



BOARD MEETING RECAP



November 16, 2020
> UPDATE <

Nov. 16 Update from Dr. Fulton Superintendent

Dr. Mike Fulton reiterated the announcement shared with families and staff earlier in the day: Beginning November 30, all secondary students (middle and high school) will return to remote learning. They will continue in remote learning until the end of the first semester, which is January 22,

2021. This decision was made due to having a shortage of substitutes to support instruction. Today's decision allows SMSD to shift a number of substitutes from secondary to the elementary level in an effort to help the district conduct in-class instruction with the youngest learners.

As the [SMSD dashboard shows](#), the number of isolations and quarantines necessary of staff is increasing in ways one might expect, given the exponential increase in positivity rates in Johnson County. Shawnee Mission is carefully monitoring conditions in schools and across the district for positivity rates, sources of transmission through contact tracing, and staffing. At this point, transmissions are primarily community-based, with very few traced back to schools. If one or more of these becomes problematic, as staffing currently is, then a decision will need to be made about changing the mode of instruction, with student and staff safety in mind. This includes moving elementary to remote-only learning, if necessary. Parents need to make sure and plan accordingly.

"We'll do the best we can to give 14-day advance notice should conditions require moving elementary to remote-only," Fulton added.

There is a caveat regarding that statement: If at the building or district level there are emergency staffing shortages or health concerns, SMSD will reserve the right to contact parents and call school off for that day or a series of days. Taking this step is disruptive and will only be done if absolutely necessary, much like a snow day.

“This is not desirable, but will be done if necessary,” Fulton noted. “We shared last week that staffing was our primary concern with keeping school in session. Tonight’s announcement is a staffing-related decision and is **not** being made because of COVID-19 transmission within our schools.”

Shawnee Mission continues to see schools doing an excellent job of implementing mitigating factors such as social distancing, mask-wearing, hand washing, and completing daily COVID-19 assessments. As secondary moves to remote learning, all staff will continue to work from their in-person building assignments.

“This situation saddens all of us,” Fulton expressed. “This is not where, as a community, we hoped to be as the holiday season approaches. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the incredible work our students, staff, parents and community members are doing to support community health. Working together we can flatten the curve, but it will take time and commitment.”

Bond Update

Dr. Rick Atha, deputy superintendent, introduced several presenters who provided an update on the 2021 Bond election that will be put before the Shawnee Mission School District community. [The presentation slides can be viewed here.](#)

Dr. Atha also shared the timeline for the mail-in ballot process leading up to 12 p.m. on January 26, 2021, when all mail-in ballots must be received at the election office.

[Click here for more ballot timeline information.](#)

David A. Smith, chief communications officer, provided details about the launch of the district’s Bond 2021 webpage and further plans for providing information to the community related to the bond.

[Click here to view the Bond 2021 webpage.](#)

Dr. Michelle Hubbard, associate superintendent of leadership and learning, provided an update on feedback provided by parents and staff from elementary schools that have been rebuilt in recent years. Dr. Hubbard

also [shared proposed projects and the project schedule](#) for those proposed projects (which is subject to change).

Student Services Team/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update Dr. Christy Ziegler, chief of student services, introduced the individuals from the Student Services and Curriculum and Instruction team who were present to provide an update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

[Click here to view the presentation slides.](#)

Dr. Ziegler also provided a summary of how this work relates to the mission, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan. The specific strategy discussed tonight was “We will relentlessly create a fully unified, equitable, and inclusive culture.”

Dr. Tyrone Bates Jr., coordinator of diversity, equity, and inclusion, spoke about current work and future goals. He noted the implementation of equity practitioners, reflected on DEI presentations at the districtwide Instructional Fair, and highlighted that the district will participate in a [Kauffman Equity Cohort](#) audit.

Dr. John McKinney, director of student and family services, highlighted work that has been done to review and update all current board policies to identify and revise areas to ensure equitable and inclusive practices, as outlined in the Strategic Plan. That work includes changes to [Policy AC](#) in July 2020 and Policy GAAC in September 2019 (which was later deleted and incorporated into Policy AC).

Dr. Bates shared details about work to provide a multicultural resource list for schools, work to strengthen hiring practices, and future work related to a superintendent advisory committee on diversity, equity, and inclusion. He also shared results of surveys given to staff members about the work of diversity, equity and inclusion in the district.

Dr. Dan Gruman, director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, provided an update on district ACT scores. The class of 2020 saw an increase in the number of students who took the ACT, as students took advantage of the funding provided by the Kansas Legislature for ACT tests for juniors in 2019. The class of 2020 earned a 22.4 average composite score. Gruman provided comparisons of average composite scores for the

past five years, comparisons to state and national average composite scores, details of composite scores by race/ethnicity, and counts of students meeting college readiness benchmarks. [This information can be viewed here.](#)

During the meeting, Dr. Fulton also shared several community celebrations:



American Education Week—Monday, November 16 marks the start of American Education Week. Dr. Fulton encouraged everyone to take part in the opportunity to celebrate public education and honor all educators who help students reach their full potential.

“As it says in our mission, the work to ensure students construct their own foundation for success is orchestrated by talented, compassionate educators, and distinguished by an inclusive culture, engaged community, and robust opportunities that challenge learners to achieve their full potential,” Fulton noted. “This week we take time to celebrate everyone in our community, who even in the most difficult times, move us toward this goal.”

Later in the meeting, a formal proclamation was read, urging all in our community to join us in honoring the institution of education in Shawnee Mission and in America. [Click here to read the proclamation.](#)



Biliteracy Honor Shawnee Mission students lead the state as Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) recognizes 125 students earning the Kansas Seal of Biliteracy, based on 2019-2020 results. This achievement is awarded by KSDE and recognizes any student who has attained proficiency in English and one or more other world languages. The Seal of Biliteracy is intended to be a statement of accomplishment that recognizes a student’s readiness for career, college, and engagement as a global citizen.



National Speech and Debate

Honors The National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) named the Shawnee Mission East Speech and Debate Team one of the Top 100 Schools in the association for the 2019-2020 school year.

SM East ranked 19th out of more than 3000 schools nationwide. "Your school was named one of the top programs in the nation. This is the most prestigious membership award the Association can bestow upon a school," the NSDA stated. Shawnee Mission congratulates all of the competitors and Shawnee Mission East Speech and Debate Coach Trey Witt. Additionally, several Shawnee Mission schools earned a "Club Award" based on their NSDA strength points, including Shawnee Mission Northwest, Shawnee Mission South, and Shawnee Mission West.



Distinguished Service Chief Communications Officer David A. Smith was awarded the 2020 Distinguished Service Award from the Kansas School Public Relations Association. The honor is given to someone who has dedicated more than five full years to the school communication profession, advocates for public education, remains committed to a creative, dedicated, and professional approach to school communications, and is active in the Kansas School Public Relations Association.

Under David's leadership, the Communication Department earned four Golden Achievement awards from the National School Public Relations Association this year. These national recognitions are for exemplary work in all aspects of school communications.

Shawnee Mission All Stars Board of Education members recognized two Shawnee Mission All Stars. Shawnee Mission's newest All Stars are:

Karla Herrera Medrano, paraprofessional at Shawnee Mission North. [Click here to view a video about Karla.](#)

Kim Balsinger, band instructor at Hocker Grove Middle School. [Click here to view a video about Kim.](#)

Board Policy Approvals The Board of Education held a first reading of the following policies:

[Board Policy DBB](#): Minimum Operating Fund Balance and Use the Capital Outlay Fund for Salaries. This policy reflects conversations held with Board members for several months. The guardrails outlined in this policy are a part of the pathway, that along with a community vote for the proposed bond issue, would free up money in operating funds to hire additional secondary teachers and better support student learning.

The Board of Education held a second reading and approved the following policies:

[Board Policy DFE](#): Investment Revenue

[Board Policy JQKA](#): Foreign Exchange Students

Anyone wanting to nominate a Shawnee Mission School District employee, certified and/or classified, to be considered for the Shawnee Mission All-Star award can do so by **[clicking here](#)**.

This publication, provided after each Shawnee Mission Board of Education meeting, provides a recap of some actions taken by the Shawnee Mission Board of Education and information about activities happening in the school district. An archive video of the workshop and regular meeting [can be found here](#). Links to board policies, agendas, and meeting minutes [can be found here](#).