

AN AUBURN-WASHBURN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 437 PUBLICATION



SCHOOLnews

Winter
2021-2022

MEDIA

*Inside the State's Largest
Middle School*

Inside this Issue

www.usd437.net



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Dr. Scott McWilliams, *Superintendent of Schools*

This school year marks the beginning of a new five-year journey in Auburn-Washburn. Strategic Plan 2026 was built from feedback provided by a variety of stakeholder groups in our school community; it was truly a community effort. Specifically, 30

strategic planning meetings were held throughout the Auburn-Washburn school community from October 2019 – January 2020 with the Board of Education, students, staff, parents, Kansas Board of Regents, Kansas State Department of Education, Topeka Chamber, Washburn University and Washburn Tech, and local business leaders. In total, nearly 500 Auburn-Washburn stakeholders participated in strategic planning meetings.

Based on the feedback received, the following five areas of opportunity consistently surfaced:

1. Birth to Age 5 – increase the number of 3- and 4-year-olds in early childhood

2. Address Social-Emotional Well-being – add space and capacity to each school
3. Instruction and Programming – problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, team building
4. Career and Technical Education – innovation focused and industry-standard spaces
5. School Size and Capacity – two ideal sized middle schools and transition sixth grade students to middle school to increase space and capacity at elementary schools

Currently, our schools are full with no remaining space to expand opportunities for students. Therefore, strategic planning meetings shifted to bond election meetings. Twenty bond election meetings were held from August – November 2021 to determine exactly how best to place Auburn-Washburn in position to make significant progress in each of the above stated five areas of opportunity. Please visit the www.usd437.net/bond2022 to learn more about Bond Election 2022. ★



Michael White, *Board of Education President*

I am excited to announce the Board of Education approved, by a unanimous vote, a two-question bond election to be held in March – April 2022 by mail ballot.

The first question on the mail ballot, with an estimated total cost for capital improvements not to exceed \$145 million, would include the following projects:

- Increase the number of early childhood classrooms for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Build a second middle school on land already owned by the district and transition sixth grade to both middle schools
- Repurpose space in each elementary school to best meet the needs of PreK – Grade 5 students
- Update Washburn Rural Middle School and repurpose sections to accommodate a sixth grade pod as well as indoor classroom space for the Outdoor Environmental Lab program

- Add an innovative, industry-standard Career and Technical Education Center at WRHS
- Add and repurpose space at WRHS to accommodate academic and co-curricular programs
- Capital outlay maintenance, improvements, and safety upgrades

The second question on the mail ballot, with an estimated total cost for capital improvements not to exceed \$15 million, would include the following project:

- Add a multi-use community pool at WRHS

This is a very exciting time for the Auburn-Washburn school community. Please remain engaged and informed on the bond election, and let us know if you have questions along the way by visiting www.usd437.net/bond2022 and then clicking on Submit Questions Here. By working together, we can take a very important step forward for our students in Auburn-Washburn.

Learn more about the bond election, timeline, ballot questions, and community meeting dates on the next page. ★



Innovation. Opportunity. Excellence.

Why a Bond Election?

The proposed projects provide the following to the Auburn-Washburn community:

1. All projects are in response to the needs consistently shared during numerous strategic planning meetings held from October 2019 – January 2020.
2. Twice as many early childhood students will be served.
3. A new middle school will reduce the grade-level team enrollment by half and double the opportunities for co-curricular involvement.
4. An innovative, industry-standard Career and Technical Education addition at WRHS will provide space and valuable opportunities to every student in partnership with evolving occupational needs.
5. Improvements will expand existing facilities and provide new types of spaces to advance instruction and programming for all students.
6. To continue excellence in facility maintenance, upgrades focus on reducing operating costs, safety improvements, and providing flexibility in the yearly capital outlay funds for school-specific requests.

Timeline

Last day to register to vote:	March 22
Ballots mailed out:	March 23
Ballots due to SNCO Election Office by:	April 12 by noon

Two Question Ballot

Question 1 – not to exceed \$145 million

Improvement	Cost	Percentage of Project
Add early childhood classrooms and repurpose elementary spaces	\$30 million	21%
Build a second middle school and update WRMS	\$64 million	44%
Add CTE center and co-curricular space to WRHS	\$35 million	24%
Capital outlay needs, deferred maintenance, safety upgrades	\$16 million	11%

Question 2 – not to exceed \$15 million

Improvement	Cost	Percentage of Project
Build a multi-use community pool at WRHS	\$15 million	100%

Master Facility Plan

Birth to Age 5

- We currently serve 200 3- & 4-year olds
- Average kindergarten class is 410 students
- So, 24% of 820 3- & 4-year olds receiving Auburn-Washburn early childhood services



Increase capacity to 54% (from 24%) by adding the following classrooms:

- 6 at Pauline Central
- 2 at Auburn
- 2 at Jay Shideler
- 2 at Indian Hills
- 2 at Wanamaker

Maintain 6 classrooms at Farley

Master Facility Plan

Visit www.usd437.net/bond2022 to access the Master Facility Plan and other Bond 2022 information.

Community Meeting Dates

The following community meetings have been scheduled to share updated information and to respond to questions about the bond election. These meetings are open to all in the Auburn-Washburn school community.

- Tuesday, January 25, 6:30 pm, WRHS Library
- Tuesday, February 10, 7:30 am, Shuler Education Center, Board Room
- Thursday, March 3, 12:00 pm, Virtual Meeting, link will be available at www.usd437.net
- Thursday, March 24, 6:00 pm, Shuler Education Center, Board Room ★

Auburn Elementary

Library Media Specialist Rachel Dial started her first year at Auburn Elementary with several activities to get students engaged, including a year-long 20 book challenge. In addition to regular library classes, Dial instituted Reading Fun Friday. Students in grades K-2nd are presented and read award winning picture books. Students in grades 3-6 make quarterly personalized reading goals. “Word of mouth is one of the best ways for students to find their next great book, and the reading groups create excitement about books when they are shared on our Reading Fun Friday,” Dial said.



Auburn Elementary participates in a program that offers monthly reading incentives with rewards from area businesses. In September, students could earn a Nothing Bundt Cakes treat. “Dozen Books for a Donut, an idea from Megan Hall at Jay Shideler, was held in November and resulted in an overwhelming amount of donuts in the library,” Dial said. Battle of the Books, a competition based on the William Allen White book list kicked off in December. “All the library promotions for Auburn Elementary came from the great minds of our district librarians,” Dial said. “The librarians do a great job of sharing and supporting each other in all of our endeavors.” ★

Farley Elementary

This fall, students at Farley Elementary started a newscast. The shows are produced weekly and sent as a private link for classrooms to watch at the time that works best for them. “A collaborative meeting at the beginning of the year was held to create the segments of the show,” said Farley Dean



of Students Dasan McDonald. The first show was August 30. This fall the show covered local news, weather, history, holidays, lunch, and birthdays. The shows also featured a Mindful Minute.

Students from 6th grade applied to work on the show and four were selected for the fall. “Next semester, there will be a new team and the current team will take on the roles of content producers, directors, and video editors,” McDonald said. ★

Indian Hills Elementary

Indian Hills School Counselor Hanna Kemble brought learning to life for students by combining project-based learning, social emotional learning, and core curriculum with a group of 3rd grade students who designed and developed a Halloween costume for the school’s beloved Therapy Dog, Piper! The students worked as a group to determine what she would be for Halloween, measured her body, created a pattern, used effective communication, and even learned to sew! By working as a team, they were able to successfully create a Hot Dog costume



for Piper to wear in the school Halloween parade. “It was wonderful to have so many parents and families attend our annual costume parade!” said Indian Hills Principal Chelsea Schmidtlein. ★

Jay Shideler Elementary

The Circle of Friends program at Jay Shideler is going strong this year. The program provides buddies to students with special needs. Right now, it is primarily 6th graders with more than 30 students participating. Students rotate through the program serving as buddies at lunch, recess, and other special activities like field days. “I was pleasantly surprised by the number of students wanting to participate,” said Special Education Teacher Wendy Randall. “I am looking forward to expanding the numbers in other grades in the future.” ★



Pauline Central Primary

“Pauline Central’s Family Engagement Night is always a big hit, but when it includes STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activities, it becomes a fun-filled night that families look forward to attending each year,” said Assistive Technology Aide Linessa Frazier.

The Kansas Children’s Discovery Center partnered with Pauline Central to host an engaging experience that included constructing catapults, building machines, controlling robots, and creating rockets.

Frazier said that the Title I funding for this program allows students to receive supplemental opportunities to meet academic state standards and the collaboration with The Kansas Children’s Discovery Center provides families the rich and diverse experience of STEAM at school. “The evening’s exhibits contribute to adventure and exploration for inquisitive minds of all ages,” Frazier said. ★



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On the Cover

The cover photo shows a crowded hallway at Washburn Rural Middle School, the state’s largest middle school.

Cover photo by Randi Stones, WRMS Communications Teacher ★

Pauline South Intermediate

Pauline South has created a way to introduce students to new fruits and vegetables as well as teaching them some valuable skills. Food Service Manager Jennifer Baurley has students come to the cafeteria and prepare individual portions to distribute to students as a healthy snack.



“It is a great way for students to bond with each other and the Food Service staff,” Baurley said. “We also teach them about food safety and preparation.”

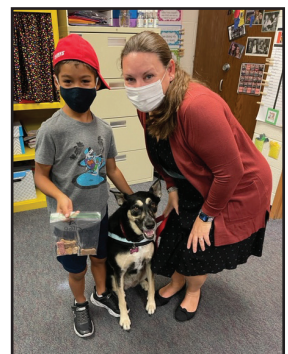
Baurley said she focuses on items that students might not have had the opportunity to try before. “It is a fun way to introduce students throughout the school to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables,” Baurley said. The students have strong opinions about the foods they like and don’t like. “For example, they liked asparagus and didn’t like cactus pear,” Baurley said.

In addition to preparing and trying new foods, students are also growing leafy vegetables in a plant tower in the school. Students get to see the process from beginning to end and then eat what they have grown. The programs at Pauline South are funded by a grant. ★

Wanamaker Elementary

Margo, the therapy dog, has become a special part of

Wanamaker Elementary. “Margo has been part of our family, and we decided to share her with the school,” Instructional Facilitator Jenny Lang said. Margo plays an important role in the social and emotional well-being of students. Students routinely check in with Margo, and she has the ability to calm them down. “Students adore Margo,” Lang said. “When they see me in the hall without her, they always ask, where’s Margo?” The school has found that Margo can be a good motivator. Opportunities with Margo are given as an incentive to students. The school created a “Pawsitivity Tree” for Margo. “She even led our Halloween parade this year,” Lang said. ★



Washburn Rural Middle School

For 30 years, Washburn Rural Middle School has served the 7th and 8th grade students of Auburn-Washburn. The school was built from the ground up to support the teaming concept. With teaming, approximately 100 students are grouped together for most of their classes. This approach has proven to be very successful.

Mark Koepsel is in his 11th year as an administrator at WRMS and has been head principal for the past six years. He feels strongly about the team approach.

“Teaming is the foundation of who we are. It allows teachers to get to know their kids on a more personal level, which also promotes stronger bonds and interactions with the families,” Koepsel said.

Jerry Meier was principal of WRMS for 17 years and he agrees. “The teaming aspect is tremendous,” he said. “Students and teachers get to know each other very well.”

Koepsel says that each team has their own strengths and personalities, but as a whole, they both challenge and support each other as a school community.

With almost 1,000 students, Washburn Rural Middle School has had the distinction of being the largest middle school in Kansas. While the teaming approach makes the school seem smaller, having so many students in one building creates challenges. Koepsel says one of the main challenges is just managing space.

“Hallways are crowded, our cafeteria is overflowing, and we seldom have school-wide assemblies, because we aren’t able to fit both grades in the gym without taking up much of the floor space, too,” Koepsel said. Meier agreed that it is almost impossible to have an all school assembly. “It takes a lot of time to move all those bodies into one area.”

Meier pointed out that the WRMS student population alone was larger than the entire student body in 60% of the districts in Kansas. Meier also said that with only two grades, students are always transitioning in and out. “You just don’t have the opportunity to get to know the students,” Meier said. “And those relationships are important.”

The Auburn-Washburn community will have the opportunity this spring to address some of the challenges facing



the middle school students. A bond to add a second middle school has been approved by the Board of Education. It will be in the form of a mail-in ballot sent in March and due back by April 12. The proposal calls for the 6th graders moving to the two smaller middle schools. Even with an additional grade, the two schools would have approximately 300 fewer students than are currently attending WRMS. Both schools would continue with the successful teaming approach for all grades.

“Reducing numbers would allow easier traffic flow throughout the building, would reduce class sizes in a few areas, and could provide students with additional options when selecting essentials courses,” Koepsel said. “I feel that teaming allows our teachers to get to know our students on a more personal level, and this would be enhanced even further with fewer students.”

“I also think that having 6th graders as part of the middle school would be very beneficial,” Koepsel said. “Our elementary schools are utilizing a departmental approach with their 6th grades now, so the students are already used to having different teachers for their core subjects.”

Koepsel believes 6th graders are ready for more independence and that providing them with elective choices would be well-received.

“I believe that having an extra year in middle school would better prepare them for high school, and a third year would allow us as a staff an extra year to both track student progress and build stronger relationships with our middle school families,” Koepsel said. ★

Washburn Rural High School

Teams at Washburn Rural High School had very successful fall seasons including a State Championship. In November, the WRHS Dance team participated in the Kansas High School Activities Association competition.

The Dancin' Blues earned the 6A State Championship at the event. Team members include Natalie Alegria, Abby Boyd, Allison Cunningham, Alexis DeWeese, Regan Hughes, Kinsey Lamb, Daryn Loewen, Justice Malloy, Madison Smith, Allison Theis, Hannah Thompson, and Georgia Zeller. The team is coached by Jennifer Tiller and Assistant Coach Hunter Hansen. ★



Other Fall Awards include:

Girls Cross Country	1st City, 1st League, 1st Regional, 4th State
Boys Cross Country	1st City, 2nd League, 3rd Regional, 8th State
Football	1st League, Regional Runner-up
Girls Golf	1st City, 1st League, 1st Regional, 2nd State
Boys Soccer	1st League, 1st Regional, 2nd State
Girls Tennis	1st City, 1st League, 1st Regional, 8th State
Volleyball	1st League, 1st Sub-state, 4th State
Cheer	2nd State

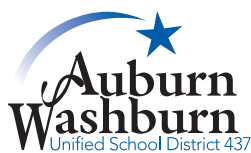
Key Dates for School Year 2022-2023

The Auburn-Washburn 2022-2023 School Calendar was recently approved by the Board of Education.

- August 11 – First Day of School
- September 5 & 26 – No School
- October 14, 20, & 21 – No School
- November 23-25 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 19-January 2 – Winter Break
- January 13 & 16 – No School
- February 16, 17, & 20 – No School
- March 10 – No School
- March 13-17 – Spring Break
- April 14 – No School
- April 17 – No School (Snow Make-Up if Needed)
- May 24 – Last Day of School

See a complete calendar at usd437.net. ★





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