

**"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

Written reports were submitted to the board by the principals and Mr. Crump. Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Paden shared some informational items with the board in comments. Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Paden shared some state assessment information. Building needs assessments were shared from administration on the challenges and barriers we have in getting 100% of our students proficient on the state assessments. Principals highlighted the outstanding state assessment scores from last year. Test scores in most grade levels and subject matter are well above the state average.

The board voted to approve the proposed budget with a 7-0 vote. The total mill levy for the 2026-2027 budget year will be 59.911, which includes the .784 that the Recreation Commission requested to levy. This is a slight decrease in mill levy from the previous budget year. USD 444 is a small minority of districts in the state that were able to remain revenue neutral. USD 444 is expected to collect slightly fewer tax dollars locally than last year.

The board approved the property insurance renewal through Raleigh Insurance and EMC. The district's policy runs from October 1st to September 30th. The premium decreased by nearly \$11,000 for the 2026-2027 school year. The total premium for the district annually will be \$142,017.

A five-year projected enrollment document was shared with the board. Unfortunately, for the first time in several years, the district is seeing a decrease in enrollment. Because state aid is based on student head count, the district will have to make some decisions in the near future to reduce the budget. The final enrollment and state reporting will be finished next week. After the October reporting and completion of the reports, the district will have a final number and projection for the possible loss of funding for the 2027-2028 school year. The law allows districts to count the current September 20th count or the preceding year's count. Due to the decrease in student enrollment, due to smaller incoming classes and graduating larger classes, we will be able to take the number from the September 2025 count day rather than the September 2026 count. However, that means next year, unless we see an increase on the 20th, our budget will be affected negatively.

The board approved an audit engagement letter from SSC CPA's, PA, for the 2025-2026 audit. I want to remind patrons that by statute, school districts are audited heavily, and this takes place on an annual basis. These audits are very thorough and complete, as they should be based on the tax dollars received. USD 444 has an outstanding record for clean audits and is an example to the state on how record-keeping and procedures should be done. A huge thanks to all staff for making this possible.

Happy National Principals Month!

October is National Principals Month, and we want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate our amazing principals!

Our principals do so much more than lead our schools. They support our teachers and staff, encourage our students, work with families, solve countless problems, and help create a positive environment where everyone can learn and grow.

Thank you for the time, dedication, leadership, and heart you give to our schools every day.

We are grateful for everything you do to make USD 444 a great place to learn and work!

Thank you to our incredible principals for all that you do!

FFA Freshmen Attend Greenhand Conference



Three freshman FFA members attended the Greenhand Conference at Inman High School, where they participated in leadership workshops, learned about FFA opportunities, and explored agricultural careers. They also began a legacy project that will turn more than 10 years of chapter T-shirts into a quilt, highlighting our chapter's history while promoting the reuse of clothing. We look forward to seeing the finished project!

Honoring our Veterans!



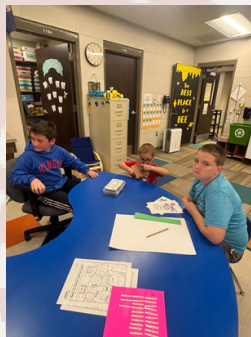
We were proud to honor and recognize the veterans in our community. We are grateful for their service, sacrifice, and dedication to our country. Thank you to all who have served and continue to serve our nation!

Advanced A&P in Action



We are excited to offer Advanced Anatomy & Physiology this year with Mr. Dold! Students are already diving into the human body and recently explored the skeletal system as part of their studies. We're excited to see all the hands-on learning and discoveries this class will bring throughout the year!

Tiger Pride Fifth Grade & Kindergarten Buddies



Our fifth-grade and kindergarten buddies recently spent time working together! Students created trees by tracing their arms and hands to make the trunks and branches while practicing their cutting skills. It was wonderful to see our students learning, creating, and helping one another!

Great job, Mrs. Renkin, Mrs. Ewertt, and students!

Sixth Grade Explores Mesopotamia



One of Miss Hendrickson's two classes of sixth grade social studies students are busy this afternoon working on their Mesopotamian group projects.

Making a Splash in Fourth-Grade Art!



One of Mrs. Sutter's fourth-grade art classes created colorful tropical fish! Students began by drawing smaller fish, followed by a larger fish, before bringing their artwork to life with paint. We love seeing their creativity and artistic skills shine!

LITTLE RIVER SCHOOL HALL OF FAME NOMINATION FORM Class of 2026-2027

As a community member, you are entitled and encouraged to nominate Little River School employees, scholars, athletes, or others you feel are deserving of the honor for the Little River School Hall of Fame. Nominations will be accepted through November 1, 2026. All nominations received after that date will be held until the next year.

CRITERIA FOR A PERSON TO BE NOMINATED

- The nominee must, during and following his/her career, have exemplified the pride and spirit that is Little River School.
- If a student and/or athlete, he or she must be a Little River School graduate and have been out of high school for at least five (5) years. If a Little River staff member, must have worked at Little River School for at least five (5) years and is not currently employed by the district fulltime.
- If an at-large nominee, the person must have made significant contributions to Little River School.

**TO SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION, COMPLETE AND RETURN THE FORM BELOW TO:
Brent Garrison, Little River School, 455 W. Prairie St., Little River, KS 67457**

Nominee's Name: _____ Name of Family Contact: _____

Current Address: _____ Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

Nominee's Category (circle one): Student Staff Contributor

Nominee's Resume (i.e., records, awards, achievements): *Copies of clippings, etc., are needed if available, and information on contributions in the following categories: Little River, State, National, College, Professional, and achievements after school and/or college.*

Please supply your personal information so we may contact you for any further assistance.

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Phone: _____

**PLEASE NOTE:
YOU MAY NOMINATE
MORE THAN ONE
PERSON**