Highlands Elementary

6200 Roe Avenue
Mission, KS 66205
913-993-3300

Principal: Laura LaHue
Grades Served: PreK-6
KSDE Bldg #: 8806

Feeder Pattern: Indian Hills MS & SME

Notable School Characteristics

- Comprehensive school serving students in grades PreK-6
- High Incidence centralized Special Education program, with a focus on social emotional regulation.
- Early Childhood Unified and Pre-K program
- Shawnee Mission East feeder schools Gifted Education Program

KSDE Building Report Card

Highlands Elementary Building Report Card

Sec. 8. On and after July 1, 2021, K.S.A. 72-1163 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-1163. (a) Each year the board of education of a school district shall conduct an assessment of the educational needs of each attendance center in the district. Information obtained from such needs-assessment shall be used by the board when preparing the budget of the school district to ensure improvement in student academic performance. The budget of the school district shall allocate sufficient moneys in a manner reasonably calculated such that all students may achieve the goal set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218(c), and amendments thereto. The board also shall prepare a summary of the budget for the school district. The budgets and summary shall be in the form prescribed by the director pursuant to K.S.A. 79-2926, and amendments thereto.
Needs Analysis

What barriers must be overcome for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on assessments?

There are always a number of challenges that should be considered when evaluating student success in a district. Some of the key barriers that impact Highlands include, but are not limited to lack of special education funding, lack or limited access to community health services and mental health services, and difficulty in retaining and attracting highly qualified teachers.

- Specialized staff members to provide research-based, systematic, and explicit reading and math interventions.
- Family and student access to mental health services and social-emotional needs that impact daily life and learning.
- Teacher support from a highly-qualified instructional coach to assist in ensuring a guaranteed and viable curriculum through an equitable learning experience.
- Special Education resources to support our students with speech and language needs, as well as specialized instruction to support academic and behavior goals.
- Resources to support our system-wide approach to a multi-tiered system of support for all students. To implement this system, we must meet with a student-centered team approach that requires many team members to be at the table to analyze data, identify deficits, implement a targeted intervention, progress monitor growth tied to that intervention, and come back to the table to review.

What budget actions should be taken to address and remove those barriers?

Given an appropriate level of funding for both general education and special education, there are a number of budget actions we could take to remove some barriers. Some include: increased salary to recruit and retain highly qualified certified and classified staff, increased funding and time for Professional Learning Communities (teacher teams) to meet, and additional staff members hired to meet the individual learning and social emotional needs of all students specifically, interventionists for general education students and additional specialized support for those in our high-incidence Special Education program.

- Full-time licensed social worker allocated to Highlands
- Full-time instructional coach to support highly qualified teachers and new teachers to the profession. This support will help retain and sustain a high standard of excellence in our instructional practice and abilities to respond to the wide range of student needs while still ensuring high levels of learning.

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● Full-time Interventionist to provide Tier 3 math and reading intervention that is systematic, explicit, and research-based.
● Full-time Building Substitute to support coverage for classroom teachers so they may participate in the multi-tiered systems of support meetings. These meetings of collaboration are essential to providing a team-based approach to meeting student needs. This Building Substitute also allows for job-embedded professional learning for teachers so they may observe other classrooms, participate in learning from district consultants in the classroom, and push-in to help with co-teaching so the lead teacher can meet with small groups.

How much time will it take for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on the state assessments if the budget actions would be implemented?

While our board of education, administration, teachers, and classified staff work tirelessly to meet the academic and social emotional needs of our students, too many factors come into play that do not allow us to accurately assess when all students will be at a certain level. Some of those include: the ever-changing population of students bringing a varying degree of cognitive abilities and disabilities which preclude us from being able to guarantee a date when all students will meet a singular level of proficiency, as well as the lack of constitutional funding of special education.

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Board Rationale/Comments

The Shawnee Mission School District faces challenging budget needs given the commitment to meeting aspirational state and district education goals for every student. The district continues to work to limit central administrative costs to less than 5% of the total budget. Following an analysis of student needs, the district has worked to maintain in the district budget a full-time social worker position in every school, a full-time instructional coach in every school, and Real World Learning counselors at each of the five comprehensive high schools.

The following positions have been added to support buildings to better meet the needs of our 26,440 students: two (2) assistant principal positions at our larger middle schools; three (3) intervention specialists; two (2) Special Education instructional coaches; two (2) ELL teachers; six (6) additional teaching positions and thirty (30) paraprofessional positions. The district will continue to analyze budget funds for the 2024-25 school year, in order to determine the ability to maintain the following positions that were added with ESSER funding: additional support for nursing services; additional secondary math teachers; building substitutes for every building; and class-size reduction at the elementary level.

In addition, the district has increased professional learning opportunities for all teachers, including hosting a major conference on Professional Learning Communities and sending large numbers of staff to a conference on Response to Intervention. We will continue to prioritize equitable allocation of resources to create a welcoming and engaging learning experience for every student — facilitating personalized learning plans, targeting career and college readiness, with the interpersonal skills for life success.

The percentage of Highlands Elementary students performing at College and Career Ready on the Math and ELA state assessments (Levels 2, 3 or 4) has consistently remained above state averages. While both ELA and Math assessment reflected a slight COVID decline in Spring 2021, both assessments have returned to pre-pandemic levels in Spring 2022. As a building that has new leadership, the focus is on culture, creating meaningful relationships, and developing effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to increase student performance. Like many other schools, Highlands students have experienced significant educational and developmental disruptions over the past few years, and the school is challenged to provide all students with the social-emotional support they need to facilitate learning growth. Highlands PTA and active parent engagement provide an additional layer of support.

Our routine use of multiple measures to assess student growth, school climate and equitable practices will serve to inform the best use of finite resources looking ahead.

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