GREAT BEND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS • USD 428
Barton County, 1809 24th Street, Great Bend, Kansas 67530

BOARD REPORT

September 8, 2025 **5:00 p.m.**

REVENUE NEUTRAL HEARING

Resolution to Exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate

Mr. John Popp explained the Revenue Neutral resolution to express the property taxation policy of USD 428 Great Bend with respect to exceeding the Revenue Neutral Tax Rate for financing the annual budget for 2025-2026. The notice to exceed the RNR was posted in the GB Tribune and on the district website. By a Roll-Call vote, the local Board of Education approved the resolution to exceed the Revenue-Neutral Tax Rate for financing the annual budget.

Adjournment of Revenue Neutral Rate Hearing

The Revenue Neutral Rate Hearing was then adjourned, and the Board of Education meeting began immediately.

BUDGET HEARING

Open Forum

Local citizen Shawn Pokorski shared his thoughts on school district budgets, emphasizing that, in his opinion, eliminating athletic programs would be a way to reduce the district budget, but academic clubs and programs are valuable resources that should be supported to prepare students for their future.

Review of the District Needs Assessment

According to Kansas state statute, all school districts must complete an assessment of the educational needs of each attendance center in the district to meet the needs of at-risk students. The results of this assessment help determine the district's next steps regarding budget programs, KESA, and Title services.

Each year, the board of education evaluates the educational needs of each district's attendance center. The District Needs Assessment combines information from the Building Needs Assessments, and board members have been provided with each school's needs assessment. This information is used to address barriers that prevent all students from achieving above level 2 proficiency on state assessments, to understand how overcoming these barriers affects budget decisions, and to estimate the time required to reach these goals.

The plan involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of the district's assessment system. MTSS (Multi-Tiered Support System) is a strategy used nationwide as a best practice, and USD 428 will continue refining the process to overcome barriers that prevent all students from achieving above level 2 proficiency on state assessments. Resources to address these barriers impact budget decisions and include estimated timeframes needed to achieve these goals. These objectives were discussed in a previous meeting, and board members have reviewed the documentation.

Budget Hearing

Assistant Superintendent John Popp presented the 2025-2026 budget to the BOE, emphasizing that long-term planning and maintaining a stable mill levy remain critically important in USD 428. He highlighted the need to take appropriate budget actions to meet the educational needs of each attendance center in the district, as identified in the District Needs Assessment. The proposed budget has a mill levy of 43.166 mills, which amounts to $8,269,840 in total taxes to be levied, representing a decrease of 1.36 mills from the previous year. Expenditures are projected at $80,258,458. The Capital Outlay fund remains at a mill levy of 8.0 mills. This rate is expected to generate roughly $120,000 more in tax revenue than last year, requiring USD 428 to publish a notice to exceed the RNR rate in 2025.

Kansas law mandates all school districts to levy 20 mills for general operations. Using the Kansas school finance equalization formula, USD 428 will collect an estimated $3.2 million in local taxes and receive an estimated $26 million in state funding. This formula, based on full-time enrollment, aims to ensure that students across Kansas have access to the same high-quality education, regardless of which county they reside.

Budget Approval

The Board approved USD 428’s 2025-2026 budget, as published. The Budget Hearing was then adjourned, and the Board of Education meeting began immediately.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

September 8, 2025 **5:14 p.m.**

Board Members Mrs. Jacquie Disque, president; Mr. Aaron Emerson, vice-president; Mr. Chad Burroughs, Mrs. Deanna Essmiller, Mrs. Karen Lindberg, Mr. Randy Wetzel, Mrs. Sara Williams

Open Forum

Janice Walker from the League of Women Voters discussed the upcoming candidate forum on October 7 and is seeking public input on questions the committee can ask candidates during the forum. Questions can be submitted by September 19 through the Facebook page. Additionally, www.vote411.org/ballot is the link to the voter guide page that the public can use to learn more about candidates in the area.

Communications

The USD 428 Education Foundation's Annual Dinner & Auction will take place on November 13, 2025, at the Great Bend Events Center. Tickets are available by scanning the QR code or contacting a trustee. This year, the banquet will have a Red and Black Ball theme with a business casual dress code.

Presentations

- Kansas Secondary Educator of the Year

Congratulations to Kim Heath, who was named Kansas Speech Communication Association (KSCA) Secondary Educator of the Year. Mrs. Heath teaches speech and debate and serves as the forensics coach at Great Bend High School. Congratulations, Mrs. Heath!

- Advanced Theatre Branson, MO. Trip, 2026

GBHS Drama teacher Holly Johnson presented information regarding the Branson, MO, trip for approximately 15 Advanced Theatre students to travel to Branson, MO, in April 2026, by passenger vehicles. They will have the chance to see and speak with actors and performers. The trip costs roughly $500 per student, which is raised through fundraising efforts. The Board approved the out-of-state trip.

- Director's Report

Each month, a district director will present department updates to board members.
Dirk Davis, Director of Maintenance and Custodians, presented a report to the board members at this meeting. He briefly summarized the tasks his department manages during the school year to maintain the buildings at USD 428.

- ✓ Throughout the summer, custodians prepare for the new school year, deep cleaning every classroom from floor to ceiling.
- ✓ Summer projects the maintenance and custodian staff accomplishes include updating overhead projectors, replacing whiteboards, testing and maintaining more than 50 HVAC units, and responding to district-wide facility work orders as they are input.
- ✓ GBMS projects recently completed: south gym floor refinish, and fluorescent lighting was replaced with more cost-effective LED lights. The library's HVAC project is now complete, and the HVAC computer controls have been updated.
- ✓ At GBHS, the boiler project is complete. Custodial crews repainted the vertical areas of the gymnasium steps and below the bench seats. The gymnasium ceiling is the only area that has not yet been repainted.
- ✓ Jefferson Elementary gymnasium was repainted this summer.
- ✓ Crews installed permanent caged safety roof ladders at every school.

In addition to completed projects, upcoming needs include updating multiple GBHS rooftop HVAC units, replacing fire panels at Riley and Park Elementary Schools, among other projects.

Approval of Resolution to Adopt Local Option Budget (LOB) Percentage

All boards of education must annually adopt a resolution setting the local option budget percentage resolution. The maximum percentage that may be authorized is the statewide average of 32.3% unless the district has passed a resolution to exceed the statewide average. The Board approved adopting the statewide average of 32.3% as our Local Option Budget (LOB) percentage.

Approval of Workers' Compensation Audited Adjustment

The annual gross Workers' Compensation premium through KASB is based on the estimated payroll at the beginning of the year and then audited and adjusted according to the actual payroll at each year's end. Audited numbers for July 2024 through June 2025 reflect a balance due of $9,742.00, approved by the Board.

KASB Delegate Assembly

The KASB Delegate Assembly is the Annual Business Meeting of the Association. Each KASB member entity designates a voting delegate at the assembly to represent their local Board of Education in voting on legislative priorities for 2026. Voting delegates will choose a KASB President-Elect Designee and vote on proposed changes to the KASB Constitution and our Legislative Positions and Priorities, which guide the association's legislative efforts. Jacquie Disquelle, President, will be registered as the USD 428 Delegate, and Aaron Emerson, Vice President, will serve as the alternate. The Delegate Assembly is scheduled for November 14. A link will be sent to delegates from KASB, allowing them to cast their electronic votes.

Curriculum / Instruction Report

Assistant Superintendent JoAnn Blevins

- Professional Development Update

On October 6, Inservice Day, a conference-style Learning Lab will feature a variety of speakers and sessions offering professional learning opportunities for teachers, including support for novice educators. Novice teachers must complete *Instructional Methods* within the first two years of their teaching contract with USD 428.

- New Teacher Mentor Program

USD 428 provides a two-year mentorship program for new teachers. First-year teachers and their assigned mentors meet weekly, while second-year teachers meet with their mentors every other week. Additionally, experienced teachers new to the district are paired with an Ambassador to help them acclimate to their new building at the start of the school year and focus on expanding their professional skills.

- Curriculum Adoption Update

Curriculum adoption efforts during the 2025-2026 school year include delaying the AP English pilot until spring due to procurement issues with curriculum selection, which require the committee to reinvestigate materials for the pilot.

- HB 2382 Update

House Bill 2382 mandates that school districts include a presentation on human fetal development in the curriculum for any course covering human growth, development, or sexuality. USD 428 will follow the law

by identifying relevant courses and selecting an age-appropriate video to meet the new legal requirements. Additional details will be finalized as more information becomes available.

- Curriculum Meetings
  - Curriculum Steering Committee: 8/12/25 minutes, next meeting 10/7/25
  - Professional Development Council (PDC): 8/11/25 and 9/8/25 minutes. Next meeting 10/6/25

Business and Operations Report

Assistant Superintendent John Popp

- Student Immunizations

Required and recommended student immunizations are to be updated by October 1. School nurses monitor student immunization records and report information to the principals to enforce the policy. To avoid exclusion, one of the following must be submitted to the nurse's office:

- Proof of receiving the vaccine.
- An annual written statement signed by a licensed physician stating the physical condition of the child to be such that the tests or inoculation would seriously endanger the life or health of the child.
- A written statement signed by one parent or guardian that the child is an adherent of a religious denomination whose religious teachings are opposed to such tests or inoculations.

- Expectations for Activities and Events

As fall athletic events approach, good sportsmanship is essential for creating a positive sports environment within our community. Mr. Popp will share a friendly reminder regarding sportsmanship and respect, as well as expectations and district policy for students attending events.

Safety Committee Update

The District Safety Committee meets monthly and has accomplished a significant amount of work in the past three years. In addition to creating a USD 428 Emergency Operations Plan, the committee has implemented Standard Response Protocol (SRP). SRP utilizes specific vocabulary for responding to both crisis and non-crisis situations. The committee's four targets and goals for this year are to ensure that all staff are trained and schools are utilizing the SRP, to determine and implement Threat Assessment procedures, to develop a Standard Reunification plan, and to participate in community agency roundtable discussions.

- Upcoming Projects

Board members and the administration briefly discussed upcoming district projects that will require completion. Roofs and HVAC unit replacements are funded through capital outlay. Due to the cost, high school projects will be phased and completed in sections.

- Camera replacement – Park and Riley Elementary Schools
- Roofing Schedule – Park Elementary, GBHS Gymnasium, Riley Elementary partial replacement
- HVAC upgrades – GBHS gymnasium, auditorium, offices/classrooms, Controls

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Khris Thexton

- Enrollment Numbers Update

An unofficial count of 2,860 students enrolled for the 2025-2026 year indicates that the USD 428 enrollment numbers have decreased by 28 students compared to this time last year. The official student count day for the 2025-2026 academic year is September 22.

- 2025 Kansas Teacher Retention Survey

The 2023 Kansas Teacher Retention Survey, powered by the Educator Perceptions & Insights Center (EPIC), is a research study to investigate teacher engagement and retention and is a powerful tool being implemented by the Kansas Teacher Retention Initiative (KTRI) to amplify the voice of educators and deliver data-driven insights to state and school district leaders.

- 31st Annual Kid's Ag Day

Kid's Ag Day introduces approximately 400 Barton County students to the world of agriculture with hands-on presentations. This year, the event was scheduled to take place at Diamond K Farms but was moved to the Great Bend Expo building due to wet grounds.

- Suicide Prevention Month and Week- September 7-13, 2025

Suicide Prevention awareness was brought to the attention of school employees in September to remind all staff that everyone can make a difference. Faculty and staff are required to complete suicide awareness courses and other mandatory training modules annually.

- Fire Safety and Awareness Week

From October 5 to 10, 2025, GB Fire Department personnel will conduct a Fire Safety and Awareness program for K-6 students through presentations, demonstrations, and skits. This year's main topic will be *"Charge into Fire Safety!*, a campaign to address using lithium-ion batteries safely at home. During Fire Awareness week, Sparky the Fire Dog visits kindergarten students, and the GBFD provides proactive lessons in teaching students lifelong response skills.

- Approval of Contributions

The BOE approved the grants and contributions noted below.

- USD 428 wishes to accept a USDA Fresh Fruits and Vegetable grant for all five USD 428 elementary schools for the 2025-2026 school year to provide healthier snack choices in schools and introduce a variety of produce that students may not otherwise have the opportunity to sample. The grant amount is $109,500.00.
- Reward Incentive contributions for the following schools have been received.

School	Amount	Company
Jefferson Elementary	$397.40	Strawbridge Photo Studios
Lincoln Elementary	$268.46	Kroger Rewards
Riley Elementary	$158.80	Kroger Rewards

- Central Kansas Library System (CKLS) wishes to contribute a $500 School Library Service Allotment to USD 428. The amount will be split between each building with a library.
- The United Way Central Kansas wishes to contribute $500 to USD 428 for participating in the Stuff The Bus school supply drive.
- Jefferson Elementary students Brock, Wesley, and Mason Bauer wish to donate $111 of lemonade stand proceeds to the Jefferson student lunch fund.

Financial Report

Mr. Popp presented the warrants, financial report, travel summary, energy report, unencumbered cash balance details, and health insurance status to board members.

Consent Agenda

Board members approved the following items.

- Approval of BOE Meeting Minutes: August 11, 2025, and August 27, 2025.
- Bills and Financial Reports: As presented.
- Personnel Report: None

Upcoming Events

Board members were reminded of the forthcoming events.

- BOE Luncheon Meeting: at noon on September 24, 2025 (GB Middle School)
- Fall Homecoming and Hall of Fame: on October 10, 2025, with Liberal, parade at 3:00 p.m.
- BOE Regular Meeting: The next BOE regular monthly meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2025, at the District Education Center.
- Education Foundation Annual Dinner & Auction: on November 13, 2025, tickets are available for the Red & Black Ball
- Annual KASB Convention: on November 14-16, 2025, in Wichita, KS

Adjournment

The Board of Education meeting was adjourned.