



USD 497 News Release

Julie Boyle, Executive Director of Communications
110 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044
785-330-1662 / jboyle@usd497.org

October 23, 2024

Boundary Advisory Committee Prepares to Present High School Boundary Options for Public Input

The Boundary Advisory Committee (BAC) met Wednesday to continue to discuss options for balancing high school enrollment numbers and student population demographics and to prepare for public input sessions November 13 and 14. Current high school enrollments are 1,781 students at Free State and 1,431 at LHS, a difference of 350 students.

Deputy Superintendent Dr. Larry Englebrick, who facilitates BAC meetings, shared with the committee that some of the data presented at its October 9 meeting contained errors. He distributed corrected information that has also been posted on our district website. Englebrick asked BAC members if they needed additional support with data analysis.

The school board previously contracted with RSP & Associates for enrollment projections and demographic data, including projections associated with proposed boundary changes. The BAC is using data that advances current student enrollment through each grade level in future years. Using this method, high school enrollments in five years would be 1,573 at Free State and 1,322 at LHS, a difference of 251 students. Most BAC members indicated support for RSP providing data analysis to the committee and community prior to the public input sessions, if possible.

About half of BAC members discussed a Middle School Feeder School option. It would send Southwest and Billy Mills Middle School students to LHS, and West and Liberty Memorial Central Middle School students to Free State. Current district boundaries split middle school student populations as they advance to high school. A few individuals raised concerns that this option would place LHS within Free State's proposed attendance area, meaning some Free State students would live 'next door' to LHS.

Members also said that this option accomplishes the goal of balancing enrollments, and that by balancing them with feeder middle schools, the district could develop consistency in grades 6-12. They cited consistency in areas, such as student friend groups, content teachers moving with their students, and relationship building with families throughout grades 6-12.

The other option under discussion, the Lawrence High "L," would expand LHS's attendance area by moving its current 15th Street boundary line east of Massachusetts St. to the north to include East and North Lawrence. The new LHS attendance area would look like an "L" lying on its back on the southern border of the district.

BAC members said this option is the least disruptive geographically for the high school boundaries, more walkable and bikeable, and would create fewer transportation needs. Members said that the biggest challenge with this option may be the perception that the east side of Lawrence is most affected.

"I appreciate how seriously each one of you is taking this. You came up with these ideas and are now saying, 'We may need to consider this or consider that.' I truly appreciate that," Englebrick said to the group. "Can we change everything overnight? No, but we can plan strategies that allow changes to happen."

The BAC is scheduled to share its proposed options with the community and hear feedback during public input sessions from 6:00-7:30 p.m. November 13 at LHS and November 14 at Free State. Follow the committee's work at www.usd497.org/Boundaries.