



USD 497 News Release

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School Board Hears Curriculum Update

The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday heard an update about the strategic plan's focus on cohesive curriculum. Goals in this area seek to identify what students should know and be able to do PreK-12+, and to use instructional resources that honor and preserve students' diverse cultural backgrounds. Each school in the district also has a cohesive curriculum goal.

Monday's report included an overview of the curriculum review process – prepare, review/plan/align, implement, and sustain/collect. In this continuous process, all curricular areas fall within one of these phases of review. As an example, the district is assembling an Elementary Curriculum Leadership Team to look at data and discuss student needs. The team will split into two groups: one looking at math and science curriculum and the other examining English language arts and social studies.

Sabrina Giersch, K-5 math curriculum and Sunset Hill Elementary instructional coach, explained that the district has had the same elementary math resource for several years. It is set to expire. In looking for a new resource, Giersch said that staff will consider the standards, teacher professional development needs, and student assessment results, among other needs.

Curriculum Directors Denise Johnson (elementary) and Shaun Hanson (secondary) provided the board an update to the five-year schedule for curriculum and instructional resource review. They explained that staff adjust this schedule as needed, including considering what is reasonable to accomplish given reduced staffing and professional development and curriculum resource budgets, the current shortage of substitutes, and other obstacles.

In addition, the board must approve any course additions, deletions, and changes. Anyone may submit course change suggestions online for staff review. Administrators recommended to the board course title changes or course additions to replace classes dropped. One new high school course, Beginning Orchestra, will provide another opportunity for students who did not learn an instrument in sixth grade or who want to learn a second instrument.

Due to low enrollment and reduced staffing levels following recent budget cuts, the district will drop several Career and Technical Education pathways; however, it will add several work-based learning courses to award credit for students' relevant work experiences. The district produces a high school course description catalog that will be available online prior to student course enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year.

The board approved the revised curriculum review schedule and course additions, deletions, and changes for the 2023-2024 school year.

In other business, following an Executive Session about non-elected personnel matters, the board approved a resolution to terminate Billy Mills Middle School special education teacher Jordan Gray for unprofessional conduct. The board clerk will give Gray written notice, including that she is entitled to a hearing before the board, provided that she files a written request within ten days of receiving notice.

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