2026-2027

USD Budget Profile

USD #368 - Paola

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2026-2027 Budget – General Information
USD #368:

Introduction

Paola Unified School District #368 comprises 200 square miles almost entirely in Miami County, Kansas. The district has four schools, Cottonwood Elementary (prek-2), Sunflower Elementary (3-5), Paola Middle (6-8), and Paola High (9-12). The district is the sponsoring district for the East Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative, housed at the Hillsdale Learning Center, which comprises eight school districts. USD #368 hosts a Parents as Teachers Program and a member of the Greenbush Educational Service Center. A well-respected member of the Frontier League, USD #368 is a 4A district that excels in academics, activities, and athletics.

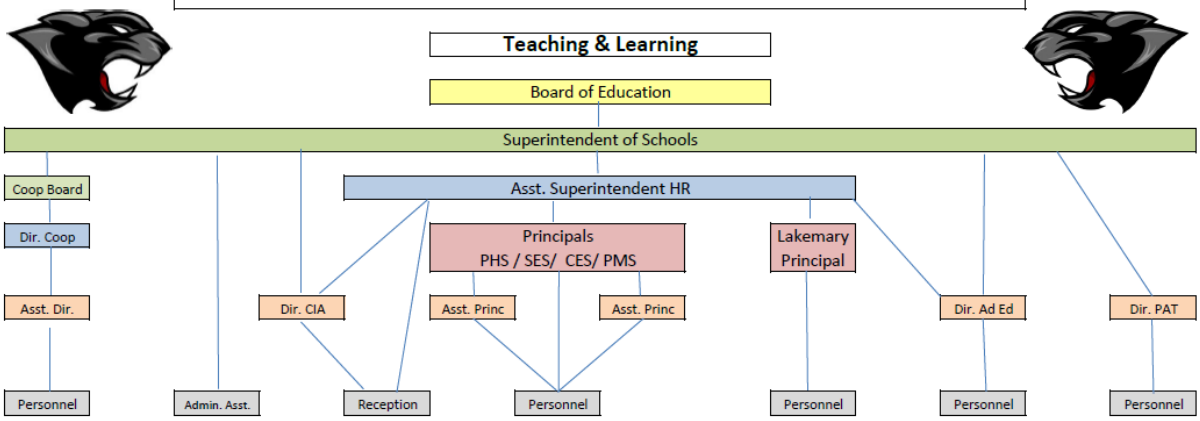
Board Members

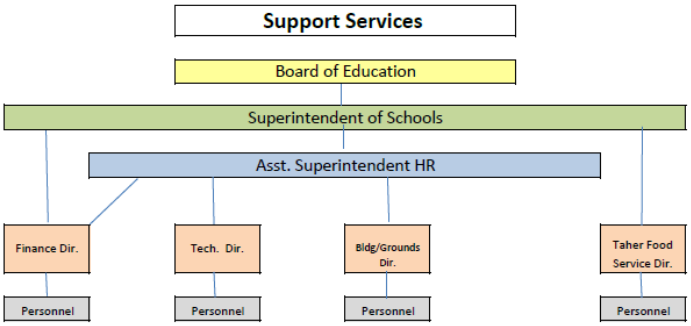
District #1	Shawn Miller	shawn_miller@usd368.org
District #2	Jamie Hall	Jamie_hall@usd368.org
District #3	Amanda Gerken	amanda_gerken@usd368.org
District #4	Mat Blackie	mat_blackie@usd368.org
District #5	Samantha Poetter Parshall	samantha_poetterparshall@usd368.org
District #6	Joel Conyers	joel_conyers@usd368.org
At-Large	Kristian Gerken	kristian_gerken@usd368.org

Key Staff

Superintendent	Matt Meek
Assistant Superintendent, HR	Justin Burchett
Director of Business & Finance/Clerk	Jimmy Hay
Director of CIA	Amy Wright
Director of East Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative	Kris Holt
Director of Buildings & Grounds	Scott Teagarden
Director of Technology	Jim Prothe
Board of Education Treasurer	Jenny Myers
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Deputy Clerk	Loralei Crum

PAOLA USD 368 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





The District's Accomplishments and Challenges

Paola USD 368

Strategic Plan

2021-2026

VISION: Ensuring Success for All Students

MISSION: The Paola School District mission is academic success and personal growth for every student.

BOARD OF EDUCATION GOALS

CURRICULUM

- Provide necessary supports and resources to allow students to be prepared to enter Kindergarten and feel socially and emotionally supported in and out of school.
- Utilize Individual Plans of Study to prepare students for graduation and post-secondary success.

BUDGET

- Effectively plan and budget to maintain strong academic curriculum for student learning while also balancing for the following:

⇒ Enrollment decline

⇒ Expanded learning opportunities funded by ESSER funding in years 2021-2024 to alleviate learning loss due to COVID-19.

FACILITIES

- Update facilities to match current and future needs of students including Career and Technical Education.

⇒ Gather feedback from the community, BOE, USD 368 staff, students, and other stakeholders to determine needs.

COMMUNICATION

- The district will effectively communicate with parents and community stakeholders at both the district and building levels.

⇒ Gather community feedback utilizing community scientific survey every three years.

⇒ Utilize social media, Panther Alerts, district website, and other community resources to disseminate information to students, parents, and the community.

- The district will partner with both City and County Government on projects to better the community of Paola and Miami County as a whole.

Accomplishments:

District staff and students remain committed to the mission of fostering academic success and personal growth for every student. This commitment is reflected through the continuous review and refinement of curriculum, instructional resources, and academic standards to ensure alignment with best practices and student needs. Our educators consistently seek opportunities to strengthen instruction, enhance programs, and improve student outcomes.

Key Success Indicators

- **2024–2025 Graduation Rate:** 100.0%
- **Five-Year Average Graduation Rate:** 97.0%
- **District ACT Average:** 19.3

Paola USD 368 continues to maintain full accreditation through the Kansas State Department of Education's Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) process. The district has also made significant progress in implementing the Science of Reading. All elementary teachers have completed Science of Reading training, and more than half have earned the Kansas Seal of Literacy. The remaining elementary, special education, and secondary English teachers are on track to earn their Seal of Literacy by the end of the current school year.

As illustrated in the following assessment data, Paola USD 368 continues to outperform the state average on nearly every Kansas state assessment. The only exception is seventh-grade mathematics, which remains an area of focused improvement.

Looking ahead, the district will begin updating its Strategic Plan during the fall of 2026, with implementation of the revised plan scheduled for January 2027. This process will ensure that the district's goals and priorities continue to align with the evolving needs of our students, staff, and community.

GRADE LEVEL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

ELA

BENCHMARK 1: AVERAGE SCALE SCORE COMPARISON

KAP scale scores range from a baseline of 400 to a maximum of 700. USD 368 outperformed the state average mean score across 100% of the tested grade levels.

GRADE LEVEL	USD 368 DISTRICT MEAN	KANSAS STATE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MARGIN
Grade 3	546	545	+1
Grade 4	554	543	+11
Grade 5	558	541	+17
Grade 6	537	532	+5
Grade 7	536	535	+1
Grade 8	543	534	+9
Grade 10	551	533	+18

AT OR ABOVE STATE AVERAGE IN ALL GRADE LEVELS

GRADE LEVEL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

MATH

BENCHMARK 1: AVERAGE SCALE SCORE COMPARISON

KAP scale scores reflect broad performance relative to grade standards. USD 368 outpaced the state average mean score in 6 out of 7 grade cohorts, trailing slightly by just 2 points in Grade 7.

GRADE LEVEL	USD 368 DISTRICT MEAN	KANSAS STATE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MARGIN
Grade 3	539	536	+3
Grade 4	552	539	+13
Grade 5	554	542	+12
Grade 6	540	537	+3
Grade 7	533	535	-2
Grade 8	543	538	+5
Grade 10	537	532	+5

6 out of the 7 grade levels were higher than the state average!

Only 7th GRADE was slighlty lower than the state average.

GRADE LEVEL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

SCIENCE

BENCHMARK 1: AVERAGE SCALE SCORE COMPARISON

KAP scale scores measure comprehensive knowledge of the Kansas Science Standards. USD 368 exceeded the state average mean score in both tested grade levels, highlighted by a massive 20-point lead in Grade 8.

GRADE LEVEL	USD 368 DISTRICT MEAN	KANSAS STATE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MARGIN
Grade 5	540	537	**+3**
Grade 8	546	526	**+20 Points**

ABOVE State Average in BOTH GRADE LEVELS

Challenges:

The district continues to face significant financial challenges as rising operational costs coincide with reduced state funding resulting from declining student enrollment. These fiscal pressures make it increasingly difficult to maintain competitive salaries and benefits while also meeting the growing costs of providing a high-quality educational program.

Recruiting and retaining qualified employees remains one of the district's greatest challenges. District leaders must carefully balance investments in employee compensation with the need to sustain a comprehensive benefits package that attracts and retains exceptional staff. The statewide teacher shortage continues to impact hiring, with some licensed positions remaining unfilled or being staffed by alternatively licensed educators. In addition, the district continues to experience vacancies in several classified positions, including paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and food service personnel, due to a limited applicant pool.

Student attendance also remains an area of continued focus. Although the district has successfully reduced its chronic absenteeism rate and continues to perform better than the state average, absenteeism remains higher than desired. When students are not consistently present in the classroom, instructional continuity is disrupted, making it more challenging for teachers to maximize student learning and academic achievement.

Supplemental Information for the Following Tables

1. Summary of Total Expenditures by Function (All Funds)
2. Summary of General Fund Expenditures by Function
3. Summary of Supplemental General Fund Expenditures by Function
4. Summary of General and Supplemental General Fund Expenditures by Function
5. Summary of Special Education Fund by Function
6. Instruction Expenditures (1000)
7. Student Support Expenditures (2100)
8. Instructional Support Expenditures (2200)
9. General Administration Expenditures (2300)
10. School Administration Expenditures (2400)
11. Central Services Expenditures (2500)
12. Operations and Maintenance Expenditures (2600)
13. Transportation Expenditures (2700)
14. Other Support Services Expenditures (2900)
15. Food Service Expenditures (3100)
16. Community Services Operations (3300)
17. Capital Improvements (4000)
18. Debt Services (5100)
19. Miscellaneous Information – Transfers (5200)
20. Miscellaneous Information Unencumbered Cash Balance by Fund
21. Reserve Funds Unencumbered Cash Balance
22. Other Information – Enrollment Information
23. Miscellaneous Information Mill Rates by Fund
24. Other Information – Assessed Valuation and Bonded Indebtedness

Note: FTE is the audited enrollment 9/20 and 2/20 (if applicable) and estimated for the budget year, which includes preschool-aged at-risk and virtual enrollment. Enrollment does not include non-funded preschool. Beginning 2017-2018, full-day Kindergarten is 1.0 FTE. Beginning 2021-2022, three-year-old at-risk students were funded. This information is used for calculating Amount Per Pupil for Sumexpen.xlsx and Budget At A Glance (BAG).

KSDE Website Information Available

K-12 Statistics (Building, District or State Totals) Report Generator:
https://datacentral.ksde.gov/report_gen.aspx

- Attendance / Enrollment Reports
- Staff Reports
- Graduates / Dropouts Reports
- Crime / Violence Reports

School Finance Reports (Data Central) website below:
https://datacentral.ksde.gov/default.aspx

- Assessed Valuation
- Cash Balances
- Headcount Enrollment
- Mill Levies
- Personnel (Certified/Non-Certified)
- Salary Reports

Kansas Building Report Card website below:
http://ksreportcard.ksde.gov/

- Attendance Rate
- Graduation Rate
- Dropout Rate
- School Violence
- Assessments
    - Reading
    - Mathematics
    - Writing
- Graduates Passing Adv. Science Courses
- Graduates Passing Adv. Math Courses

Accountability Reports website below:
https://datacentral.ksde.gov/accountability.aspx

- Performance Accountability Reports
- Financial Accountability Reports
- Longitudinal Achievement Reports