



USD 497 News Release

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Board Approves 2024-2025 Budget

After reviewing a district needs assessment and school improvement goals, the Lawrence Board of Education on Monday approved by unanimous vote a 2024-2025 budget of \$215,698,464. It is based on 52.252 mills, an increase of .042 from last year's total mill levy. School districts set maximum budget authorities high to provide flexibility to address district needs and capture as much state aid as possible. Budget maximums do not reflect expected spending. No community members spoke during public hearings held prior to budget approval.

The state of Kansas sets a statewide General Fund levy of 20 mills. A mill is approximately \$1 for every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value. The budget also includes the state-maximum allowable Local Option Budget at 33% of the General Fund, or 14.517 mills; 8 mills for Capital Outlay, and 8.301 mills for Bond and Interest payments on debt services. Special Revenue Fund mill levies support Adult Education, .2 mill, and a Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA), 1.234 mills. Our district qualifies for the COLA because the average appraised value of a single-family home in Lawrence is more than 25% higher than the state average.

Some of the changes that affected this year's budget, include a 5.7% increase in state Base Aid for Student Excellence (BASE), from \$5,088 to \$5,378 per pupil. Following school finance litigation, the BASE is now calculated on the three-year average of the Consumer Price Index for the midwest region. If increases in BASE funding had kept pace with inflation, it would sit at approx. \$7,600 per student. The BASE is multiplied by a district's full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment. Because our district enrollment is declining, the state will allow us to use the average of two prior years' enrollment, or 9,879, this year only. The district will receive approx. \$2 million more in state special education funding and increased state aid for part-time virtual education students.

Pleas for Action

"Please enact sensible gun laws, and stop making us ask," said Kelly Jones, during her board president's report. Jones' remarks, directed at lawmakers, followed Interim Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Swift taking a moment during her first superintendent's report to honor the teachers and students who died in last week's school shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia.

Dr. Swift said that she met members of the local Be SMART organization at the Lawrence Schools Foundation's Kids Expo August 10. She reiterated the importance of Be SMART's message: Secure all firearms in your home and vehicles. Model responsible behavior around firearms. Ask about the presence of unsecured firearms in other homes. Recognize the role of firearms in suicide. Tell you peers to Be S-M-A-R-T.

Fall Community Engagement

"We want to hear from everyone in the community," said Dr. Swift. "We will use what we hear and learn in our conversations to inform and align our work with the thoughts and direction, experience, needs, and aspirations of our students and staff, parents, families, and greater community." She previewed fall community engagement efforts to meet face-to-face by inviting the community to public meetings and attending local activities. Our district also will share an online survey as another tool for gathering input.

"I want to welcome Dr. Swift. I appreciate that you hit the ground running. My motto when I was working every day was – keep moving. I really love that you came in and stayed in motion. I really believe that with our interim, we are moving and will continue to move forward throughout the year," said board member Bob Byers.