

Shawnee Mission Early Childhood Center (SMECEC)

6701 W. 83rd Street
Overland Park, KS 66204
913-993-2600

Principal: Carla Heintz
Grades Served: PreK
KSDE Bldg #: 8770

Feeder Pattern: District Center



Notable School Characteristics

- Early Childhood special education program for students with disabilities who receive their special education and related services in programs designed primarily for students with disabilities, and may be integrated with non-IEP peers at a ratio from 0% to no more than 50%
- Program serving early childhood students ages 3-5
- Peer Model Program for students ages 3-5
- Trauma Smart School
- The Parents as Teachers Program is located within the building.

KSDE Building Report Card

No building report card available

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Needs Analysis

What barriers must be overcome for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on assessments?

Our teachers, students and families face a variety of barriers in ensuring student proficiency at SMECEC. One of the barriers that we are working to overcome includes the fact that a majority of our students have some identified special need with various levels of severity, and they need a variety of support from a variety of resources. Access to these resources are often hard for our families to navigate on their own. Limited funding for special education and universal preK, in order to provide additional fully inclusive preK programming, create another barrier for our students and families. According to a policy statement on inclusion put out by the U.S Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human services (2015) it is critical for young children to have the opportunity to play and interact with peers with and without disabilities for increased proficiency across a variety of skill sets. Without sufficient funding the opportunity for access to inclusive early childhood programming is limited. Finally, retaining high quality staff and difficulty hiring new staff, both teachers and paraprofessionals, to support the needs of all of the students presents a barrier for grade level proficiency.

What budget actions 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 we could take to remove some barriers. Some of them include:

- Increase SMECEC paraprofessional rate of pay equal that of paraprofessionals in other centralized programs due to the similarity of the jobs. This would allow us to recruit and maintain highly qualified paras for this program.
- Increased salaries to recruit and retain highly qualified certified and classified staff
- Floating paraprofessional to ensure adequate coverage of student minutes and needs when absences occur.
- Access to adequate building space to ensure students have a state of art facility that supports developmentally appropriate practices and allows for the addition of classroom space as needed in the future.
- Maintain appropriate levels of certified staff and resources (including, but not limited to, curriculum materials and furniture as the program expands) to meet the individual needs of our special education students and provide a more complete continuum of services, including increased inclusive settings for our PreK students.

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- Maintain staff and resources for the number of comprehensive evaluations necessary in early childhood
- Maintain full time social worker to support needs of students, families and staff
- Maintain the ECSE coach to support staff and students
- Maintain appropriate para allocation as class sizes grow and the needs of students increase
- Maintain certified building substitute which allows for full coverage in classrooms at all times.
- Full funding of special education and preschool programs from the state and federal levels

How much time will it take for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on the state assessments if the budget actions would be implemented?

The ever changing population of students we serve, and the variety of abilities and disabilities of the students we serve, their age, and family involvement make it difficult to determine when all students will meet a singular level of proficiency.

In addition, lack of constitutional funding of special education continues to impact our ability to fully meet the needs of our students in a variety of ways and provide inclusive settings which are shown to boost overall academic achievement for all students, both with and without disabilities.

Fully funded universal pre K and early childhood special education programming will allow more students access to high quality, developmentally appropriate instruction at an early age which will increase state assessment scores in the assessed elementary grades. Once again, this funding also helps to create inclusive programming which has been researched to improve the outcomes for all students involved.

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Board Rationale/Comments

The Shawnee Mission School District maintains focus on its commitment to meeting aspirational state and district education goals for every student. The district continues to budget conservatively and efficiently, limiting central administrative costs to less than 5% of the total budget. Over the past several years, the district has risen to external challenges that have impacted our students educational experiences, with an increased focus on learning recovery, chronic absenteeism, and an enhanced need for social and emotional support.

The district has used information from needs assessments conducted at each building to make targeted staff allocations at the building level. Specific needs identified by large numbers of schools, included additional teacher allocations to maintain lower class sizes at the elementary level, providing a building substitute at each building, taking extra measures to ensure paraprofessional/teacher support in special education classrooms, and higher salaries for both certified and classified staff to strengthen retention and recruitment of employees. In addition, following a comprehensive analysis of student needs, the district continues to budget for a full-time social worker position in every school, a full-time instructional coach in every school, and Real World Learning counselors at each of the five comprehensive high schools (at about 1,700 students each).

Even with the incremental restoration of state general education funding, (an increase to the base, along with a corresponding increase in the Local Option Budget) we were **not** able to add any new positions identified in individual building needs assessments across our 48 attendance centers/specialized programs (in fact we cut 19.2 FTE). Our budget situation for this year was challenging given the ongoing shortfall in Special Education funding from the State and a decline in student enrollment. Through our individual building needs assessment, our leaders identified a need for an additional 79.3 FTE that the district was unable to fund. Some positions that were unable to be funded were:

- 34 elementary counselors
- 10 Classified Special Education positions
- 5.25 Certified Special Education positions
- 5 high school instructional coaches
- 5 Interventionists
- 3 ELL Teachers

The district is maintaining the following positions in the operating funds for at least one more year:

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- Elementary class size will remain at 22 for Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 25 for 3rd through 6th grades.
- 10 additional teachers at the secondary level to support learning recovery.
- 6 Attendance Specialists to continue our work towards curbing chronic absenteeism
- At least 1 building sub at each building in the district.

The district will continue to analyze budget funds for the 2027-28 school year, in order to determine the ability to maintain the positions listed above that were originally added with ESSER funding: additional support for nursing services; additional secondary math teachers; building substitutes for every building; and class-size reduction at the elementary level. Due to the shortfall in special education state aid, along with the uncertainty of federal funds, this recently restored capacity is tenuous.

In addition, the district will take steps to absorb cuts to state aid for professional development and teacher mentoring in order to continue support for the professional growth and retention of all teachers, with a focus on Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention. These types of budgetary needs to offset unfunded mandates erodes the inflationary adjustments to general education state aid. Additionally, resources will be allocated to the following items which also were identified through the needs assessment process:

- Expand implementation of iReady math resources and assessments from 6-8 to K-8.
- Continue expanding the number of LETRS trained staff (structured literacy)
- Adopt a new Learning Walkthrough platform for enhanced data collection and feedback.

We will continue to prioritize equitable allocation of resources to create a welcoming and engaging learning experience for every student - facilitating personalized learning plans, targeting career and college readiness, with the interpersonal skills for life success.

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