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Kathleen Mathews has served Kearney Public Schools for two decades as principal of Park Elementary School, a K-5 school her colleagues describe as “a family of educators who have created a positive culture that supports academic excellence, values the whole child, and protects a well-rounded educational experience.” Driven by Mathews’ strong belief in the efficacy of situated leadership, Park staff are collaborative problem solvers, and everyone is referred to as a teacher regardless of their role, because “all are responsible for helping all of our students learn and grow.” Principal Mathews’ commitment to leadership development extends to Park students as well; Each grade level takes on specific leadership roles, while fifth graders have the opportunity for extended learning in the P.A.R.K. after-school program, which focuses on community stewardship. Mathews’ effective facilitation of professional development has allowed Park to align its practices to evolving performance standards and changing student needs without compromising access to the arts or socio-emotional learning opportunities. On the contrary, Park is a district leader for its robust before- and after-school programming in art, music, and theater. Mathews holds a S.Ed. in Supertintendency from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, a Masters in Educational Policy and Administration from the University of Kansas at Lawrence, and a B.A. in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Art from Hastings College, where she participated in the Cooperative Urban Teacher Education Program.