Arkansas City Public Schools

# BOE BRIEFS

*An informal report from the Board of Education Meeting*

**December 8, 2025**

## Board Recognizes Outstanding Music Educator

The Board recognized Chris VanGilder, Arkansas City High School Band Director, for being named the South Central Kansas Music Educators Association's Outstanding High School Music Educator for 2025–2026. We appreciate his dedication and the impact he continues to make through music.

## Ark City High School Report

Administrators and students presented an update highlighting student success and engagement at Arkansas City High School. The report included perspectives from the Hispanic student population, continued progress with the Seal of Biliteracy and career internship programs, recent experiences at the FFA National Convention, current JAG projects, and a choir performance celebrating student talent.

The high school's attendance and school climate data show steady improvement. Chronic absenteeism has dropped from approximately 26.14 percent last year to 14.45 percent this year. Behavioral incidents are also trending down month to month.

ACHS leaders continue to focus on building a strong school culture through four cornerstones: attitude, effort, discipline, and passion. These areas are supported by consistent expectations, visible supervision, responsive staff, and early identification of student needs. Students are embracing the positive direction.

The recent ACT prep course was well-received and will be offered again. In addition to free ACT exams for juniors, the district will soon be able to provide the test to seniors at a reduced cost.

## PERSONNEL UPDATE

Resignations/Retirements:

- Tara Adams – SAT at Jefferson
- Amy Hutto – Principal at C-4 *(retirement effective June 2026)*

Reassignments/Transfers: N/A

Hirings: Lindsey Frontel – SAT at Jefferson

**OTHER BUSINESS**

- The Board amended the agenda to include a third executive session.
- Accepted $25 for the Warm Hearts Fund from Paul and Sylvia McAlister.
- Rev. Tim Milby addressed the Board regarding the potential of reviving the baccalaureate service for seniors.
- Outgoing Board members Bob Squires and Rhoda MacLaughlin-Ramirez were recognized and thanked for their service.
- The Board approved the issuance and sale of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2025, supporting planned district projects. This move enables the district to move forward with financing and required documentation. The district received an A rating from Standard & Poor's, secured an insured AA rating, and benefited from competitive bids. The more than $2 million bond package received an average interest rate of 3.34 percent, which was better than anticipated.
- The Board reviewed a request from the local Ministerial Alliance regarding the possibility of hosting a baccalaureate ceremony for graduates
- The Board approved the district's updated School Action Plan as part of KESA 2.0. The plan continues to focus on aligning standards and improving schools to help all students succeed.
- The Board reviewed updated priorities in the district's Strategic Plan and chose to table action until the new Board takes office in January. This will allow time for further review and ensure new members are part of the decision-making process.
- The Board approved updates to middle and high school courses to comply with state rules and give students more options, including new programs and hands-on learning opportunities.
- The Board reviewed KASB's December 2025 policy updates. Topics included executive sessions, graduation rules, artificial intelligence, controversial topics, health education, religious opt-outs, nonresident enrollment, bullying, adult student placement, and school visitors. The Board will consider these updates at a future meeting.
- The Board received an update from the Calendar Committee. The group is reviewing school schedules, key dates, and alignment with Cowley College to better support students and families. Work will continue as they prepare recommendations for the 2025–26 school year.
- During the Board Comments section, the Board discussed the former clinic property

on Radio Lane. McGown-Gordon has offered to develop estimates for renovations of that facility.

- The Board held two executive sessions to discuss non-elected personnel.
- The Board held an executive session to discuss administrative contracts.
- The Board accepted Dr. Ron Ballard's retirement effective July 1, 2026.
- The Board approved extending the contracts of Assistant Superintendents William Pfannenstiel and Braden Smith by one year each.
- The Board approved holding a special meeting on December 22 at noon at the Avery Family Learning Center.