

District Summary

The Olathe Public Schools believes in continuous improvement and that ALL students should show academic growth as evidenced by goal area number one of the Strategic Plan. The District also recognizes that not all students grow academically at the same rate, pace, and achievement level. It is also noted that state assessments are a single snapshot of student performance on one day and are not the only measure that should be considered to determine student and district success.

1. IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS THAT MUST BE OVERCOME FOR EACH STUDENT TO ACHIEVE GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY ON STATE ASSESSMENTS:

There are a number of challenges that should be considered when evaluating student success in our district. Some of the key barriers that impact our state assessment data are:

- Number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch may not have exposure to high quality programming prior to entering the school district.
- Declining enrollment also reduces funding and access to certain educational supports.
- The large number of multilingual students in Olathe who qualify for second language supports and are required to participate in state assessments with limited English proficiency. All students are required to take state assessments in science and math regardless of time with exposure to English and take the reading assessment within one year of US education. All assessments are given in English.
- Increasing levels of social-emotional challenges that include student behavior.
- Significant reduction in the Mental Health Intervention Team (MHIT) state grant has led to the elimination of the Mental Health Professional position, who were licensed therapists providing mental health services to our students. This will result in significant unmet mental health needs for our students.
- Ability to hire qualified staff in special education, especially for low-incidence positions. In contrast to the decline in the overall district enrollment, the number of students with disabilities continues to grow considerably.
- Mandates that impact education that are not part of local control.

2. IDENTIFY THE BUDGET ACTIONS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ADDRESS AND REMOVE THOSE BARRIERS:

Given an appropriate level of funding for both general education and special education, there are a number of budget actions that could be used to remove barriers:

- Reinstate funding for Mental Health Intervention Team state grant (MHIT).
- Continued investment in systemic support for behavior, mental health, and social-emotional support, which includes PBIS coaches, mental health professionals, and behavior coaches.
- Increased salary to recruit and retain highly qualified certified/licensed and classified staff. Currently, over 80% of our general fund budget goes directly to compensation and benefits. Increased funding to provide instructional support coaches at a smaller building ratio. With the sunset of our MTSS Support

Specialists, the focus of this work has moved to our instructional coaches. Having coaches covering a smaller number of buildings will provide a higher level of support for all buildings.

- Increased funding to provide additional early childhood opportunities for three and four-year-old kids in our community.
- Incentivize staff who have remained committed to public education in Kansas through quality retirement programs.
- Providing low-cost education options for those wishing to enter the field of public education.

3. IDENTIFY THE AMOUNT OF TIME THE BOARD ESTIMATES IT WILL TAKE FOR EACH STUDENT TO ACHIEVE GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY ON THE STATE ASSESSMENTS IF THE BUDGET ACTIONS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED:

- While our board of education, administration, teachers, and the rest of our staff work tirelessly to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of **ALL** our students, too many factors come into play that do not allow us to accurately assess when all students will be at a certain level. If all the students enrolled in the Olathe Public Schools were the exact same, this could be done. However, they are all different, they all deserve growth with high expectations, and they all achieve at various times and levels.
- Our students deal with trauma, poverty, mental health concerns, disabilities, interrupted and/or inconsistent educational opportunities, different levels of language proficiency, and other factors that make giving a time estimate unrealistic as a practice of a local board of education.
- The district continues to refine its local assessment system to provide timely, standards-aligned information that supports instructional decision-making throughout the school year. Continued investment in this work ensures educators have access to reliable, actionable evidence of student learning while remaining prepared to respond to future changes in state assessment and accountability systems.