



Dr. Jessica R. Dain

Piper School District, Kansas City, Kansas

INTRODUCTION

Meet Dr. Jessica Dain, Superintendent of the Piper School District (USD 203) in Kansas City, Kansas. The district is recognized for its rapid growth, state-of-the-art facilities, and commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Piper is known for its innovative wall-to-wall career academies, strong community partnerships, and a dedicated staff focused on preparing every student for their future. Dr. Dain's extensive experience and unwavering focus on strategic innovation, future-ready preparedness, and student achievement have earned her state and national recognition as a respected leader and visionary in public education.

Education

Jessica holds a Bachelor of Science in English and Physical Education from Emporia State University, a Master of Science in Educational Administration from Emporia State University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Saint Louis University. Additionally, she holds an endorsement in English as a Second Language.

Experience

Dr. Jessica Dain's career in education includes a variety of successful experiences, beginning as an English teacher and coach in the De Soto and Shawnee Mission school districts. She then transitioned to school leadership, serving as an assistant principal at both Blue Valley North High School and Lakewood Middle School. Her leadership journey continued in the Blue Valley School District, where she became principal of Overland Trail Middle School, earning multiple state accolades for academic excellence.

In 2008, Dr. Dain moved to the De Soto School District, where she served as principal of Starside Elementary before being promoted to Director of Teaching and Learning. Her work there led to impactful district-wide initiatives in curriculum, assessment, professional development, and technology integration.

She joined Olathe Public Schools in 2015 as Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, later becoming Assistant Superintendent of Support Services, overseeing key departments and leading strategic initiatives focused on student success and real-world learning.

In 2020, Dr. Dain was named Superintendent of Piper USD 203, where she continues to lead with vision, managing growth, long-range planning, and student-focused innovation, all while fostering a culture of excellence and community pride.

Outstanding Achievement(s)

Jessica believes that today's superintendent plays a pivotal role in transforming education into a gateway for opportunity and lifelong success. She views the position as one of great responsibility — building educational and career pathways that help students access the middle class and achieve their full potential. Under her leadership, Piper USD 203 has become a trailblazer in education. The district is home to the only high school in Kansas with six wall-to-wall career academies, encompassing 24 individual pathways of study for all students. This innovative approach ensures that every student has access to a diverse range of opportunities that align with their interests and career aspirations, whether their path leads to college, skilled trades, military service, or entrepreneurship. The Piper High School Class of 2024 achieved an impressive 98% graduation rate, with 96% of graduates earning at least one Market Value Asset. These assets include nine or more hours of college credit, an industry-recognized credential, a client-connected project or internship, or an entrepreneurial experience.

The district has also earned notable distinctions, including being the only one in Kansas to receive the Kansas Commissioner of Education's gold-level distinction for its Individual Plans of Study for all students in 6th-12th Grades. Recently, Piper USD 203 was awarded the Kansas State Department of Education's Purple Star Distinction for its exceptional support of military families, highlighting its commitment to providing equitable, inclusive educational opportunities for all students.

Dr. Dain demonstrates dedication to both professional and community service through her active involvement in numerous influential organizations. She serves on The School Superintendents Association (AASA) Executive Committee and Governing Board as the Kansas Representative and is a valued mentor in the AASA Aspiring Superintendents Academy. Additionally, Dr. Dain contributes her expertise as a member of the Kansas Commissioner of Education's Superintendent's Advisory Team, the Kansas Leadership Project Committee, and the KSDE Accreditation and Design Team. Her leadership extends to serving on the KC Rising Executive Board as the K-12 representative, the Greenbush Education Service Center Executive Leadership Team, and the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Superintendent Search Screening Team. Dr. Dain is also a member of the Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA) Governing Board, where she represents legislative interests. Through these roles, Dr. Dain exemplifies a deep commitment to educational leadership, mentorship, and community engagement.

While these accomplishments are significant, Jessica considers her most outstanding achievement to be positively impacting the lives of students and empowering educators to do the

same. She remains focused on supporting growth, maintaining responsible stewardship, and creating opportunities for all students to succeed. Jessica says, “I don’t view my work as extraordinary; it’s simply my passion to ensure every student, regardless of their background or chosen path, is given the confidence and tools to succeed — not just in school, but in life.”

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today’s superintendent.

I believe that today’s superintendent plays a pivotal role in transforming education into a gateway for opportunity and lifelong success. I view this position as one of great responsibility — building educational and career pathways that help students access the middle class and achieve their full potential. Under my leadership, Piper USD 203 has focused on developing innovative, inclusive programs that meet the diverse needs of every learner, whether their path leads to college, skilled trades, military service, or entrepreneurship.

I am passionate about creating equitable opportunities for all students, removing barriers, and ensuring every child feels seen, valued, and supported. My work centers on fostering real-world learning experiences, developing skills that prepare students for success beyond graduation, and building a strong foundation for personal and professional growth.

“For me, this work is about transforming lives,” I say. “It’s about empowering every student, no matter their background or chosen path, with the confidence and tools to succeed — not just in school, but in life.”

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

One of the most significant realizations I gained was the critical importance of clear, consistent communication and unwavering transparency, especially in the face of difficult situations or conflict. While strategic planning, vision-setting, and operational knowledge are essential, they are only effective when paired with honest dialogue and open communication. I have learned that fostering trust requires not only sharing information but also being forthright when challenges arise and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

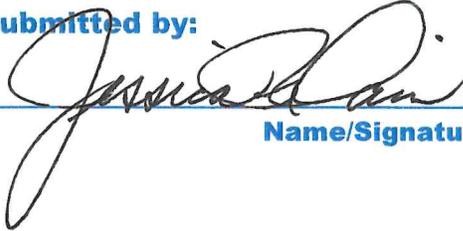
By maintaining open lines of communication with the Board of Education, staff, families, and the community — even when conversations are uncomfortable — I have seen how transparency can build confidence and strengthen relationships. Ultimately, people may not always agree with every decision, but they will respect the process and the integrity of leadership when they feel informed and included. This understanding has reinforced my belief that communication, paired with listening and responsiveness, is the foundation of effective leadership.

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

Something I have learned is the importance of inclusivity in our communication and decision-making processes. It is crucial to identify and remove barriers that may prevent all students from accessing the opportunities they deserve. By working closely with colleagues, I have found that ensuring we use a variety of approaches to address the needs of every child makes a significant difference. For example, when planning school programs or resources, we have had success by taking the time to listen to different perspectives, ensuring that all voices are heard—whether from students, parents, or staff.

This collaborative effort allows us to remove obstacles and create pathways for all students to thrive, regardless of their background or needs. We must also regularly check in with one another to ensure we are not inadvertently excluding anyone from these opportunities. Inclusivity is not just about offering chances; it is about actively breaking down walls that stand in the way.

Submitted by:


Name/Signature


Date