



USD 497 News Release

Julie Boyle, Executive Director of Communications
110 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044
785-330-1662 / jboyle@usd497.org

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Board Approves 2021-22 Budget Maximums & Staff Retention Incentive Payments

Public Hearings

During the annual public budget hearing Monday, the school board heard from one staff member about the importance of increasing staff pay and filling open positions.

Budget Approval

The board approved a maximum spending authority of \$201,473,338 and an estimated tax rate of 52.880 mills for its 2021-2022 budget. One mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in assessed valuation. The tax rate reflects a decrease of .242 of a mill.

In keeping with what the Kansas State Department of Education identifies as a financial best practice, the board approves a budget that is higher than anticipated spending to allow for flexibility and program changes. Statutory formulas and available resources limit actual spending.

Budget & Program Evaluation

Executive Director of Finance Kathy Johnson asked board members for input regarding funding priorities and direction for the Budget and Program Evaluation Committee.

“A living wage, I think, is important, and then trying to balance the need for finding funds to increase compensation for staff and also finding funds to increase our strategic reserve, I think, are both important,” said board member GR Gordon-Ross. He recommended the Committee look at a ratio that would weight funds identified for staff more than funds to replenish the Contingency Reserve Fund.

Gordon-Ross, Kelly Jones, and Shannon Kimball all mentioned the need for the Committee to look for ways to increase staff compensation.

“I think we have to start the conversation without a lot of ‘won’ts’ on the table; otherwise, we’re not going to get anywhere. That’s where we’ve been for a lot of years – we won’t do this, we won’t do that – and that has left us picking at the margins and not really making any progress on these issues,” said Shannon Kimball, vice president of the board

“I think that the Committee also needs to work in tandem with the work of the Boundary Committee, because one of the ways that we can free up funds in our budget on an ongoing basis is to ensure that the resources we are spending in each of our buildings are being spent as efficiently as we can while still supporting the needs of our students,” said Kimball. “Those are going to be really, really difficult conversations to have.”

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Staff Retention Incentive Payment Plan

If you are actively employed on:	And you are still an active employee on:	You will receive a payment in the amount of:	You will receive payment on approximately:
2021-2022			
5/27/2021	10/4/2021	500.00	10/22/2021
10/4/2021	2/21/2022	500.00	3/10/2022
2/21/2022	5/26/2022	500.00	6/17/2022
2022-2023			
5/26/2022	10/3/2022	500.00	10/21/2022
10/3/2022	2/20/2023	500.00	3/10/2023
2/20/2023	5/25/2023*	500.00	5/20/2023

The proposed retention plan is contingent upon approval of ESSER II amendment and ESSER III application. Dates are subject to change.

*Subject to change based on final 2022-2023 school calendar. Date will be the last day of school for the 2022-2023 school calendar.

Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Staff who meet the employment criteria (See chart.) could receive up to \$1,500 in retention incentive pay during each of the next two school years.

With approximately 1,700 contracted employees, the plan would cost the district approximately \$5.4 million. District plans for the use of ESSER funds are based on school community input and also require state approval.

“I appreciate that you have taken the time to think through how we can address the retention issue with the ESSER funds. From a policy perspective, it’s one of the big things that I think we’re going to continue to struggle with, and this gives us a tool to address it that we wouldn’t otherwise have, so I appreciate that and am supportive of it,” said Kimball.

Superintendent Dr. Lewis told the board that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the district’s ability to retain staff. He added that research shows that staff retention plays an important role in student success.

“Every single position that we have in the school district is very important and valued tremendously,” said Samrie Devin, executive director of human resources. “Not only does it (retention) have an impact on student achievement, it also plays a vital role on the impact on our building climates and our staff morale.”

The board approved a staff retention incentive payment plan using federal Elementary and Secondary School

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