



Name
James Kapptie

Current School District and Location
Ekalaka Public Schools, Ekalaka, Montana

INTRODUCTION

Let's meet James Kapptie, a dedicated and passionate educator known for his strong work ethic and creative problem-solving skills. He thrives in collaborative environments and approaches new challenges with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. Beyond his professional life, James is an avid learner who constantly explores new ideas to improve education and make schools better for all children. He maintains a curious mindset, asking “why” and “how” every day to deepen his understanding and drive meaningful change.

Education

James holds a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, with a focus on the ISLLC Standards. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Health Enhancement K-12 from Montana State University–Billings, where he also completed a minor in History. Additionally, James attended Northwest Community College as part of his academic journey.

Experience

James Kapptie's career in education has come full circle. After beginning his professional journey in Ekalaka, Montana, as a 7–12 teacher at Carter County School District, he returned in 2024 to serve as Superintendent of Ekalaka Public Schools. For James, coming back is more than just a professional milestone—it is a deeply personal opportunity to lead and give back to the community that helped shape his educational philosophy and career.

With over two decades of diverse experience across rural and urban districts in Montana and Wyoming, James has served in roles ranging from classroom teacher to director of instructional technology, intervention specialist, and associate principal. His leadership is rooted in a vision that values innovation, collaboration, and community engagement. Whether implementing technology initiatives in Cody or supporting instructional improvement in Cheyenne, James has consistently prioritized student-centered learning and staff empowerment.

James's educational background includes a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Rocky Mountain College, with a focus on ISLLC standards, and a Bachelor of Science in Health Enhancement from Montana State University–Billings, with a minor in History. His professional credentials span multiple states and disciplines, reflecting a commitment to lifelong learning and versatile leadership.

Now, as Superintendent in Ekalaka, James brings this extensive experience home, focused on fostering excellence in education while honoring the community's values. His return represents a unique blend of continuity and growth—a leader who knows where he started and is driven to shape a stronger future for the district that launched his career.

Outstanding Achievement(s)

James Kapptie has distinguished himself as a visionary educational leader with over 20 years of service across Montana and Wyoming. His career reflects a rare combination of innovative thinking, community-centered leadership, and a deep commitment to student success. Returning in 2024 to serve as Superintendent of Ekalaka Public Schools—where his educational journey began—James exemplifies the power of full-circle leadership and meaningful impact.

Throughout his career, James has spearheaded groundbreaking initiatives in instructional technology, curriculum development, and professional learning. As Director of Instructional Technology in Cody, Wyoming, he led transformative districtwide integration of technology, fostering 21st-century classrooms that enhanced student engagement and teacher effectiveness. His work as a national Code.org facilitator has equipped educators across the country with tools to bring computer science to life in their classrooms.

James has also earned distinction as a public speaker, keynote presenter, and state leader in educational innovation. From leading #WyoEdChat to representing districts on accreditation and digital learning task forces, his voice has influenced policy and practice on a broad scale. His leadership consistently brings people together—students, staff, families, and communities—to create schools where all learners are seen, supported, and inspired.

In every role, James Kapptie has made lasting contributions by building systems of excellence, fostering strong relationships, and always keeping students at the center of his work.

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent must be a visionary instructional leader, navigating a rapidly evolving educational landscape shaped by technology and increasing accountability. They must understand how students learn, promote innovative teaching practices, and use data to drive continuous improvement.

Equally important, a superintendent must be a strong communicator and relationship-builder, engaging with students, staff, and the broader community. You must guide the story being told about your school and the educational opportunities being delivered. My time leading Ekalaka Public Schools has deepened my belief in the superintendent's power to shape a district's and community's future and foster lasting impact

What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

Serving as Superintendent of Ekalaka Public Schools since 2024 has given me invaluable insight into the unique dynamics of leading a rural district. One key realization is how deeply the school is woven into the fabric of the community—its success depends on strong relationships with families and local stakeholders.

I've also gained a greater appreciation for the dedication of our teachers and staff. In a small district, people often wear many hats, and their resilience and commitment to students are remarkable. Coming from larger districts, I've learned that tight-knit collaboration is both essential and powerful here.

Another important lesson: lasting solutions come from shared ownership. While the superintendent may not have all the answers, it's our role to ask the right questions and invite the community to the table. People want their schools to thrive—they just need to be included in the process.

Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

When seeking improvement, don't limit your perspective to education—look beyond it. Nonprofits and charitable organizations, for example, have developed innovative approaches to fundraising and engagement that schools can learn from. How they connect with supporters, tell compelling stories, and build trust can inform how we approach community relationships and financial challenges.

We can also draw inspiration from unexpected places—like the Savannah Bananas baseball team. They've redefined the fan experience through creativity, energy, and relentless focus on joy and inclusion. What if schools did the same? Think about where families find joy and connection, and bring that spirit into our classrooms, events, and communication.

Ultimately, we should treat every person who walks through our doors—students, parents, staff, and visitors—like valued guests. The most successful experiences, whether in business, entertainment, or community events, are the ones people can't wait to return to. Schools can and should create that same welcoming, memorable atmosphere.

Submitted by:

Name/Signature

Date