"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.

October 2026 Board Briefs

The board reviewed administrative reports. Mr. Paden and Mr. Hendrickson updated the board on some building items and upcoming events.

Mr. Garrison provided the board with an enrollment update. As expected, the district has experienced a decrease in overall headcount of 11 students. The SO66 report has been submitted to the state to certify our final weighted factors and student headcount. This report is the funding report, which is due in October so that KSDE can calculate overall state enrollment. Of course, nothing is final until our KSDE audit, which will come at a later date. The overall state per-pupil enrollment is expected to decrease to more than 9,000 students statewide. The birth rate and smaller incoming class sizes are challenges and concerns for many school districts, including USD 444. Below is a comparison of the past three years based solely on headcount. The chart below illustrates the district's enrollment and the challenges with smaller incoming classes. This information is based on the last three years' enrollment numbers. The loss of 11 students will result in a loss of state funding for the 2027-2028 fiscal year.

Little River Jr./Sr. High Headcount

Grade	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027
7th	16	24	31
8th	19	17	24
JH Total	**35**	**41**	**55**
9th	22	20	16
10th	23	26	19
11th	24	23	25
12th	18	23	22
HS Total	**87**	**92**	**82**
JH/HS Total	**122**	**133**	**137**

Windom Elementary Headcount

Grade	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027
PK	15	7	12
K	20	18	18
1st	14	19	13
2nd	22	14	18
3rd	17	22	14
4th	29	18	25
5th	28	31	17
6th	**24**	**31**	**28**
WES Total	**169**	**160**	**145**

	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027
Total Enrollment	**291**	**293**	**282**

October 2026 Board Briefs Continued

Mr. Paden and Mr. Hendrickson shared with the board the highlights of the school improvement day that the KESA team attended at Kinsley on October 6th. KESA (Kansas Education Systems Accreditation), is how Kansas ensures every school system is improving outcomes for students. The model focuses on continuous improvement by helping schools strengthen instruction, use data effectively, and align their work so all students are prepared for success after high school. USD 444 has been focused on high-quality instruction. Each district is required to submit an action plan and goals annually. The new improvement plan is due in December. The district continues to look at data to drive instruction.

Mr. Garrison shared a transportation update and plan with the board. The board approved a bid from Midway Motors to purchase a 2027 Chevrolet Equinox LT in the amount of $31,979. The car will be used by district staff for trips that do not require a larger vehicle.

Trevor Rolfs, due to accepting the Boys' Basketball Head Coaching position here at Little River High School, resigned his duties as Board Member effective October 31st. Trevor's resignation will be accepted at the November meeting. The board will begin searching for a new board member. The position will be advertised after the November meeting. Interested applicants will need to submit a letter of interest to Marsha Heinly, Board Clerk, after the position has been posted and advertised.

Lady Redskins Take 3rd at State! 🏐❤️



So proud of our Lady Redskins! These girls brought home 3rd place at the state tournament! They faced their share of ups and downs, challenges, and tough battles throughout the season, but they continued to show up, work hard, and fight for one another. They proved once again that Little River is a force to be reckoned with!

Congratulations to all the girls and coaches on an amazing season! Thank you for the time, effort, and heart you put into this program. We know it wasn't always easy, but you never backed down. You have given our school and community so much to be proud of. Way to go, Redskins! ❤️

FFA Hosts District Land Evaluation Contest! 🌱



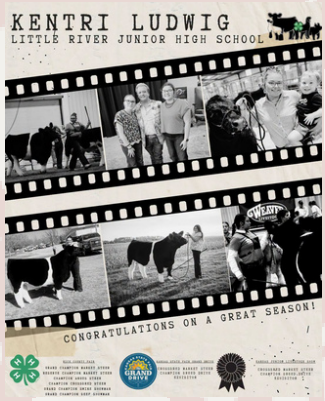



Our FFA program hosted 183 students from over 15 schools for the district land evaluation contest. Despite muddy conditions, it was a successful day of learning! Our Plant and Soil Science students also gained hands-on experience evaluating soil and land use. Thank you to Ed Hodgson for generously hosting this event!

Celebrating Livestock Show Success! 🐄











Congratulations to our students on a successful fall livestock show season! We are proud of Colyer Williams, Kentri Ludwig, Kaden Bessar, Graham Williams, and Kelltyn Grasser for their hard work and dedication. Best of luck to Kelltyn at the American Royal!

Exploring Careers in Mechanics! 🔧







Students interested in mechanics careers toured Dan's Cycle, Prairieland Partners, Midway Motors, and McPherson College. Thank you to each location for sharing their knowledge and helping students explore future career opportunities!

Chemistry Comes to Life at K-State! 🧪







Mr. Dold's Chemistry students visited K-State for hands-on learning, touring the Glass Blowing Shop and participating in activities in the chemistry labs. Thank you to K-State and LRHS alumnus Jim Hodgson for this great learning opportunity!

Thank You, Booster Club! ❤️





We are so grateful for all the ways you support our students, athletes, and school throughout the year. From the little extras to the big moments, your time, generosity, and dedication make a difference. We appreciate EVERYTHING you do for our Redskins! ❤️

Volleyball Senior Night! 🏐❤️





We celebrated our volleyball seniors with a great Senior Night victory over Inman, sweeping the match in three straight sets! Thank you to our seniors and their families for their dedication, hard work, and support throughout the season. We are proud of you, Redskins!

Football & Cheer Senior Night! 🏈❤️📣





















Friday night was all about recognizing our football seniors and cheerleaders and celebrating the memories, friendships, and moments they've made along the way. Thank you for being such an important part of our Redskin tradition and for representing Little River with pride. We will always be cheering you on!

Pre-K Pumpkin Fun! 🎃🧡










🎃 Our Pre-K friends have been learning all about pumpkins! We had a special time decorating pumpkins with the help of the Ladies Auxiliary. The smiles, creativity, and excitement made for such a sweet day! We are so thankful for the helping hands and the memories made! 🧡🍂

Pre-K Fire Safety Fun! 🚒🔥





🚒 Pre-K has been learning all about fire safety! Our little firefighters had fun putting out pretend fires with a hands-on baking soda and vinegar science experiment! 🔥🧯

Third Grade Mail Adventures! 📬❤️







📬 You've got mail! Third graders explored different types of communities by writing letters to family and friends across the country. After mailing their letters at the Windom Post Office, they were excited to receive replies and share what they learned. A fun way to connect and learn about communities near and far! ❤️