

OLATHE PUBLIC SCHOOLS REVIEW FOR BUDGET

District Summary

The Olathe Public Schools believes in continuous improvement and that ALL students should show academic growth as evidenced by goal area number one of the Strategic Plan. The District also recognizes that not all students grow academically at the same rate, pace, and achievement level. It is also noted that state assessments are a single snapshot of student performance on one day and are not the only measure that should be considered to determine student and district success.

1. IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS THAT MUST BE OVERCOME FOR EACH STUDENT TO ACHIEVE GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY ON STATE ASSESSMENTS:

There are a number of challenges that should be considered when evaluating student success in our district. Some of the key barriers that impact our state assessment data are:

- Number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch that may not have exposure to high quality programming prior to entering the school district.
- Declining enrollment that also reduces funding and access to certain educational supports.
- The large number (around 3,000 in Olathe) of students who speak English as a second language, who are also required to participate in state assessments with limited English proficiency. Students are required to take state assessments in science and math regardless of time with exposure to English, and take the reading assessment within one year of exposure to English. All assessments are given in English.
- Increasing levels of social-emotional challenges that include student behavior.
- Ability to hire qualified staff in the area of special education.
- Mandates that impact education that are not part of local control.

2. IDENTIFY THE BUDGET ACTIONS THAT 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 that could be used to remove barriers:

- Increased salary to recruit and retain highly-qualified certified/licensed and classified staff. Currently, over 80% of our general fund budget goes directly to compensation and benefits.
- Increased funding to provide additional early childhood opportunities for three and four-year-old kids in our community.
- Incentivize staff who have remain committed to public education in Kansas through quality retirement programs.
- Providing low-cost education options for those wishing to enter the field of public education.

3. IDENTIFY THE AMOUNT OF TIME THE BOARD ESTIMATES IT WILL TAKE FOR EACH STUDENT TO ACHIEVE GRADE LEVEL PROFICIENCY ON THE STATE ASSESSMENTS IF THE BUDGET ACTIONS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED:

While our board of education, administration, teachers, and the rest of our staff work tirelessly to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of ALL of our students, too many factors come into play that do not allow us to accurately assess when all students will be at a certain level. If all of the students enrolled in the Olathe Public Schools were the exact same, this could be done. However, they are all different, they all deserve growth with high expectations, and they all achieve at various times and levels.

Our students deal with trauma, poverty, mental health concerns, disabilities, different levels of language proficiency, and other factors that make giving a time estimate unrealistic as a practice of a local board of education.