Arkansas City Public Schools

BOE BRIEFS

An informal report from the Board of Education Meeting

August 25, 2025

Budget Hearing

Prior to the regular meeting, the Board held a budget hearing. No one addressed the Board during the hearing.

Board Approves 2025-26 Budget

The Board of Education has approved the 2025-26 budget, which lowers the district's total mill levy from 50.619 to 44.589, a significant reduction in the local tax rate. This comes as the district made its final bond payment 3.5 years early, saving taxpayers an estimated $4 million while continuing to invest in safe, supportive schools

Head Start Nutrition Grant

The Board will consider approval of a one-time Head Start grant to expand nutrition services for children and families in Cowley County. The proposal includes cooking and gardening activities, crock-pot meal programs, and lessons on food access and budgeting using the Healthy for Life curriculum. The Head Start Policy Council has already reviewed and approved the application

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Resignations:

- Lisa Bagg – ESOL SAT
- Ashley Whatley – Maintenance

Reassignments/Transfers:

- Jodie Keefe – Lunch/Office Aide at Roosevelt to Secretary at Roosevelt

Hirings:

- Colton Banta – Maintenance at ACHS
- Sherita LaCoss – Lunch/Office Aide at Jefferson
- Ron Levan – SAT at Frances Willard
- Bobby McChristian – Bus Aide

OTHER BUSINESS

- The Board accepted the following gifts:
    - $800 for ACMS band instruments from ACHS Class of 1970
    - $1,000 for ACMS Cheer from Scott and Nicole Rogers
    - $50 in snacks for a special education classroom from Jody Brewer
- The Transportation Department reported that all vehicles passed inspection with perfect scores. However, a summer storm totaled 10 buses, and four older units are being retired. About 600 students are served daily on 13 routes, and recruiting drivers remains a priority.
- Human Resources is moving personnel processes online, updating job descriptions, and providing leadership training. Since July 1, 35 positions have been filled. Vacancies remain in coaching, a high school science position, and support services such as bus drivers and mechanics.
- The Board named Board President Jon Oak as the USD 470 delegate to the KASB Delegate Assembly and named all other board members as alternates. The annual meeting is scheduled for November 15 in Wichita, Kan.
- In compliance with federal guidelines, the Board approved updated adult meal prices for the 2025-26 school year. Adult breakfast will be $2.94, and adult lunch will be $5.04
- The Board reviewed a $676,750 plan to update student and teacher devices, projectors, lab computers, and network equipment. Most purchases will be made through the state bid process for cost savings, with E-rate covering much of the network expense.
- Plans are underway to upgrade the Avery Family Learning Center's sound system to improve audio for Board meetings and district events. Updates will include new microphones, speakers, and integration with video conferencing, with completion expected by October 1, 2025.
- As of August 19, USD 470's enrollment stood at 2,865 students, close to last year's official count of 2,896. Numbers continue to shift daily as staff connect with families ahead of the official September 20 count.
- The Gifted Committee reviewed 2025-26 plans, noting Cristine Noland will lead the elementary and middle school program. Highlights include expanded enrichment, vertical alignment at the high school, and updated tools and assessments to support student growth.
- Beginning in September, the Board and the Arkansas City Teachers Association

will each appoint four representatives to a joint panel. Meeting six times during the year, the panel offers a structured way to address unresolved concerns and strengthen communication between teachers and the Board.

- The district will begin providing quarterly reports to the Board on supplemental contracts covering fall, winter, and spring activities. These reports will give an overview of staff receiving supplemental pay, as outlined in the Master Agreement, and will be updated regularly through personnel reports.
- District administrators reported that the new phone-free initiative using Yondr pouches is off to a strong start. Staff and students are adjusting well, classrooms are experiencing fewer distractions, and the process is expected to improve as everyone settles into the routine. Families are reminded that students should bring their pouch each day to support learning and encourage face-to-face connections.
- District administrators reported that mold was recently found in a few areas of the middle school. Those spaces are closed and will not be used until they are cleaned and confirmed safe. Stover's Restoration, with support from an environmental testing group, has developed a remediation plan. Specialists are cleaning the affected areas, which will be retested before the spaces are used again.