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

BOARD REPORT

September 14, 2026 **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 2026-2027. 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 Board then adjourned the Revenue Neutral Rate Hearing.

5:05 p.m

BUDGET HEARING.

Review of the District Needs Assessment

At previous meetings, the Board has reviewed 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 received each school's needs assessment. At previous meetings, the board discussed the objectives and reviewed the documentation. Mr. Popp also stated that the teaching staff believes it needs additional staff to help students reach academic goals.

Budget Hearing

Assistant Superintendent John Popp presented the 2026-2027 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 each attendance center's educational needs, as identified

in the District Needs Assessment. The proposed budget has a mill levy of 43.921 mills, totaling $8,582,050 in taxes to be levied, an increase of .97 mills from the previous year. Expenditures are projected at $78,234,382. The Capital Outlay fund remains at a mill levy of 8.0 mills. This rate is expected to generate roughly $200,000 more in tax revenue than last year, requiring USD 428 to publish a notice to exceed the RNR rate in 2026.

Kansas law mandates that all school districts levy 20 mills for general operations. Under the Kansas school finance equalization formula, USD 428 is estimated to collect $3.3 million in local taxes and receive $26.7 million in state funding. Based on full-time enrollment, the formula aims to ensure students across Kansas have access to the same high-quality education, regardless of the county in which they reside.

Budget Approval

The Board approved USD 428's 2026-2027 budget, as published. The Board adjourned the Budget Hearing, and the Board of Education meeting began immediately following the Budget Hearing.

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BOARD REPORT

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

September 14, 2026 **5:07 p.m.**

Board Members Mrs. Jacquie Disque, president; Mr. Aaron Emerson, vice-president; Mrs. Karen Lindberg, Mrs. Sarah Schenek, Ms. Barb Thoren Mr. Randy Wetzel, Mrs. Sara Williams

Communications

The USD 428 Education Foundation's Annual Dinner & Auction will take place on November 12, 2026, at the Great Bend Events Center. Tickets are available by scanning the QR code to purchase tickets online or by contacting a trustee. The banquet will have a Red and Black Ball theme with a business casual dress code.

Presentations

- E-Sport Update

GBHS E-Sports coaches Jake Hofflinger and Kindric Castro reported strong interest, and what began as a club has become a competitive sport, with five teams competing against other schools. They have doubled the number of PCs, now have 6 Nintendo Switches, and have moved into room 145 at GBHS. The E-Sports Club has 69 students enrolled. Last season, the group formed two Smash teams, two Rocket League teams, and one Mario Kart team; one team narrowly missed the state playoffs. Students have plenty of opportunities to participate, and rosters will be formed soon, before the winter season begins. The group helps students connect, and certain games reach students whose interests they match. This year, the group presented two new games to the Board for addition: Marvel Rivals and Madden NFL, both approved by KSHSAA. These games promote good communication skills. The first 2026-2027 competition is on September 23.

- Cross Country Travel, Joplin, MO.

Mr. Matt Westerhaus presented information on a GBHS Cross Country out-of-state trip to Joplin, MO, on September 19, 2026. Board members raised no objection to this out-of-state trip.

- Director's Report

Each month, a district director will present department updates to board members.
Shelby Zuniga, District Accountant, presented a report to the board members at this meeting, briefly summarizing the district's finances.

- Highlights include a widening budget gap between the 2024–25 and 2025–26 school years. Total revenue is projected to fall from $57.36 million to $56.54 million, while total expenditures will climb from $58.67 million to $62.29 million.

- USD 428 generates revenue from five primary sources: local property taxes, other local receipts (fees, meals, interest, and donations), state income and sales taxes, federal funds, and additional reserve payments from the Special Education Co-op and the Health Care Reserve Fund.
- The district allocates these funds across five main expense categories: staff wages and benefits, day-to-day operational costs (curriculum, utilities, travel, and food services), capital expenditures (renovations, site improvements, and vehicle leases), purchased professional services (IT support, auditing, and virtual enrollment), and property services (building, equipment, and technology repairs).
- State funding is the district's primary revenue source, accounting for 63.7% ($36.03 million) of the total budget. The remaining funding comprises special education co-op and healthcare reserve payments at roughly 13.7%, local property taxes at 9.8%, federal taxes at 8.0%, and local receipts such as student fees and donations at 4.9%.
- Personnel costs account for the vast majority of district spending, at 73.4% ($45.69 million) of total expenditures. Day-to-day operations—covering classroom supplies, utilities, and food services—make up the second-largest share at 18.9% ($11.79 million). The remainder of the budget is allocated to capital projects at 4.1%, professional services at 2.6%, and property maintenance at 1.1%.
- For the 2026–27 school year, the district plans targeted spending reviews to address challenges stemming from declining enrollment, rising operational costs, and potential shifts in the state funding formula.

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. The maximum percentage that may be authorized is the statewide average of 32.4% unless the district has passed a resolution to exceed the statewide average. The Board approved adopting the statewide average of 32.4% 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 is audited and adjusted at the end of each year based on the actual payroll. Audited numbers for July 2025 through June 2026 show a refund balance of $2,561.00. No Board approval was required to accept this credit.

KASB Delegate Assembly

The KASB Delegate Assembly is the Association's annual business meeting. Each KASB member entity designates a voting delegate to represent its local Board of Education and to vote on legislative priorities for 2026. Voting delegates will select a KASB President-Elect Designee and vote on proposed changes to the KASB Constitution and to our Legislative Positions and Priorities, which guide the Association’s legislative efforts. Aaron Emerson, Vice President, will be registered as the USD 428 Delegate, and Randy Wetzel will serve as the alternate. The Delegate Assembly is scheduled for November 7. KASB delegates will receive a link to cast their electronic votes.

Approval of 10-passenger vans

The district has received a state government contract quote for two 2027 Ford Transit T350 low-roof, 10-passenger vans for student transportation, priced at $61,226 each. The vans are available under a state government contract through Shawnee Mission Ford. Mr. Popp provided details and recommended approval. The Board approved the purchase of the two vans for the district fleet.

Curriculum / Instruction Report

Assistant Superintendent JoAnn Blevins

- New Teacher Mentor Program & Pre-Service Teachers

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 a new building at the start of the school year. Mrs. Blevins also shared ways that USD 428 supports student teachers, those in Transition to Teach programs, RTAP, and internships.

- Effective Use of Instructional Technology

Mrs. Blevins provided an overview of current discussions on research and policy regarding students' effective use of instructional technology, including district efforts to align with best practices. The Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) have established policy frameworks for the Effective Use of Instructional Technology in K–12 public and accredited non-public schools, and the district will begin drafting a policy that is proactive and transparent, based on research from the state board of education. Prioritize face-to-face, non-technology learning over technology use. This statewide initiative provides guidelines to balance the educational benefits of digital devices against concerns over screen time, mental health, and classroom distraction.

- Curriculum Meetings
  - Curriculum Steering Committee: 9/8/26 minutes, next meeting 10/13/26
  - Professional Development Council (PDC): 8/17/26 minutes, next meeting 9/14/26

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 shared 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 has organized a district-wide reunification simulation drill on 9/28/26. The day will begin with a guest speaker in the GBHS auditorium. Building employees will then return to their buildings, and staff from each building will be bused to the PAC to simulate their roles in a real situation.

Employees from the District Education Center will be assigned roles and provided with signage and kits to ensure the process runs smoothly.

- 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. Because of the cost, the district will phase high school projects and complete them in sections.

- Camera replacement – Jefferson, Lincoln, and Eisenhower Elementary Schools
- Roofing Schedule – GBHS Fieldhouse, Riley Elementary
- GBHS Parking Lot

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Khris Thexton

- Enrollment Numbers Update

An unofficial count of 2,484 students enrolled for the 2026-2027 year indicates that USD 428 enrollment has decreased by 76 students compared to this time last year. Mr. Thexton said the enrollment drop has been a trend over the past five years and has been experienced throughout the state. The official student count day for the 2026-2027 academic year is September 20.

- 32nd Annual Kid's Ag Day

Kid's Ag Day introduces approximately 400 Barton County students to agriculture through hands-on presentations. This year, the event took place at the Great Bend Expo and rotates every other year between the Expo and Diamond K Farms. The event is well attended by 4th-grade students in Barton County.

- Suicide Prevention Month and Week- September 13-19, 2026

Suicide Prevention awareness was highlighted for school employees in September to remind all staff that everyone can make a difference. Faculty and staff must complete suicide awareness courses and other mandatory training modules annually. The Jason Flatt Act is dedicated to preventing the "Silent Epidemic" of youth suicide through educational and awareness programs that equip young people, educators, youth workers, and parents with the tools and resources to identify and assist at-risk youth. The triennial global theme (2024-2026) is "Changing the Narrative on Suicide."

- Fire Safety and Awareness Week

From October 4 to 10, 2026, 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.

- GBMS wishes to accept a $150 contribution from the GBMS Booster Club to purchase prizes for Paw Mart Bucks.

- GBHS Activities Department wishes to accept the following contributions:
  - $1,500 from Coach Taylor Satterthwaite to go towards the GBHS Boys Basketball program.
  - $350 from Bank of the Plains to sponsor a Pep Club Megaphone
  - $500 from Carol M. Hopkins to support the GBHS Band trip.
  - $744.95 from football players who opted to purchase their football helmet to keep post-season.
  - $6,398 from Norlin Inc. for a GBHS Cheer fundraiser.

GBHS Activities wishes to accept the following contributions from the Panther Booster Club:
$414 to pay for student entry fees to attend the regional softball tournament

- $100 to pay for KSHSAA state tournament ads for softball and baseball

- $695.50 to go towards tennis uniforms
- $1102.84 to purchase softball helmets
- $7220 towards second half payment of the golf simulator

- Reward Incentive contributions for the following schools have been received.

School	Amount	Company
GBHS Activities	$ 81.00	BSN Sports
GBHS Activities	$ 14.91	Ohiopyle Prints

Financial Report

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

Executive Session(s)

The Board recessed into executive session to discuss individual employees' performance under KOMA. The Board took no action after the session.

Consent Agenda

Board members approved the following items.

- Approval of BOE Meeting Minutes: August 10, 2026, August 26, 2026
- Bills and Financial Reports: As presented.
- Personnel Report: None

Upcoming Events

Board members were reminded of the forthcoming events.

- USD 428 Reunification Safety Drill: September 28, 2026, all staff participation
- BOE Luncheon Meeting: at noon on September 30, 2026 (Little Panthers Preschool)
- Fall Homecoming: on October 9, 2026, with Liberal, parade at 3:00 p.m.
- BOE Regular Meeting: The next BOE regular monthly meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2026, at the District Education Center.
- Annual KASB Convention: on November 6-8, 2026, in Wichita, KS
- Education Foundation Annual Dinner & Auction: On November 12, 2026, tickets are available for the Red & Black Ball

Adjournment

The Board of Education meeting was adjourned.