, who are working hard to create a model 21st century library.
- This school district is a community institution, and it flourishes because of strong community support. We especially appreciate all of the churches and community organizations that have been faithful in supporting our students, families and schools.
- Parents, thank you for believing in us, believing in your children, and working together with us to support their achievement.
- And finally, to our students, everything we do, we do it all for you. We so want you to be able to dream big dreams, and work hard to get the skills you need to make those dreams come true. We are counting on you to change the world.



Dr. Evelyn Hill
KCK Board of Education President

2013-2014 DISTRICT CALENDAR (SECOND QUARTER)

November

- 12 Board of Education Meeting
- 26 Board of Education Meeting
- 27-29 Holiday / Administrative Offices Closed

December

- 10 Board of Education Meeting
- 19 Last Day of Second Quarter
- 20 ½ Day Records Prep, ½ Day Inservice
- 23-31 Winter Break
- 23-25 Administrative Offices Closed
- 31 Administrative Offices Closed

January

- 1-2 Administrative Offices Closed
- 1-3 Winter Break
- 6 Classes Resume
- 14 Board of Education Meeting
- 20 Holiday / Administrative Offices Closed
- 28 Board of Education Meeting

November 2013

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2013

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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	[19]	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January 2014

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

The full district calendar is accessible from the homepage of the website, www.kckps.org (click on "calendars").

SPARK GRANT ENHANCES PRESCHOOL



Damica Mitchell, kindergarten teacher at New Chelsea Elementary School, started her school year early by hosting 19 students for the new Kick Off to Kindergarten program. She worked with students to help them learn to write their names, identify colors and to understand the social and emotional skills they need to get the school year off to a good start.

School began early for many incoming kindergartners in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) this fall. The students were part of a new program that helped them gain some social, emotional and basic academic skills to “kick off” their new school experience.

“Kick Off to Kindergarten” was held at New Chelsea Elementary and M.E. Pearson Elementary schools. The 10-day program was open to children entering kindergarten in KCKPS who had no preschool experience. A total of 72 students attended.

“Our goal is to have our students enter kindergarten ‘school ready’ but for children who have had no preschool experience, this isn’t always possible. So we launched this program to introduce them to the school experience,” said Marylee Battaglia, preschool coordinator.

Academic lessons included, for example, learning colors and writing their names. But social and emotional lessons were an equally important part of their everyday routine. The students learned to raise their hands, how to line up, how to sit crisscross applesauce in a reading circle, and how to listen when someone else is talking.

“It was wonderful because it gave the kids who will be in my kindergarten class, a head start to get ready for the year,” said Danica Mitchell, kindergarten teacher at New Chelsea.

SPARK Grant

Kick Off to Kindergarten was one of the many new early childhood offerings made possible this year through the \$2.9 million Project SPARK grant (Successful Partnerships to Assure



OFFERINGS

Readiness for Kindergarten). The block grant from the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund provides for the establishment and enhancement of early childhood services to at-risk children, from birth through age five. In all, the grant has allowed the district to expand its early childhood programs to reach an estimated 630 additional students. In addition to the new Kindergarten Kick Off program, the grant has allowed the district to:

- Establish four new KCKPS preschool sites. They are at M.E. Pearson Elementary, Silver City Elementary, T.A. Edison Elementary and the Quindaro Community Center.
- Collaborate with United Way and The Family Conservancy to provide services

“ New Chelsea absolutely LOVED hosting the Kick Off to kindergarten program. Both instructors, Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Mejia, thoroughly enjoyed being able to facilitate activities that front-loaded students with the social, emotional, and academic foundations to enter the first weeks of kindergarten with some tools in their ‘tool box.’ ”

– Dominic Flora
Principal at New Chelsea Elementary School

to children 0-5 in community-based learning environments in the Harmon and Wyandotte clusters.

- Expand the Parents as Teachers program to reach students up through age 5 (previously the program only served students up through age 3).
- Hire an additional mentor specialist for the Head Start program to expand reach in this area.

Early Childhood History

Since the district established its early childhood program in 1997, it has had a history of tremendous growth. In the year 2000, KCKPS

was serving approximately 225 students. At the start of the 2012-2013 school year, it had grown to accommodate 570 at-risk students and 240 special education preschoolers. With the additional reach of 630 through

this grant, more than 1,400 children will be impacted.

The grant will run through December 2013 with the option of a two-year renewal.



NEW TURF FIELD INSTALLED AT ART LAWRENCE STADIUM

J.C. Harmon High School has a new, all-weather field at its Art Lawrence Stadium complex. Installation of the turf field took place over the summer and was completed in late August.

The field is the first of its kind in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. It measures 100,875 square-feet and is made of Astro-turf synthetic turf. It is surrounded by a new structural spray track surface. New long jump runways and sand pits

were also installed. The project was paid for with Capital Outlay funds (school district funds that can only be used for improvement of grounds, construction, remodeling, etc.)

To celebrate the new field and reopen the stadium complex, J.C. Harmon staff and students hosted a grand opening event on August 30. The celebration included a ribbon cutting, followed by the annual purple and white games featuring the football team and boys' soccer team.



Classroom Libraries Coming to All Secondary Schools

122,000 BOOKS PURCHASED TO ENHANCE LITERACY



This school year, mini libraries are popping up in secondary classrooms across the district. It's one of the many literacy initiatives happening in the district.

Pallets full of books were delivered to all middle and high schools in the district in early September – thousands to each building. The books will be available to students in their Family Advocacy classroom. Students can read the books during independent reading time, and many staff will allow students to check them out and take them home.

In all, 611 classroom libraries are being created in 13 schools. That amounts to more than 122,000 books!

Because research shows that boys prefer nonfiction books, about 40 percent of the selections are nonfiction,

according to Sue Pierce, secondary curriculum coordinator. Plus, Common Core requires that students read more nonfiction books. There are also sets of books available, such as the *Divergent* trilogy by Veronica Roth, as well as books in Spanish.

Across the district, teachers are organizing their books and figuring out ways to get students more engaged in reading. For example, at Wyandotte High School, an online Classroom Library Collection site allows students to see the covers of the books available in the classroom. A synopsis of each is

also posted. In the coming weeks and months, more initiatives around reading and using the classroom libraries will be created.

Pierce said she hopes that staff will be able to show off their libraries during Family Advocacy Day in October. "Reading builds vocabulary and talking about reading increases comprehension. If our kids can read and write well, then the future is theirs to choose," Pierce said.

Students Are Preparing for “Battle” by Reading

It will be one massive book club gathering! On Saturday, November 9, approximately 400 students will gather to spend the morning taking part in friendly competitions about books!

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools will host its 2nd annual Battle of the Books competition beginning at 9 a.m. at F.L. Schlagle High School and the Central Office and Training Center. Battle of the Books is a voluntary incentive reading program for students in grades 4-12. Students read books from a selected list and come together to demonstrate their abilities and test their knowledge of the books they have completed through a series of competitions.

Groups of 8 to 10 students from all of the district’s elementary, middle and high schools will take part. The groups have been working with a “coach” at their schools, preparing for the competition by reading as many of the books from their provided lists as possible. At the competition, they will participate in four different events to answer questions about the books they have read. The events will include: a Family Feud style event with two teams;

a Super Challenge with three to four teams competing to answer questions; and a Relay where students race to a question area, and must answer the question correctly to complete their leg of the race. There will also be a Book Discussion segment at this year’s event.

First through third place winners will be named. First place winners will receive medals and second and third place teams will receive ribbons.

Students also will have a chance to enter a t-shirt design contest to design t-shirts for this year’s event.

Let the battle begin!



Battle of the Books 2012 Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

This is the design from the winning t-shirt in last year’s Battle of the Books competition. Community members are encouraged to watch for a new t-shirt design that students will be wearing this November.

Battle of the Books Selections

Here is a partial list of the books students are reading to compete in the “Battle of the Books.” Community members are encouraged to engage students in conversations about their reading.

- *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr
- *Reaching for the Moon* by Buzz Aldrin
- *Running Out of Time* by Margaret Peterson Haddix
- *No Talking* by Andrew Clements
- *A Long Way From Chicago* by Richard Peck
- *Skin I’m In* by Sharon Flake
- *Nothing But the Truth* by Avi
- *The Egypt Game* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder
- *Things We Couldn’t Say* by Diet Eman
- *Killing Lincoln* by Bill O’Reilly
- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk-Kidd
- *The Fault of Our Stars* by John Green

JOIN IN THE COMMUNITY-WIDE LITERACY CAMPAIGN

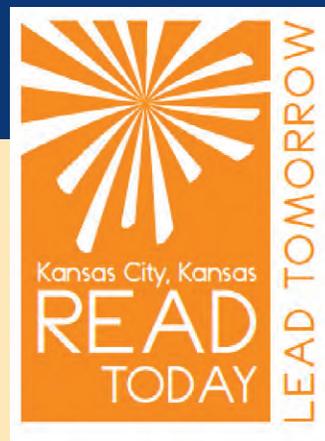
In September 2012, Kansas City, Kansas was honored as one of America’s Top 100 Communities for Young People. This award recognized both the community work to improve the lives of young people, as well as the improvement in academic outcomes for students in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

In response to the designation, community members came back together to deter-

mine what other steps might be taken in order to continue to strengthen the community’s work on behalf of young people. Out of these conversations, the decision was made that what young people need most is strong literacy skills. The group chose, “Read Today, Lead Tomorrow – KCK” as the slogan for a new community-wide literacy campaign.

Do you want to be involved in helping to support literacy

for all in Kansas City, Kansas? Visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/readtoday-kck. The site will be a place to share ideas, stories and information about literacy efforts in our community. And order a window cling with the new, “Read Today, Lead Tomorrow – KCK” logo! Clings can be ordered through the Facebook site or by calling Gerri Skaggs in the Communications Office, (913) 279-2242.



Back to School for KCKPS Students

Scenes from the first day of school



UNDERSTANDING THE COMMON CORE

WHAT PARENTS, STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW

“How do we know that our students are well prepared when they leave high school?” Across the country, some version of this question is being asked by parents, teachers, school board members, college and university faculty, the business community, politicians, and others. And perhaps even more importantly, these same people are asking: “How do we know that a student graduating in Kansas is as well prepared for success as a student in Colorado, or a student in China?”

Well, for too long, there were no good answers to these questions. Recently however, educators, business professionals, content experts, parents and state governors have come together in a partnership to answer these question, through the Common Core State Standards initiative. English Language Arts and Math Common Core State Standards have been developed and approved by 46 states, including Kansas. In Kansas, these standards are known as the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.

What Are the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards?

The Kansas College and Career Ready Standards are the Kansas version of the Common Core State Standards in math and English Language Arts. They describe what every U.S. student should know and be able to do in order to be prepared to be successful after high school, whether that student is going directly to college, the military or to the workplace. The Standards are broad, clear statements of the knowledge and skills students should master at every grade level from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Here in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS), teachers and school and district administrators have the task of determining how best to teach what is in the standards.

Why Is Having Common Standards Important?

First, having clear standards is important, so that teachers, students and parents all know what it is they should be working together to achieve. Before the Common Core Standards, different states came up with their own standards, so that what was expected of students in Kansas might be very different than what was expected in Massachusetts. Perhaps just as important in the global economy in which we live, students in Kansas might not be receiving the same kind of rigorous and challenging instruction as students in Finland or South Korea. This would leave our students unprepared to compete against their foreign counterparts.

This move to common, rigorous standards fits well with changes that have taken place in KCKPS over the past several years. Two years ago, the district was granted a waiver to allow it to stop administering the Kansas Assessment Test (the state test that students in grades 3-11 take each spring, in order to evaluate the performance of schools and districts.) The district asked for this waiver because it was finding (as were other districts across the state) that students who did well on the state exam (labeled “proficient”) were nevertheless still required to take remedial classes when they got to college. In other words, the state test told them that they were prepared, but colleges and universities said they weren’t.

Instead of the state exam, KCKPS received permission to administer the ACT exam to all students (typically, in most districts, only the students who are planning to go to college take the ACT.) The ACT test was developed to address the same rigorous standards as the Common Core, so KCKPS has been out front in adopting these more rigorous standards.



Preschoolers at the Earl Watson Jr. Early Childhood Center work on beginning letter sounds, with some fun props!

What Happens Next?

Because of the district’s decision to administer the ACT exam as its state accountability exam, students, teachers and administrators have had a head start on adapting to the new, more rigorous standards. Teachers and administrators have been hard at work changing both what they teach (the curriculum) and how they teach it. As indicated above, the Common Core Standards are more rigorous and demanding than what students have previously been expected to know and be able to do.

So, at least at the beginning, fewer students will perform at the highest level on tests aligned to these standards. However, teachers, administrators, students and parents will have a much more honest assessment of whether students are on track to be successful in college and careers. This will allow schools and teachers to

much better align their work to support students who are struggling.

Every good teacher knows that students live up or down to the expectations held for them. In KCKPS, teachers are holding all students to high expectations, and they will rise to meet the challenge.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

means an individual has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, and employability skills to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

THE PATH TO GOOD HEALTH

NOBLE PRENTIS STUDENTS START THEIR DAY WITH A QUARTER-MILE WALK



Before they hit the books each day, students at Noble Prentis Elementary School hit the trail – walking trail that is. They are taking advantage of the new walking trail that was constructed on the school grounds over the summer.

The quarter-mile trail, which winds around the school's soccer goals, has taken four years to see to fruition. Now that it's complete, it's being utilized to its fullest. Students who arrive at school early hit the trail to get some morning exercise (supervised by staff).

"Walking in the morning gets them moving and gets them in the practice of working exercise into their daily routine," said Principal Jim Poplau.

PE classes are using it during the school day. And in the evenings and on weekends, a steady stream of students and families can be seen walking and jogging on it.

The project was funded by a Sunflower Trails Foundation Grant secured by the Rosedale Development Association, and funds from the school's PTA. The cost was approximately \$4,800.

"One of the goals of this project was to promote healthy living and healthy habits," Poplau said. "There's no park in

this area and we don't have sidewalks. So this is a place for our students and families to come together to walk and get some exercise."

The trail also pays homage to 2nd grader Santos Arreola, who passed away two years ago from cancer. At that time the school community constructed a memorial garden in his honor, but they envisioned that someday, the garden could be surrounded by a trail that would bring people together to walk and get healthy.

While the project was a long time in the making, it is not yet complete. Poplau

would like to enhance the trail with exercise stations, such as areas to stretch, do pull ups, situps and more. He is looking for community partners to support the project. Poplau can be reached at (913) 627-5250.



JOIN US FOR THE 2013 REASONS TO BELIEVE CELEBRATION



Twelve distinguished graduates of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) will be celebrated for their career achievements and community involvement as they are inducted into the 11th Alumni Honor Roll of the *Reasons to Believe* program. The induction ceremony and celebration will take place Thursday, November 21 on the first floor of the KCKPS Central Office and Training Center, 2010 N. 59th St. The event begins at 7 p.m. and is open to the public.

The *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll annually showcases the high caliber of graduates that the district produces, and brings a select group of them together with staff, students, community members, colleagues and key leaders for a night of honors.

Members of the 2013 *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll are:

- **Anna Lu Brune**, retired from the Wyandotte County Treasurer's Office, Washington High School Class of 1948
- **Larry Drew**, head coach for the Milwaukee Bucks of the National Basketball Association, Wyandotte High School Class of 1976
- **Niki Economy**, retired KCKPS teacher, Wyandotte High School Class of 1955
- **Joni Franklin**, attorney, Washington High School Class of 1989
- **Michael Harrity**, an associate athletics director at the University of Notre Dame, Sumner Academy of Arts and Science Class of 1995
- **Kevin Harvey**, education consultant/US Army, J.C. Harmon High School Class of 1983
- **Herman T. Jones, II**, Shawnee County sheriff, Wyandotte High School Class of 1976
- **Keith Mark**, attorney, Washington High School Class of 1978
- **Linda Pendleton**, retired Board of Education member/realtor, Argentine High School Class of 1964
- **Linnie Poke**, KCKPS educator/principal, Sumner High School Class of 1974
- **Janelle Monae Robinson**, professional musician/producer, F.L. Schlagle High School Class of 2001
- **Megan Randle-Robinson**, critical care nurse and nursing instructor, Washington High School Class of 1999

Reasons to Believe was established in 2002 to generate pride and celebrate the progress being made throughout the district. As part of the program, nominations are sought for the *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll, which spotlights successful alumni to encourage and inspire today's students. The nominations are reviewed by a panel of judges that includes members of the Board of Education, *Reasons to Believe* Steering Committee, students, business leaders, and a former Alumni Honor Roll recipient.

To review past honor roll classes or to learn more about the program, go to www.kckps.org/recognition/alumni.



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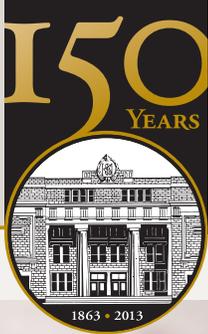
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