

**"Little River-Windom USD 444: Building
Brighter Futures – Board & District
Updates"**

Little River-Windom USD 444

Mission

USD 444 is committed to preparing ALL students to make a positive impact in their lives and communities after high school.

Vision

Every Student. Every Opportunity.

Focus

Goals

Objectives

Recruitment and Retention of Quality Staff

Develop a culture of recruitment and retention of high-quality staff that drives student success.

- Develop a competitive compensation package
- Increase housing options
- Create a culture of choice with a sense of belonging
- Provide professional growth opportunities for all staff
- Increase marketing for the school district and educators

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Develop and maintain partnerships with community stakeholders to provide meaningful learning.

- Enhance and grow school-community partnerships
- Actively pursuing/receiving grants and outside funding
- Develop student-run enterprises
- Increase methods for all stakeholders

Student Success

Develop a culture of learning that challenges each student through meaningful opportunities and experiences

- Develop personalized learning with appropriate staff resources/time
- Create meaningful learning opportunities
- Ensure college and career readiness
- Identify ways to best measure student success

World Class Facilities

Maintain and enhance facilities and resources that align with the district's vision.

- Update and maintain facilities
- Develop a culture of ownership and pride
- Maintain technology innovation

Focus Area #1

Recruitment and Retention of Quality Staff

Goal **Develop a culture of recruitment and retention of high-quality staff that drives student success.**

Objectives & Outcomes

1.1 Develop competitive compensation package

- 1.1.1 Increase base teacher salary to be equal to or greater than all adjacent school districts and increase median teacher salary by 3+% annually to be competitive with surrounding districts.
- 1.1.2 Evaluate and expand employee benefits annually, ensuring our offerings remain competitive, responsive to staff needs, and aligned with organizational goals.

1.2 Increase housing options

- 1.2.1 Form a collaborative community housing committee, including school, city, local developers, and others, to develop and implement a strategic housing plan.
- 1.2.2 Develop and expand a building trades program for student training, career opportunities, and future housing expansion.

1.3 Create a culture of choice with a sense of belonging

- 1.3.1 Construct one or more representative advisory teams that routinely meet with district and/or BOE leadership.
- 1.3.2 Construct and use an employee and student survey to assess their sense of belonging and identify areas for improvement each year.

1.4 Provide professional growth opportunities for all staff

- 1.4.1 Provide annual professional development opportunities for all staff by offering relevant workshops or training sessions and establishing partnerships with peer schools or districts to collaborate and share professional learning resources.
- 1.4.2 Conduct surveys or evaluations annually to assess the effectiveness of professional development programs and adapt them based on staff feedback.

1.5 Increase marketing for school district and educators

- 1.5.1 Increase staffing or reassign job duties to prioritize district communication and marketing.
- 1.5.2 Highlight and celebrate district successes by consistently sharing compelling stories that result in at least one positive feature or mention in regional or state-wide media each month of the school year.

Focus Area #2

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Goal **Develop and maintain partnerships with community stakeholders to provide meaningful learning.**

Objectives & Outcomes

2.1 Enhance and grow school-community partnerships.

2.1.1 Establish a School-Community Partnership Committee to collaboratively design and implement a joint educational program that strengthens connections between schools and community stakeholders.

2.2 Actively pursue/receive grants and outside funding.

2.2.1 Establish a system to prioritize, assign, and promote awareness of grant opportunities by developing and maintaining a centralized repository of grants and other funding sources available for school and community use.

2.2.2 Increase external funding by annually submitting 3–5 grant proposals and securing a minimum of \$10,000 to support district initiatives and strategic priorities.

2.3 Develop student-run enterprises.

2.3.1 Prioritize work-based learning through the School-Community Partnership Committee by creating a dedicated sub-committee to lead the initiative and launching at least two student-run enterprises by 2030 to provide authentic, career-connected learning experiences.

2.3.2 Track the financial sustainability and profitability of student-run enterprises, demonstrating their viability each year.

2.4 Increase methods of communication for all stakeholders.

2.4.1 Strengthen district communication by improving or implementing at least one new stakeholder communication channel annually through 2027, and improving school communication open rates each school year.

2.4.2 Conduct surveys or focus groups to annually assess stakeholder satisfaction with communication methods and identify areas for improvement within.

Focus Area #3

Student Success

Goal **Develop a culture of learning that challenges each student through meaningful opportunities and experiences**

Objectives & Outcomes

3.1 Develop personalized learning with appropriate staff resources/time.

3.1.1 Enhance personalized learning by establishing a baseline from fall 2025 student survey data, developing clear targets and metrics, and increasing the percentage of students who feel their learning is tailored to their needs and interests by 10% annually through ongoing data collection, analysis, and strategic adjustments.

3.1.2 Increase work-based learning opportunities annually.

3.2 Create meaningful learning opportunities.

3.2.1 Increase student engagement and motivation by 10% annually through the implementation of high-impact, standards-aligned teaching strategies supported by biannual professional learning opportunities.

3.2.2 Enhance personalized learning across all classrooms by expanding the effective use of technology to create more dynamic, student-centered learning experiences.

3.3 Ensure college and career readiness.

3.3.1 Raise student MAP scores by 5% from Fall to Spring and reduce the percentage of students in the bottom 40% annually.

3.3.2 Cohort ACT scores will exceed the Kansas state average ACT scores in all categories.

3.3.3 Regularly track and report the participation rate in college and career exploration activities.

3.4 Identify ways to best measure student success.

3.4.1 Engage key stakeholders through surveys and focus groups to gather diverse perspectives on success measurement, while tracking the variety and frequency of assessment methods used to measure student progress across the academic year.

3.4.2 Monitor and enhance the use of data analysis tools to evaluate student success beyond standardized tests, and track the frequency and effectiveness of data-driven decision-making in curriculum development, instructional strategies, and student support services.

Focus Area #4

World Class Facilities

Goal Maintain and enhance facilities and resources that align with the district's vision.

Objectives & Outcomes

4.1 Update and maintain facilities.

4.1.1 Complete all planned maintenance projects on existing facilities, each as outlined in the Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan. 4.1.2 Conduct satisfaction surveys with students, staff, and parents to assess the overall condition and functionality of school facilities annually.

4.2 Develop a culture of ownership and pride.

4.2.1 Foster a stronger sense of ownership and pride in the school community by conducting surveys or focus groups with students, staff, and parents annually, and using the insights to guide engagement efforts.

4.2.2 Strengthen school spirit and community involvement by increasing staff and student participation in beautification or volunteer projects annually and launching two new student-led initiatives that promote engagement by 2030.

4.3 Maintain technology innovation.

4.3.1 Upgrade 20% of classroom technology equipment with newer models each year to ensure adequate functionality and support for learning activities.

4.3.2 Implement at least one new teacher-led technology initiative or program that enhances teaching and learning each year.

4.3.3 Train all teachers on effectively integrating technology into their lesson plans and instructional practices annually.

Board Briefs

The board reviewed KASB policies. Several new policies and verbiage, including a lot of language about cell phones and social media, were discussed. The new law regarding the use of social media for communication was discussed. USD 444 will use Apptegy Rooms and the USD 444 app to communicate with students and/or parents for the coming year.

The cell phone and personal device policy was discussed and reviewed by board members. Discussion was held about the upcoming year and the process that schools will follow. The cell phone policy was adopted. Due to new legislation and the fact that any two-way communication with students is considered a breach of the law, the board approved limiting Facebook pages and streamlining communication through the major existing pages.

District Crisis Plans, Athletic Handbooks, Student and Staff Handbooks, and the Computer Usage Agreement were discussed and reviewed by board members. Final approval of the handbooks occurred at the July meeting after a few minor changes.

Discussion was held regarding health insurance. The district will continue the two-tiered plan based on staff preference and need. The decision is never a one-size-fits-all, but the district is very proud to continue providing a high-quality health insurance plan. Currently, the district pays \$905 a month for full-time employees. This is a very nice benefit for staff members.

Approved contracts for Jamie Zimmerman, Head Cook at Little River, and Julia Crawford, PreK teacher at Windom Elementary.

A large portion of the July board meeting was spent discussing the budget. Every year in June, the district closes out the year and starts the process of budgeting for the next. USD 444 was able to make the necessary transfers to start the 2026-2027 budget year. Below are a few of the highlights of year-end expenditures and transfers. A total of \$180,591 was spent on year-end purchases. This includes curriculum, school supplies, athletic supplies, and capital outlay purchases for facility upgrades. Transfers were made into Special Education, At Risk, Professional Development, Food Service, and CTE to start the new year. The total of the transfers was just over \$350,000. These transfers allow the district to make payments at the beginning of the school year and fiscal year before state funds are distributed into these accounts. Funding in these accounts is not distributed until October or November. The 2026-2027 budget was discussed. More discussion will be held in August, with approval of the budget to take place at the September meeting.

Board meeting dates for 2026-2027 were approved after discussion. Board meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 AM.

PHONE-FREE LEARNING

USD 444 LITTLE RIVER SCHOOLS

**Fewer Distractions. Greater Learning.
Stronger Futures.**



PERSONAL DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

To support a focused learning environment, students are not allowed to use personal electronic devices during the school day. This includes:

- Cell phones
- Smartwatches
- Tablets
- Earbuds / Headphones
- Personal laptops
- Messaging devices
- Other wireless electronic devices



SECURE STORAGE

01 Bring It? Store It.

If a student brings a device to school, it must be powered off and stored in an approved location for the entire school day unless permission is granted by school staff.



BEST PRACTICE

02 Leave It at Home.

Students are encouraged to leave personal devices at home or in their vehicle to help create a safe, respectful, and distraction-free learning environment.



NEED TO REACH YOUR STUDENT?

03 Contact the Office.

For urgent messages, parents and guardians should contact the main school office. Students may use school telephones when necessary.



EXPECTATIONS FOR STAFF

04

- Staff will communicate with students using district-approved methods.
- Classroom assignments will not require students to use personal electronic devices.



APPROVED EXCEPTIONS

Devices may be used when authorized for:



Documented
Medical Needs



IEP
Accommodations



Section 504
Plans



Administrator-
Approved
Educational Use

A SIMPLE ROUTINE. A POWERFUL IMPACT.



ARRIVE

Come to school ready to learn.



STORE DEVICE

Power off and store in approved location.



FOCUS & LEARN

Engage, participate, and achieve.



GO HOME

Retrieve your device at the end of the day.

WHY IT MATTERS



MORE FOCUS
Reduce distractions and maximize instructional time.



STRONGER CONNECTIONS
Encourage face-to-face interactions and build positive relationships.



ACADEMIC SUCCESS
Help students stay engaged and reach their full potential.



BETTER WELL-BEING
Support healthy habits and limit unnecessary screen time.

**USD 444
LITTLE RIVER**

*Learning First.
Every Student.
Every Day.*



THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS!

From Dirt to Diamond: The Journey Begins



A Masterpiece Made by Many

Windom's new downtown mural is complete! The project was led by the Windom Beautification Committee and artist Kaycee Sutter, who worked with 50 area students to create a mural celebrating the community's heritage and traditions.

Special thanks to John Ratzlaff for providing the mural site; Dylan Baldwin and Fab Works of Inman for donating the metal frames; Les and Zack Toews, Jim Nelson, Dave Surface, Ian Bower and the Bower family for their work installing and finishing the project.

The mural was made possible through a partnership with USD 444, an Arts Everywhere grant, local businesses, volunteers and community support. Thank you to everyone who helped make this lasting addition to Main Street possible!



Main Gym Gets a Fresh Look



Work is underway on a facelift for our Main Gym! The gym floor is currently being sanded and refinished to give it a fresh new look for the upcoming school year. This photo captures the project in progress. We look forward to sharing the finished results once the work is complete!

Important Dates:

- **July 27 – Online Enrollment Opens**
- **August 4 – Face-to-Face Enrollment**
- **3:00–6:00 p.m. at both school buildings. Stop by if you need help with enrollment or have any questions.**
- **August 13 – First Day of School**
- **August 17 – First Day of Athletic Practices**

Summer Staff Spotlight

Before another school year begins, we'd like to recognize the incredible team working behind the scenes all summer long. Their dedication and hard work have helped ensure our students and staff are returning to schools that are organized, welcoming, and ready for a great year.

A special thank you to:

Marsha and Briana – District Office, for managing orders and keeping everything moving behind the scenes.

Jean, Toni, and Emily – For their many contributions in preparing our school buildings.

Tim and Jacob Paden – For keeping our maintenance and grounds in top shape.

Angela and Debbie – For their outstanding work getting our buildings clean, organized, and ready to welcome everyone back.

Your commitment doesn't go unnoticed. Thank you for everything you've done to help make the start of the school year a success!