

April 14, 2025 Board of Education Workshop Meeting

Board Items

Health Services Report

Dr. Christy Ziegler, chief of student services, diversity, equity, and inclusion introduced Paula Bunde, health services coordinator, Teresa Denk-Smajda, student wellness specialist, and Kristina Knight, social worker at Horizons. The team provided the Board with an update on the district health services program. Bunde shared a detailed look at how the district's health services program continues to support the well-being of students and staff.

The program is designed to offer professional nursing care that goes beyond treating illness. It includes a broad range of services such as health assessments, early intervention, case management, and prevention strategies. Health education and collaboration with school teams and community partners also play an important role.

During the presentation, Bunde spoke about the mission and goals that guide the work of the health services team. She shared current staffing levels and data on the number of student visits to school health offices.

Denk-Smajda discussed the program's expanding focus on student wellness, specifically efforts around vaping education and nicotine use prevention.

Knight spoke about recent training initiatives available to SMSD staff members interested in learning how to support students facing mental health or substance use challenges or those in crisis.

Rosehill principal Jen Duke spoke about the value of community partners sharing an opportunity 20 Rosehill Elementary students had to participate in the One Sight Vision Clinic, where they received a complete vision exam and glasses.

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

Food Service Report Dr. Christy Ziegler, chief of student services, diversity, equity, and inclusion introduced Grace Liss, director of food services, Jennifer Earthly, assistant director, and Jill Willett, nutritionist. The team shared an update on the Shawnee Mission School District's Food Services program. Liss shared progress on department goals and highlighted the efforts of the food services team in meeting those objectives

In addition, Liss reviewed detailed financial information, emphasizing the team's ongoing commitment to offering affordable, nutritious meals that are tailored to student preferences. Willett explained that input from student focus groups and data analysis continues to guide menu decisions.

This year, new initiatives included the introduction of Food Promotional Days in elementary and middle schools to engage students and support nutrition education. The team also expanded its farm-to-table approach by partnering with the Kansas City Food Hub.

Earthly reported that professional development for staff remains a priority, which aligns with Strategy 3 of the district's [Strategic Plan](#). Food Services supports classified employees with ongoing training to enhance food safety, customer service, and meal quality. This school year, Food Service has also launched several initiatives to strengthen connections with employees and celebrate their contributions.

Liss concluded the presentation by sharing recent community engagement and outreach efforts including a SMAC PTA presentation, website enhancements, and participation in the Shawnee Mission Mic'd Up podcast.

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

Instructional Walkthroughs

Pam Lewis, associate superintendent of leadership and learning, presented on a refreshed approach to classroom walkthroughs. Instructional walkthroughs are short, informal visits to classrooms by administrators,

instructional coaches, and teachers to observe teaching and learning in action.

These visits help school leaders support educators, cultivate a culture of learning, encourage collaboration and ensure high-quality instruction across all schools. Walkthroughs also provide valuable feedback and help identify targeted professional development needs.

Lewis reported a new walkthrough tool is being developed with input from staff. This tool will focus on clear expectations, ease of use and meaningful, non-evaluative feedback. The goal is to strengthen teaching practices and align with state standards. Lewis reviewed the next steps including developing a high quality instruction walkthrough tool, creating an SMSD walkthrough guidance document, building leadership capacity, providing opportunities for teachers to observe and discuss instruction, and holding quarterly building and district data discussions.

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

First Read of Revised Board Policy KH: Public Gifts/Donations to the School District

Dr. Schumacher provided an update on the work of the Policy Review Committee related to proposed updates to [Policy KH](#), which guides how public donations are accepted.

In May 2024, questions were raised about the fairness and equity of community-funded positions. In response, a task force was formed to study the issue. Their recommendation was for the Policy Review Committee to consider a policy to govern community-funded positions, while also not discouraging overall community support.

Following this, the Board's Policy Review Committee developed a draft of a [revised Policy KH](#). The updated policy would include new guidelines and a request process for any community-funded position. If approved, the new policy and request process would take effect in the 2026-2027 school year.

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

From the Superintendent Report



E2 Presentation

The Board of Education meeting began with Kim Hinkle, executive director of the [Shawnee Mission Education Foundation](#), announcing this year's Excellence in Education grants.

These grants are awarded for projects that foster innovative and challenging teaching and learning. As she announced the grant recipients Hinkle shared, "These outstanding teachers, social workers, and administrators didn't just apply for grants—they dreamed big. They asked, 'What more can we do?' and then built incredible visions of what's possible for our students."

Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher thanked the Foundation and all of the educators who are receiving the grants for the creative and innovative ways they are teaching in Shawnee Mission schools and classrooms.



Challenge Award Winners Comanche and Shawanoe Elementary Schools have been recognized by the Kansas Public Education Task Force as Challenge Award winners.

This honor is given to schools to highlight outstanding achievements based on Kansas Assessment

Program achievements in math and reading, especially for students from ethnic minority groups and those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Congratulations to both school communities for this exceptional achievement.



KIAA Recognition Kent Glaser, Shawnee Mission School District athletic director, was awarded the 2025 Kansas Athletic Director of the Year and District 3 Athletic Director of the Year by the Kansas Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (KIAAA). This honor recognizes an administrator’s dedication to developing, enhancing, and preserving the educational values of interscholastic athletics. Glaser was recognized at the KIAAA Spring Conference in Manhattan.



Presidential Award Matt Jenkinson, an Indian Woods industrial technology teacher, is one of three people selected from Kansas for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). This honor is given to those who represent the best of STEM education, demonstrating deep content knowledge of the subject they teach and the ability to motivate and enable student success. The National Science Foundation administers this award on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.



eImagine Awards Students from the Animation and Interactive Media signature program had a strong showing at this year's eImagine Festival. This is a competition for high school students in the areas of graphic design, web animation, and video. The team secured six out of the 15 top 5 spots in a field of more than 330 entries. Additionally, Maddie Redmon, Shawnee Mission West junior, earned first place in character animation, Ava Winfield, Shawnee Mission East junior, earned second place in character animation, and the AI Art Heist Team earned third place in Animated Short Story.



Kansas City Science Fair Biotechnology students achieved top honors at the Greater Kansas City Science and Engineering Fair. Grand Award winners include Elizabeth Barnes, Shawnee Mission West junior, Anna Holland, Shawnee Mission East High School senior, and Cooper Grotzinger, Shawnee Mission South senior.

Dr. Kenneth Lee, Biotechnology Signature Program instructor, was also presented with the Marie Miller Educator Award. This honor is given to those who show outstanding effort toward the motivation of students in scientific exploration.



Read Across SMSED This April, the Read Across SMSED theme encourages all to share their poetic



voices. The program is made possible through the support of NEA Shawnee Mission and the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation, which provides books to students in every building.

[Click here to play the April video.](#)



Youth Art Month March was celebrated as Youth Art Month. This year, 20 Shawnee Mission School District art teachers were proud to share artwork from Shawnee Mission School District students at the state Youth Art Month show. The event was held in the gallery located in the Topeka Shawnee County Library building for the entire month of March.

A special congratulations goes to Greta Pilgreen, an eighth grader at Indian Hills Middle School, whose artwork was selected to represent Kansas at the National Art Education Association Convention in Kentucky.

[Click here to view the newest quarterly digital art show.](#) This art show features artwork completed by students in Pre-K through 12th grade from all feeder patterns in the Shawnee Mission School District. We thank all of the teachers who contributed artwork and Megan Ellis, visual arts coordinator and Lenexa Hills Elementary teacher.

R&D Forum All are invited to attend the annual [Research and Development Forum](#) Student Showcase, which will take place from 4 to 7 p.m. on April 22, 23, and 24 at the Center for Academic Achievement. This district-wide open house will highlight student projects across grade levels. In addition, the Next Great Idea pitch competition will be held at 9 a.m. on Saturday April 26, 2025 at the CAA. The event will be livestreamed on www.smsd.org and right after the pitch competition, viewers will have the chance to cast a vote in the People's Choice category. The district thanks the Regnier Family for their ongoing support of the forum.



JAG-K Success Students in Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas (JAG-K) programs have excelled in regional and state competitions. At regionals Shawnee Mission won multiple state qualifiers in the areas of employability skills, financial literacy, prepared speaking, creative decision making, and project-based learning. At the state level, Shalom Wacha, a freshman at Shawnee Mission West earned second place and was a national qualifier in employability skills. Ivan Cuevas, a Shawnee Mission West senior, earned second place in financial literacy and is a national qualifier. A team including Mason Bowman, Tim Tucker, and Cameron Roberson from Shawnee Mission West earned third place in Creative Decision Making. Overall at state, Shawnee Mission West students earned second place. Analicia Aquino, a junior, at Shawnee Mission North High School earned third place in prepared speaking and is a national qualifier. Chris Tomlinson, a junior at Shawnee Mission North

earned third place in financial literacy and is a national qualifier. All National qualifiers are preparing for the National Career Development Conference in Indianapolis this month. JAG-K programs are offered to help students graduate and learn career, leadership, and life skills. Dr. Schumacher noted we are also hearing great news coming from our middle school participants and that information will be shared at an upcoming meeting.



Wellness Specialist Awarded Teresa Denk-Smajda, SMSD student wellness specialist, was awarded the Kansas Tobacco Control Champion of 2025. This recognition is given to honor an individual

who advocates for tobacco control policies and works to engage youth in tobacco control and prevention activities. This award is presented by Resist Kansas, a statewide, youth-led movement that uses activism to encourage resistance to marketing tactics related to tobacco.



Last Day of School Following a winter of multiple snow days, Superintendent Dr. Schumacher confirmed that the academic calendar will remain unchanged. “We of course had a lot of snow days, but fortunately had enough time built into the

calendar to accommodate,” stated Schumacher.

The last day for Pre-Kindergarten students will be Thursday, May 22. The last day for students in Kindergarten through 11th grade will be Friday, May 23. Tuesday, May 27 will be a teacher work

day, Wednesday, May 28 will be held for teacher-facilitated professional learning, and Thursday, May 29 will be a teacher flex day.

As a reminder: **This Friday, April 18, 2025, school will be in session for all students.** Last summer, the Board of Education approved a calendar revision during its August 12, 2024 meeting that moved a student contact day originally scheduled after Memorial Day to this Friday.

Dr. Schumacher noted that the board of education always reserves the right to change the school calendar to respond to emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances that affect the educational program or students' welfare.

“We hope that there will be no unforeseen circumstances and that everyone who is ready for some summer days can enjoy starting their official countdown,” Schumacher added.

Former Westwood View Elementary School - The district remains under contract to sell the former Westwood View Elementary School property to the City of Westwood. Although the City's initial proposal to convert the land into a park was rejected by voters, the agreement remains active through the due diligence period, which ends on June 1, 2025. Should the contract be terminated, the district intends to relist the property for sale. Dr. Schumacher shared that further updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

Statement on Strengthening Public Education in the Current Environment

Superintendent Schumacher shared the following statement on public education in the current political environment.

“I am sure that many in the audience and watching at home have been paying attention to news coming out of Washington, DC concerning statements and other actions related to public education. You may also know that the legislative session here in Kansas ended two days ago. I want you to know that we have been tracking legislative items very closely, to evaluate their impact upon our work here in Shawnee Mission. At this moment, nothing concerning our work has changed. This Board passed the new community-led Strategic Plan last June, which provides clear direction for our work, and we are committed to continuing to follow that plan.

At the same time, we have been strongly advocating for the positions we believe to be best for public education, and for the students and families here in Shawnee Mission. At the next Board meeting, you will have the opportunity to hear from our lobbyist, Dr. Stuart Little, who is our voice in Topeka. Last month, working alongside my fellow superintendents in Olathe and Blue Valley, we wrote a letter to the members of our delegation, advocating on behalf of important state legislative issues, and we will continue to press on those things that impact our students and this district. I also went to Topeka at the end of March, along with the other five superintendents in Johnson County and a number of school board members, to host a luncheon for our delegation, where we shared

information with them about legislative issues. We also had the opportunity to meet with Governor Laura Kelly and speak with her about issues related to the legislative session.

Board president Dr. Mary Sinclair wrote a letter to the four representatives and two senators that represent the state of Kansas in Washington, DC. I had the opportunity to meet with Representative Sharice Davids' community liaison last week, and in a manner similar to Dr. Sinclair, was able to share with her our concerns related to things happening in Washington, DC, particularly the efforts to close the U.S. Department of Education. Many of you are aware that here in the United States, education is primarily funded at the state and local levels, with only around 8% of funding coming from federal sources.

At the same time, we believe that the USDOE plays a critical role in education here in the United States. Through the Office of Civil Rights (or OCR) the department is a critical guarantor of the rights of numerous individuals across our country, including racial and ethnic minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. It also provides critical financial resources that go towards helping these and other populations achieve equity in educational outcomes. Finally, it provides financial support and serves as a clearinghouse for research that helps to improve educational outcomes for all students.

We strongly believe that the US Department of Education is a critical partner to local school districts, and we have been both clear and forceful in advocating on its behalf.”

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](#).