

January 27, 2025 Regular Board of Education Meeting

Board Items

Legislative Update

Dr. Stuart Little, district lobbyist, provided the Board with an update on legislative activities at the start of the 2025 Legislative session. He explained that work on the K-12 budget is already underway, with recommendations expected by the end of the week. Dr. Little also highlighted several emerging policy discussions. These include a bill related to non-public school tax credits, legislation concerning gender-affirming care, and proposals aimed at expanding scholarship programs for non-public schools, among others.

[The update can be watched on this video starting at 35:50.](#)

PriorityOne Health Center Annual Review

Dr. Jeremy Higgins, associate superintendent of human resources, and Erin Eason, national director of clinical consulting practice with CBIZ, presented the annual review of the PriorityOne Health Center to the Board. Since opening in 2017, the Health Center has become a valuable resource for district employees, offering accessible and comprehensive medical care.

Dr. Higgins shared a number of metrics highlighting the utilization of the health center. In 2024, the center recorded 6,860 visits, representing a 16% increase in visits over the prior year. The most common medical appointments focused on acute illness, routine physical exams, and chronic disease management.

Feedback from employees about the PriorityOne Health Center is overwhelmingly positive. According to post-visit survey results, 99.4% of respondents rated services as good or excellent and 99.9% indicated they would recommend the health center to others.

To conclude the report, Eason shared data on cost avoidance and the return on investment of the Health Center.

For more details, you can [view the full report](#).

Assessments Update

Pam Lewis, Associate Superintendent of Leaders and Learning, and Dr. Dan Gruman, Director of Assessment and Research, provided an update on ACT and Kansas Assessment results for SMSD students.

Lewis began the presentation by emphasizing how assessments align with the district's [Strategic Plan](#) objectives and strategies. Specifically, she highlighted the connection to two objectives: achieving academic success through a challenging, personalized learning plan and developing and utilizing personal resilience while mastering essential competencies that lead to college and career readiness.

Dr. Gruman followed with an overview of the ACT, a college entrance exam used for admissions and course placement decisions. Dr. Gruman highlighted several factors that influence performance on the test, such as course completion in core subjects, the quality of instruction, and timing. He also noted that test participation rates, individual testing frequency, and background factors like English language acquisition and home-life experiences can impact scores. The average ACT Composite score for SMSD students is higher than both the state and national averages.

The focus then shifted to Kansas assessment results, where Dr. Gruman provided an overview of the performance level descriptors and data comparing SMSD students' performance to statewide results. He highlighted the percentage of SMSD students scoring at levels 1, 3, and 4 and shared that overall progress is trending positively.

Lewis shared that a goal for next year is to increase student achievement and performance through targeted interventions with a grade level focus for all students.

Laura LaHue, principal of Highlands Elementary, shared what supports and systems look like at the building level. These include strategic use of high-quality instructional materials, ensuring time is protected for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and actively supporting and monitoring the quality of instruction. These initiatives are designed to create a strong foundation for continued growth and help students achieve their personal best.

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

Policy Approval

The Board held a first and final reading and approved the following policies.

[Revised Policy JBCB: In-District Transfers](#)

[Revised Board Policy JBCD: Open Enrollment](#)

From the Superintendent Report



R&D Forum The Shawnee Mission School District is ALL IN on getting ready for the Research and Development Forum this spring. Several students and teachers have shared their thoughts on what makes this event such a great opportunity.

[Click here to view the video.](#)

The Research and Development Forum features the Next Great Idea Pitch competition and Student Showcase open houses. Competitors in the Next Great Idea pitch an idea to a panel of judges. They will have a chance to win prize money that will help make their idea a reality. The deadline for the initial application for The Next Great Idea is March 7, 2025. Once students submit their initial application, they will have sessions with professionals who will provide support and feedback. [Click here](#) to access resources that will walk students, families, and teachers through the process.



Horizons Winner First-grade teacher, Ryleigh Diskin, from Ray Marsh Elementary School is a 2025 Horizon Award Winner. The Horizon Award recognizes outstanding first year teachers in the state of Kansas. Dr. Schumacher congratulated Ryleigh on this fantastic accomplishment at the beginning of her career!



SM South Successes The spotlight has been shining brightly on Shawnee Mission South High School recently.

A team of four students involved in the school's radio and broadcasting program won the Kansas 24-hour film festival. The rules of the festival required the students to write, film, edit and produce a three-minute film in just 24 hours based only on the prompt, "the worst thing to happen is getting exactly what you want." They also had to include specific elements such as a screen door slamming, a worm's-eye-view shot, and props like a water bottle and leaves on the ground. This group represents the first team from Shawnee Mission South to win this competition!

Shawnee Mission South students also shared their production of the musical "Six" at the Kansas Thespian Festival. The performers earned the opportunity as their fall production was adjudicated for both state and national theatre festivals. Only two other schools were invited to perform a main-stage production in the 4,000 seat Century II theater during the festival. Director of Theater Mark Swezey shared it had been about 20 years since South took a performance to state.



Leader in Me Lighthouse Merriam Park Elementary School was recognized as a Leader in Me Lighthouse Academic Honor Roll school. The honor was presented to celebrate exemplary academic growth as measured by state standards. Dr. Schumacher congratulated all of the students, families, and educators on their continued excellence.



STEM Champion Shawnee Mission West junior and Biotechnology Signature Program student Elizabeth Barnes has been selected as a National STEM Champion, representing the state of Kansas. She has earned the opportunity to advance to present her research on microplastics in Washington D.C. in March. Congratulations to Elizabeth!



Board Appreciation January is Board of Education Appreciation month. During the January 13 board meeting, the Shawnee Mission School District recognized the contributions of the members of the Board and celebrated their commitment to our schools. As part of the recognition, the Shawnee Mission West Madrigals gave a beautiful choral performance. The district thanks the Board of Education members for their dedication. [Click here to view a video.](#)

All Star The Board of Education presented two Shawnee Mission All Star Awards.

The first honoree was Kristin Archer, special education teacher at Indian Woods Middle School. [Click here to watch a video honoring Archer.](#)

Next to be celebrated was the ICT Help Desk Team. [Click here to view a video recognizing their efforts.](#)

Anyone wanting to nominate a Shawnee Mission School District team member as an All Star can do so [by filling out this form.](#)

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 in the school district. An archive video of the meeting can be found by [clicking here.](#) Links to board policies, agenda, and meeting minutes can be found by [clicking here.](#)