



**National Association of
School Superintendents**
United in Common Purpose: Each Other's Success

Name

**Harlan Ptomey, Superintendent
Cedar Bluffs Public School, Nebraska**

INTRODUCTION

Harlan Ptomey, Ed.S., serves as Superintendent of Cedar Bluffs Public Schools, where he has led transformational growth and innovation in a rural district setting since 2012. Under his leadership, the district has more than doubled in enrollment, expanded facilities, and developed forward-thinking programs that position students for both college and career success.

A strategic and community-centered leader, Ptomey is known for aligning fiscal responsibility with visionary planning. His work has resulted in over \$9 million in facility improvements, the creation of a Chapter 47 Career Academy, and the establishment of early childhood programs that now serve families from birth through preschool. He has also secured over \$7 million in grant funding, expanding opportunities while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Beyond operations, Ptomey is deeply committed to community engagement and economic development. Through partnerships and leadership initiatives, he has helped drive local housing growth and created a school foundation that supports both academic and extracurricular success.

Education

Harlan Ptomey earned his Education Specialist degree in Superintendency from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, along with PK–12 Superintendent Certification. He also holds a Master of Arts in Educational Administration, a Master of Arts in Physical Education, and a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Experience

Mr. Ptomey has served as Superintendent of Cedar Bluffs Public Schools since 2012, leading a district of approximately 500 students and 100 staff members. During his tenure, he has overseen significant enrollment growth, expanded academic and career programming, and strengthened community partnerships.

Previously, he served as Director of Federal Programs/Assistant Superintendent at Santee Public Schools, where he managed a \$3 million School Improvement Grant and led implementation of key instructional and behavioral initiatives.

His experience also includes roles as Secondary Principal/Activities Director at Doniphan-Trumbull Public Schools, Secondary Principal/Headmaster at Frontier Academy in Colorado, and K–12 Principal at Elba Public Schools, where he consistently improved student outcomes and implemented innovative programming.

Outstanding Achievement(s)

Mr. Ptomey's leadership has resulted in measurable impact, including:

- Increasing enrollment from 212 to 500 students
- Reducing the tax levy from \$1.20 to \$0.84
- Leading over \$9 million in new construction and renovations
- Establishing a Chapter 47 Career Academy in a district under 500 students
- Securing over \$7 million in grants
- Expanding early childhood programming with waiting lists
- Creating a school foundation supporting scholarships and community engagement

Awards and Recognitions:

- 2026 – Fulbright Global Leaders Scholarship (Finland)
- 2023 – School Finance Officer Certification, Association of School Business Officials International
- 2022 – Elected to NRCSA Legislative Committee
- 2022 – American School Board Journal Silver Award (Magna Award) for Cradle to College Program
- 2022 – Nebraska Association of School Boards Board of Excellence Award
- 2021 – U.S. Department of State Certificate of Appreciation and SEVIS School Accreditation
- 2021 – Cognia National Accreditation as a School of Distinction (through 2026)
- 2016 – Fremont Tribune Pathfinder Award
- 2013 & 2017 – Ranked nationally in Digital Literacy by the Center for Digital Education

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent must be both a visionary leader and a practical problem solver. The role now requires expertise in finance, facilities, instruction, and community engagement, while maintaining a strong focus on student success. Transparency and communication are critical, as communities expect

to be informed and involved. Superintendents must also think beyond the school system, recognizing their role in economic development and community growth.

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

One of the most important lessons I learned is that leadership is built on relationships and trust. While technical knowledge is important, long-term success depends on strong connections with staff, students, board members, and the community. I also learned that meaningful change takes time and requires patience, persistence, and consistent communication. Listening to stakeholders and involving them in decisions is essential for building support and achieving lasting progress.

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

A key strategy I've found effective is aligning school improvement efforts with community development. By viewing the district as part of a larger community ecosystem, we have been able to create opportunities that benefit both students and the community. Supporting housing initiatives and economic development has strengthened our district's long-term stability. I encourage colleagues to build partnerships and think beyond traditional boundaries—when schools and communities grow together, the impact is far greater.

Submitted by:

Harlan Ptomey

4-21-2026

Name/Signature

Date