How We Overcame: The Kansas City Story

Dr. Mark Bedell
Superintendent
The issues that have kept me up many nights are not the ones I can solve as superintendent.

I’m talking about racism, injustice, a lack of affordable housing, inequitable economic development practices, violence and other systemic issues that cannot be solved in our classrooms alone.

– Dr. Mark Bedell (June 9, 2022)
Outgoing Superintendent of Kansas City Public Schools
Systemic racism and its legacy in Kansas City

- There is a longstanding legacy of racism as it relates to education in Kansas City
- Missouri maintained separate schools for African Americans until 1954
- Even after Brown v. Board of Education, racist housing policies kept African Americans out of schools in white neighborhoods
- This is the foundation KCPS is constantly working to dismantle

Kansas City Public Schools
Redlining and its impact across the country

• The J.C. Nichols Company in Kansas City was one of the first and highest profile organizations to use racially restrictive covenants, which influenced racial population patterns, nationally.

• Through the legacy of neighborhood covenants and redlining systemic racism was engineered into every facet of Kansas City.

Kansas City Public Schools
Evictions and Mobility

The zip codes where KCPS students and their families live have some of the highest eviction rates in the U.S.

Nearly 40 percent of the KCPS student population is considered “mobile”
Justice in the Schools, the KC Eviction Project & KC Tenants

Award-winning Justice in the Schools program

• Public and Subsidized Housing Issues
• Landlord/Tenant Law (Eviction Defense)
• Family Law and Guardianships
• Domestic Violence Protection
• Foreclosure Prevention
• Healthcare
• Food stamps, TANF, SSI and Medicaid
• Consumer Matters (Car loan issues, Bankruptcy, etc.)
• Denial of Unemployment Benefits

Kansas City Public Schools

KC Tenants: Four-Part Miniseries

“I was a homeless kid growing up. I was a ward of the state. I lived in different homes. I know the impact unstable housing can have on a kid and the frustration they show up with and how it’s an impediment to kids being able to reach their full academic potential.”

Mark Bedell

‘Today Kansas City made history’: City Council adopts tenants bill of rights

BY ALLISON KITE
DECEMBER 12, 2019 07:24 PM, UPDATED DECEMBER 12, 2019 09:29 PM
Kansas City Public Schools is ranked 17 among 5,600 school districts in the level of abated property tax revenue.

Abated from Kansas City Public Schools & charter schools in 2021.

From 2017 to 2020, the amount abated from Kansas City Public Schools and charter schools increased 60%.

$37M of abatements is equal to 23% of the current local property tax revenues that KCPS/charters collect ($160 Million). This is significantly higher than best practice recommends (no more than 10%).
“In the wake of the last month, I am sitting with how racism continues to fester in the culture, conversations, and policies relating to business and economic development practices in our city.

Frankly, I am exhausted with the development community pitting the city against the public entities that are doing the work of trying to give our students and their families access to the world they deserve.

This is systemic racism.” -Dr. Mark T. Bedell (June 23, 2020)

Kansas City, Missouri, Schools Superintendent Blasts Incentive Deal For Construction Company As 'Systemically Racist'

BlueScope Construction has already pulled $7 million in tax revenue away from schools and libraries and is asking for another $8.4 million in incentives to stay in Kansas City.

‘Years overdue’: Kansas City school leader again urges council to curb tax incentives
## Incentive impact: urban vs. suburban districts

### NET TAX ABATEMENTS BY DISTRICT PER STUDENT AND DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS (FY 18-19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Abatement Per Student</th>
<th>% FRL</th>
<th>% ELL or LEP</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Other Races</th>
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<td>56%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>8%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</table>

Source: FY18-19 GASB 77 Results; student enrollment MO DESE, Finance and Statistics Summary for Districts, 2018; student demographics from MO DESE, District Demographic Data, 2019

Net tax abatement = forgone or redirected tax revenue from City of KCMO or PIEA abatements, minus any PILOTS
The Kansas City Public Schools Board of Education affirms in our actions that each student in our school system can, will and shall learn, and that it is the responsibility of the school district to provide each student the necessary supports to achieve his or her highest potential.

Educational equity is the intentional allocation of resources, instruction, and opportunities according to need. We recognize that based on factors including but not limited to race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, national origin, language and socio-economic status, students may be deprived of equitable educational opportunities.

It is the commitment of the KCPS Board to foster a barrier-free environment where all students have equitable access to an excellent education within our schools. To achieve this, it is critical and necessary to understand and work to eliminate discriminatory practices, prejudices, and beliefs that result in fewer educational opportunities and persistent achievement gaps for particular demographic groups of students.

Toward this end, the KCPS Board holds itself and all KCPS staff accountable for building a culture of equity at all levels of our district in order to meet our responsibilities to the entirety of the students we serve.
Equity Audits: using data to identify disparities

**Gifted Students**
- Asian: 39 (7.12%)
- Hispanic: 224 (40.88%)
- White: 104 (16.6%)
- Black: 158 (26.83%)

**Ethnicity Breakdown**
- Asian 4%
- White 10.1%
- Hispanic 28%
- Black 5.32%

**Suspension Count by Ethnicity**
- Black: 4777
- Hispanic: 1273
- White: 1647
- Multi-racial: 610
- Asian: 502
- Pacific Islander: 162
- American Indian: 60
- Male: 9869

**Homeless Students**
- White: 0.15K (6.83%)
- Hispanic: 0.61K (28.39%)
- Black: 1.29K (59.39%)

**OSS Day Count**
- White: 634 (4.76%)
- Hispanic: 1723.6 (12.95%)
- Black: 10430.449 (78.38%)

**ISS Day Count**
- White: 478 (7.73%)
- Hispanic: 1106 (19.4%)
- Black: 4216 (66.38%)

Total of All Incidents: **17200**
The Student Code of Conduct

The KCPS Model

- All Principals Trained on Social & Emotional Learning Practices
- Teachers, Counselors, Support Staff Trained on Trauma and Restorative Discipline
- **Totally Transform the Student Code of Conduct**
- Increase the Number of School Counselors for Each School to Have a Full Time School Counselor
- Implement School Trauma Care Teams at Each School reviewing data responding to equity audit and Missouri Model Indicators
- Implement Restorative Practices Coordinators Districtwide through 4-year plan
- Security officers trained in Bias Training, De-escalation and mental health first aide
- Implement a comprehensive stakeholder support model for students, parents, and teachers
- Create a Supportive School Certification for Schools who implemented the Model with Fidelity

Kansas City Public Schools
Adult advocates

• K-5 students matched with a mentor scored 10 percent better than students with no mentor

• Students matched with mentors are less chronically absent than their peers without mentors

• In an end of the year survey, 95 percent of the K-5 students participating in a mentorship program said having a mentor made them feel special
Student growth scores highlight progress, not privilege, in Missouri schools

Most of Kansas City’s Faxon Elementary School students aren’t meeting state benchmarks. But it’s among the best in Missouri at helping them improve reading skills.

Gary Ritter, dean of Saint Louis University’s School of Education, argues that statistics measuring how much students know at a specific point in time have limited value when it comes to assessing school quality.

He said student growth is a better way to measure quality, because it shows what educators are adding to a student’s knowledge, rather than measuring how advanced students are when they arrive at school.

If you graph all Missouri schools based on test scores and family income, a pattern emerges. Students at schools with higher income families tend to score higher on tests.

Ritter thinks that’s an indication that point-in-time test scores are measuring students’ advantages rather than how much schools are teaching them.
Closing the gap

- KCPS students exceeded state expectations for English language arts and were on track to meet them in mathematics.
- KCPS is closing the achievement gap for African Americans faster than the state average.
- KCPS virtually eliminated the achievement gap for white students against the state average.
College and career

• Despite not offering AP prior to 2017, KCPS has built an Advanced Placement program from the ground up
• 80.35% of KCPS students who take International Baccalaureate exams score 4 or higher
• 723 KCPS students took AP, IB or dual credit courses in 2020-2021
• KCPS has quintupled the number of students scoring 3 or higher on AP exams, from 4.8% in 2018 to 23.3% in 2021
Hello,

I wanted to share with you before you say your farewell to everyone how much the middle college program dramatically changed my life.

I was a teen mom who dropped out of high school early and didn’t know where to start. I tried multiple GED programs with no success. I am a mother so time was of the essence as I had a full time job and not much down time in between.

I was able to jump in the middle college program with so many helping and encouraging hands ready to help me. I was able to get my diploma in 4 weeks which was a total god send for me as I was able to elevate my career.

I started with a passion of dentistry and with my diploma I was able to enter a training program and became a certified D.A as covid hit things changed and I walked through the doors of a data center in the ITAD business. Within 10 months I was promoted to lead of operations and ran a room with 16 people underneath me.

I gained confidence and much pride after graduating. I stayed at my last company for 2 years before getting the opportunity of being a IT project manager. I now have been listed on the honor role at JCCC and I cannot give enough thanks to all of you apart of this program.

I hope that every young person from whatever background who would like to pursue better things come across this program.

I’m looking forward to visiting Ms. McDonald’s class in august to share my story with all the young adults in the class. I joined in 2019 when I was 23 now 26 and thriving. I simply don’t know where I’d be if I hadn’t searched the internet and found an article about the middle college program. It truly is one of the greatest blessings I have received!

THANK YOU SO MUCH❤️
The KCPS 4-year graduation rate increased from 68.7 percent to 74.8 percent from 2016-2020. In 2021, the KCPS graduation rate was 78 percent.
KC public schools superintendent, longest serving in 5 decades, has a promise to keep
A 22-year journey

Los Angeles Times
Kansas City Schools Lose Accreditation
MAY 4, 2000 12 AM PT
KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Kansas City’s public school district has become the first in the nation to lose its accredited status by failing all Missouri’s performance standards, and could be abolished unless it improves, officials said Wednesday.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.
Kansas City Public Schools finally regains state accreditation. Here’s what that means
BY SARAH RITTER
UPDATED JANUARY 11, 2022 5:12 PM
Mark Bedell’s energy spurred change in Kansas City schools. I was his fan at ‘hello’

I remember covering an event at Central Academy of Excellence high school, where track and field star John Carlos — one of the two Black Olympians who’d famously thrust a fist in the air during the 1968 Olympic medal ceremony — was to speak to students. Bedell walked into the school’s library and students surrounded him, shaking his hand and hugging him, as if he was the celebrity. Bedell knew everyone’s name. They talked like friends who respected each other. I had never seen a superintendent do that. Most students don’t even know what their superintendent looks like.

He not only played the inside game, but he also knew how to get the attention of the world beyond the school walls. During his six years at the helm in KCPS, Bedell relentlessly promoted his district and bragged on his scholars and staff, because he knew of course that their successes were also his.

He strategized with local and state education leaders to protect schools from any threats to diminish public education. He told me once that he really wanted to see Kansas City voters support a school bond issue, because one hadn’t passed in the district since the 1960s. Maybe the next superintendent can get that done.
My statement on the departure of @kcpublicschools Superintendent Dr. Mark Bedell. I’ll miss him.

"One of the leading school administrators in the country, Dr. Mark Bedell has transformed Kansas City Public Schools, regaining accreditation for our schools, improving the lives of thousands of children in our city, and providing stability in the position unknown to generations of Kansas Citians. His belief in our children and their potential is unmatched and his leadership in relation to COVID and racial reckoning helped shepherd our city through tough times. More than anything, he is an exceptional father, husband, and teacher. Kansas City will miss him. I will miss him even more. I wish him well."

It’s no disrespect to anyone else but for me, there maybe 2-3 other people in the public servant space in KCMO that is even in his stratosphere as far as impact in my lifetime.

And I would make the argument that Bedell’s leadership had a bigger positive impact than quite a number of electeds and appointed local leaders. The work continues, I say to myself.

KC Star editorial board writes, “an argument can be made that Dr. Mark Bedell will go down as one of the best superintendents in Kansas City history.” Mark Bedell leaves impressive legacy as superintendent of Kansas City schools. @MASALeaders kansas.city.com/opinion/editor...
Central Early Head Start

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES
Resources

• “Building the Troost Wall” (Prof. Michael Wesch, 2017) - bit.ly/KCPS_TroostWall


• “Housing Segregation in Everything” (Gene Demby/NPR, 2018) - bit.ly/KCPS_HousingSegregation

• Complex Justice (Joshua M. Dunn/UNC Press, 2014) - bit.ly/KCPS_ComplexJustice

• Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development (Kevin Fox Gotham/SUNY Press, 2002) - bit.ly/KCPS_RaceRealEstate

• “The impact of tax incentives on Kansas City Public Schools and the need for incentive reform” - https://www.kcpublicschools.org/about/tax-incentives-kcps

• News headlines and articles pulled from: The Kansas City Star, the Los Angeles Times, NPR/KCUR 89.3-FM, The Beacon, Resolve Magazine and KCTV-5.

• Race Project KC (Johnson County Library, 2009) - https://www.raceprojectkc.com/