



## USD 497 News Release

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### Boundary Advisory Committee Discusses Consultant's Enrollment Analysis & Shifts Direction

The Lawrence Board of Education's Boundary Advisory Committee (BAC) met tonight for the first time since November. The school board charged the group to study and recommend how to better balance high school enrollments. At present, Free State has 1,782 students and Lawrence High serves 1,466, a difference of 326 students.

In November, the committee identified the data it needed from demographics consultant RSP and Associates. Members reviewed that enrollment analysis tonight. RSP's report includes:

- District enrollment will decrease by 220 students by 2029-2030.
  - High school enrollment will decrease the most, by 135 students, in five years.
  - By 2029-2030, Free State's enrollment is projected to drop to 1,675, and LHS's, to 1,440. This means Free State would be serving 235 more students than LHS in 2029-2030.

"So where do we go from here?" asked Deputy Superintendent Dr. Larry Englebrick of the committee.

The BAC discussed the data report and questioned whether a high school boundary change is necessary at this time. The committee expressed interest in looking at the bigger picture on an ongoing basis toward long-term solutions. Rather than looking at high school enrollments, for example; members suggested studying ways to provide all high school students opportunities to access the full curriculum. Committee members added that they want to continue to study facility utilization/capacity issues and the potential for a feeder-school model.

Other RSP's conclusions about declining enrollment, a state and national trend in public education, include:

- The district is seeing smaller kindergarten classes that do not fully replace exiting seniors, creating a loss districtwide.
- With decreasing county live birth rates and district market share, it is likely kindergarten enrollment will continue to be lower.
- Residential development has slowed down with limited potential to finish large student-yielding projects in the next five years.

Other potential challenges for the district cited in RSP's report include:

- Overutilization challenges (greater than 100%) are forecasted for Hillcrest and Schwegler Elementary Schools during the next five years.
- Underutilization challenges (less than 70%) are forecasted for Deerfield, Prairie Park, and Woodlawn Elementary Schools during the next five years.
- All secondary facilities are projected to remain under building capacity during the next five years.

RSP's report recommends the district annually review enrollment projections, analyze building utilization and staffing of buildings, and communicate results with the public.

Dr. Englebrick plans to provide the board an update from the BAC Monday. The public may go to <https://www.usd497.org/school-board/committees/boundary-advisory-committee> to review BAC materials.