



USD 497 News Release

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High School Graduation Requirements

The Lawrence Board of Education decided that seniors should complete 24 credits to earn their high school diplomas, rather than the state minimum 21 credits. The district currently requires 23 credits for graduation; however, the board approved a waiver during the global pandemic, enabling students in the Classes of 2020-2023 to graduate with 21 credits. The new graduation requirements will first apply to the Class of 2028, now in eighth grade. Under existing Board Policy, Lawrence seniors have the option of early graduation. The board plans to review that policy for any necessary clarifications.

This discussion began with the Kansas State Department of Education's Graduation Task Force. It met June 2021-March 2022. Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis served on that panel. The Kansas State Board of Education adopted the Task Force's findings, determining a minimum of 21 credits required for high school graduation, beginning with the Class of 2028.

In addition, the state board approved new course of study requirements, including communications, STEM, employability and life skills, and financial literacy. State standards also now require postsecondary assets, such as community service, workplace learning, and college-credit hours, among other options; and completion, or opting out, of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The district's Curriculum and Instruction Team used these state minimum standards to guide its discussions with high school principals, Building Leadership Teams, staff subcommittees, lead counselors, and district administration to reach its recommendation to the board. Feedback from building and district site councils and community members participating in multiple "Portrait of a Graduate" public input sessions and a public survey also informed the recommendation.

Beginning with the Class of 2028, Lawrence graduation requirements will include 24 units of credit, including 4 units of Communications (3.5 credits of English language arts and .5 credits of communications), 4 units of Society and Humanities (3.0 credits of social studies and 1.0 credit of fine arts), 7 units of STEM (3.0 credits of science, 3.0 credits of math, and 1.0 credit of STEM elective), 9 units of Employability and Life Skills (.5 credit of physical education, .5 credit of health, .5 credit of financial planning, .5 credit of career and postsecondary planning, and 7.0 elective credits), as well as two postsecondary assets, and completion of the FAFSA unless opting out.

Postsecondary assets could also include apprenticeships, the Seal of Biliteracy, industry-recognized certifications, an ACT (score of 21 or higher), WorkKeys (level Silver or higher), state assessment scores of 3 or 4 for math, ELA, and science; ASVAB requirements of military selection, senior project/exit interview, SAT (1060 or higher), completing Board of Regents curriculum, an AP exam (score 3+), etc.

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District and Bert Nash MOUs

The board approved Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, a longtime district partner. The board approved an update of an existing MOU for WRAP therapeutic services. A new MOU covers Community-Based Services.

“Bert Nash has been an amazing partner to us, and we want to make sure we are an amazing partner to them,” said Kiley Luckett, district mental health coordinator.

Luckett reported that the district is seeing an increase in the number of students challenged by a range of mental health concerns. She said that Bert Nash’s Community-Based Services create a continuum of care for students.

“I want to thank district staff and Bert Nash for all of the work that has gone into making this partnership stronger,” said Board Past President Shannon Kimball.

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