



USD 497 News Release

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Board Hears Strategic Plan Update and Approves Change in High School Student Devices for Fall

Student Academic Data

The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday heard a report about its Safe and Supportive Schools and Data-Informed Decisions strategic plan goals. This included its second quarterly equity update of the school year.

The board looked at an interim assessment data comparison from fall to winter, measuring student performance across Level 1 (limited) to Level 4 (excellent) in English language arts (ELA) and math. In ELA, the number of students scoring at Level 4 increased from 4.4% in the fall to 7.9% in the winter; however, students scoring at Level 1 also increased (28.1% fall to 29.3% winter). In math, fewer students scored at Level 1 (32% fall to 25% winter) and slightly more scored at Level 4 (7.2% to 8.0%).

In October, the board reviewed spring Kansas Assessment Program data. On Monday, it reviewed data showing the access, opportunity, and achievement gaps between White/Asian and Black/Brown students decreasing in English language arts (25.13 to 23.08) and math (16.23 to 14.63) but increasing in science (19.24 to 29.74).

Dr. Cynthia Johnson, executive director of inclusion, engagement, and belonging, said that the district is using a framework in its work to close access, opportunity, and achievement gaps. The framework asks:

1. What does the data show about how we are educating our marginalized students?
2. Who are the marginalized students?
3. What does the data show about the achievement of each marginalized student?
4. What does the data show about the attendance rate of each marginalized student?
5. What does the data show about the behavior of each marginalized student?
6. What instructional changes are necessary to improve the learning of each marginalized student?
7. What supports are necessary to promote healthy development and excitement about learning to move our marginalized students?

Principal Sarah Kruse reported that Hillcrest Elementary is moving a lot of students out of Level 1 and into Levels 2-4. She said the Building Leadership Team met this summer to review student data. Celebrating third grade student progress, staff determined that third grade teachers were successful in using focused interventions on specific skills. She said that staff looked at every student, what skills they needed, and put students in flexible groups for interventions.

“We’re plugging the holes in the ship, so the ship can float... We’re narrowing our focus,” said Kruse. “We’re scoring higher in FastBridge (assessments) than last year at this time because of this work.”

Dr. Carissa Miles, Southwest Middle School principal, said that one of her school’s main goals is to amplify student voice to move learning forward. Every morning the administrative team meets individually with students identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). They listen to what students need and want from school. “We are trying to be very mindful of what it is exactly that our students are needing, and then what is the data telling us,” said Miles.

“There’s a lot of power in the foundational work of being able to provide a successful education for a student when you know what that means to the student,” said board member GR Gordon-Ross.

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Principal Jessica Bassett said that she appreciates the commitment of Lawrence High staff to look at and act upon student data. She said that the school's Academic Strategic Planning Team reviewed data and talked about best practices and student needs. The team identified four areas for support for student needs: academic language/vocabulary, reading for understanding, information processing, and interactive note taking.

"This has been a focus in our building, and we believe it is going to pay off as we go along. We are starting to see that in our (Common Formative Assessments) and in our cluster data from our interims (assessments)," said Bassett.

"As you heard tonight, work is taking place to move our students," said Dr. Johnson to the board.

Student Attendance and Behavior Data

The board also reviewed student attendance and behavior data. The district's average daily attendance dropped from the first to the second quarter (92.5% to 91%), with high school attendance the lowest of the three levels during quarter 2 (87.7%). The district's rate of chronic absenteeism (students missing 10% or more of school days) is 31.6%, a decrease from the previous school year (34.11%).

The number of student behavior events at the elementary (264 to 173) and high schools (222 to 213) decreased from quarter 1 to 2, but middle school behavior events increased (532 to 559). High school In-School Suspensions (ISS) decreased (65 to 61) and middle school Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) dropped (194 to 182) during the same time. The number of ISS/OSS consequences increased at all other levels. In addition, restorative practices, which focus on healing and repairing harm and wrongdoing, resulted in non-ISS/OSS outcomes in 34% of the behavior events in quarter 2.

(Review data at <http://go.boarddocs.com/ks/usd497/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=CN6TT3714694>)

Southwest Middle School recorded the fewest student behavior events. Dr. Miles said that staff use a unified approach, focusing on restorative practices, traditional consequences, and positive behavior interventions and supports.

"Behavior is a form of communication, so when students are displaying a behavior, our first step is to drill down and try to figure out what it is. Are we hungry? Did we not get enough sleep last night? What is it that you need? So that way, we can respond," said Miles.

Dr. Johnson added that each school participates in building goal check-ins three times during the school year, using multiple data sources to monitor progress toward their specific building goals.

High School Student Device Evaluation

The board approved Technology Director David Vignery's recommendation to change high school student devices from MacBooks to iPads in the fall. The district already provides iPads at the elementary and middle school levels. Following research, device evaluation, and a pilot program at both high schools, Vignery concluded that iPads with keyboards, cases, trackpads, and pens will enable similar word-processing and additional touchscreen functionality for high school students at an estimated cost savings of \$4 million in capital outlay funds and \$600,000-\$750,000 in general fund repair costs over the three-year term of the lease.

Page 3 – January 23, 2023, Board Meeting.

Vignery said that his recommendation included alternate device options for specialized classes with specific needs, such as career and technology and innovation courses.

“I’m a firm believer that one device doesn’t fit everybody’s needs. I want to listen and provide them with technology that supports their classrooms,” said Vignery. “I think we just have to get creative. I would call it a hybrid scenario for those classrooms. Those are conversations that we need to continue to have.”

Board President Shannon Kimball, a member of the board’s Facilities Planning Committee, said, “As more and more data was shared (in the committee about the device evaluation and the finances), I reached a place where I, personally, felt like we were no longer really talking about making a choice between, are we going to keep MacBooks or are we going to do something else?”

“To me, the unsustainable nature of the expense that we are experiencing with the MacBooks really makes it for me that we can’t continue that, so what are we going to do instead?” asked Kimball.

“It really comes down to what can we afford, and how can we provide what we can afford to move forward in education and make it successful.” Vignery said. “It’s going to take a commitment from everyone.”

Kimball said that she understands students, staff, and parents who shared concerns about the device change. “I hear your concerns, and I do have confidence that our staff have heard your concerns,” she said. “I also want to acknowledge that change is not easy. We have a lot of decisions that we are going to have to make in this district that are about difficult change, and it’s hard.”

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