

For Immediate Release

National School Board Association's 2022 Magna Awards Grand Prize Winner is Topeka Public Schools PreK–12 Dual Language Program

Topeka, Kan. - The winners of the 28th annual Magna Awards program, sponsored by the National School Boards Association's flagship magazine, [American School Board Journal \(ASBJ\)](#), have been announced. This year, the Magna Awards recognized school districts and their leaders for their efforts to bring educational equity to their students. Topeka Public Schools (TPS) has been named a Grand Prize winner in the 5,000 to 20,000 student population category for the district's PreK-12 Dual Language Program. The district is home to 13,100 students and it is the only district in Kansas with a PreK-12 Dual Language Program.

"Topeka Public Schools is honored to have our Dual Language Program recognized on the national level," said Dr. Tiffany Anderson, Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools. "Our educators have worked hard to remove barriers for families and promote biliterate and bilingual scholars who graduate prepared to be globally competitive. As the only Prek-12 Dual Language Program in Kansas, this award also highlights Kansas as one of the most innovative states in the nation."

Research has established that the most efficient method of learning academic English is through a strong education in the native language. The Hispanic population in TPS has steadily increased every year since 2008. Currently, one in three TPS students identifies as Hispanic. The Pre-K to 12th-grade Dual Language Program, now in its 12th year of operation, integrates native English-speaking students with native Spanish-speaking students for academic instruction, which is presented in both languages.

Furthermore, the Dual Language Program contributes to the leveling of culture as it supports the preservation of language of origin, promotes culture, and helps individuals negotiate the struggles they face with transnational and cross-national identities.

TPS has seen growth across all grade levels from 2018 to 2020; in particular, there was 30% proficiency growth in our low-income, special education, and English Learner populations. TPS has also celebrated a 6% growth of exceeding standards in Math standards on our state assessments.

We look forward to continued accomplishments as the first cohort of students in dual language participate in the ACT, contribute to increased graduation rates, earn diploma seals of biliteracy, and experience postsecondary success.

As a Magna Awards Grand Prize winner, the district will be featured in the April issue of *American School Board Journal* and in a video that will be played at NSBA's Annual Conference in April in San Diego.

Dr. Pilar Mejía, Principal of Scott Dual Language Magnet Elementary School and the district's longest-serving dual language principal, and her husband, Dr. Aaron Kipp, General Director of Assessment & Demographics, will be presenting several education sessions at the NSBA Annual Conference on the topic of bilingual education and equity.

This is the district's fifth Magna Award, three of which have been gained under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Tiffany Anderson. This is the first Grand Prize Magna Award the district has received. Other past winning district initiatives include Equity Initiatives (2018), The Tot SPOT (2017), Education Station (2015), and Pine Ridge Prep (2014).

The Magna Awards, supported by Sodexo, a leader in delivering sustainable, integrated facilities management and food service operations, honor districts across the country for programs that break down barriers for underserved students. A panel of school board members, administrators, and other educators selected the winners from more than 100 submissions. For more information, visit nsba.org.

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