

USD 444 Little River/ Windom

# Quality teaching is the goal with 12:1 student/staff ratio

USD 444 serves students from Rice, McPherson and Ellsworth counties. Its schools are split between Windom Elementary School which serves students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade and Little River Junior/Senior High School that serves students seventh through twelfth grades. The high school has a 12:1 student/teacher ratio, allowing for more personalized learning and instruction. Small class size and great community support are a couple of reasons that Little River/Windom is a great place for students. Brent Garrison, Superintendent of schools, is serving in his second year at USD 444. The Kansas Can Vision is one that USD 444 is taking seriously. It is our goal to meet the needs of all of our students and prepare them for success once they leave Little River. Students in Little River deserve the same chance any other student in the state. It is our job to meet the needs of the students and provide opportunities. I am very proud of our staff and its commitment to the students here at Little River.

Finding classes that meet students' goals can be a difficult prospect in a small school, however, Little River has met the challenge. Personalizing a plan of study through a tailored plan designed to meet individual needs is top priority for Little River Junior Senior High School. Students enroll individually with the principal, counselor, and with family input to ensure students see a pathway for success in both postsecondary education and careers after high school. Students strategically select their coursework according to career interests, or possible career interests.

Eight career and technical pathways were added this year, bringing the total to eleven (Finance, Construction & Design, Teaching/Training,



Health Sciences, Auto Mechanics, Engineering and Applied Mathematics, Audio Visual, Biomedical, Biochemistry, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture). Student organizations have been established this year as well, Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Future Health Professionals (HOSA) led by Mr. Jaret Wohler (FFA) and Mrs. Karen Gunther (HOSA). The district is also very excited to have its very first FFA chapter and agriculture science classes. Little River has never officially had an FFA chapter. With this program student opportunities were enhanced greatly.

Partnerships with postsecondary educational institutions continue to be developed with student opportunities to gain dual credit through courses associated with SB155 funding. This ensures education remains affordable and attainable for students in an effort to fuel the workforce with qualified graduates. Including the fact that students only have so many class periods during a normal school day. The district offers online

classes through online learning programs, certification programs, and college enrollment through Hutchinson Community College and Barton Community College. The classes can be taken either on site at Little River Junior/Senior High School or at the Hutchinson Career Technology Education Academy.

At Little River Junior Senior High School, students have the opportunity to explore various career pathways, including Science Technology Engineering Arts Mathematics (STEAM) curriculum. Project Lead the Way, a nationally recognized STEM Program, was implemented this year at the seventh and eighth grade levels. Expansion of the program is expected annually. Seventh grade students enroll in "Design and Modeling" with eighth grade students enrolling in "Automation and Robotics." These can serve as entry level courses for the Engineering pathway in high school and robotics course.

With implementation of career and technical education at Little River Junior Senior High School, students are afforded multiple opportunities to explore possible careers. Students are also accountable for establishing short and long-term goals, and share goals at student-led conferences where 100% of students or families attended this year. Advisory periods where students monitor grades, receive employability skills training, and explore careers have been integrated four days a week. Students are also participating in more job shadow, internship, and work study opportunities. The days of college or career are no longer. Students and staff are preparing for Little River graduates to be college AND career ready post-graduation.

Windom Elementary School

saw a big change at the start of the 2017-2018 school year as the pre-kindergarten program and sixth grade classes moved from Little River to Windom. While these classes had been successful in their locations at Little River, the change was made to best meet the overall needs of students and utilization of staff. The Windom school building, now being a PreK - 6 facility, has allowed for more interaction between pre-school age students with other grade levels and has given the 6th graders an opportunity to continue leadership involvement throughout the building. The character education program at Windom School focuses on numerous positive character traits and is sometimes themed around the tiger mascot of the school. T.I.G.E.R. - Teamwork, Integrity, Gratitude, Education, Respect and A.M.B.U.S.H. (a family of tigers) - Always Mindful Be Understanding Stay Humble.

After the completion of a greenhouse project during the 2016-17 school year the school held its first Spring Plant Sale in April of 2017. This event was very successful and will be held again in May 2018. Students and staff utilize the greenhouse through late spring. During a few cold winter months plants and activities are moved indoors. The greenhouse will reopen in mid-February as plants started in the classroom will be moved back outside. Science, math, writing, and language arts activities are integrated easily into greenhouse projects and activities. The district continues to use the plant sales and other activities as a way to keep the community invested and aware of the greenhouse project. The greenhouse is becoming a self-sustaining project as funds from a Fall Mums Sale and the Spring Plant Sale not only allow

for maintenance and purchasing of needed items, but also provides funds for educational field trips and other student activities. Big strides have been made in the area of hands on learning at USD 444. The district recently completed a Green House project that resulted in a new 18 x 32 foot state of the art facility for learning. Staff, students, and community have embraced the greenhouse. It is large enough to accommodate an entire class of children as they use plants to learn about science, math, writing and various other academics. To prepare for the coming spring semester of plant learning the teachers have prepared lessons plans by meticulously combing through their curriculum and finding ways to apply subjects to the greenhouse. Students have also prepared by growing plants over the past few months in their classrooms for the greenhouse. This took place in a special classroom dubbed the "Bloom Room." The students' plants will later be sold to help further raise greenhouse funding. The Greenhouse was funded by grants and is self sustaining with on cost to the district.

Individuals who would like to contact USD 444 can contact Windom Elementary's principal Jon Paden at (620) 489-6241, Principal Audrey Herbst of Little River Junior/Senior High School at (620) 897-6201, or Superintendent Brent Garrison at (620) 897-6324.



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District Office  
455 W. Prairie Ave.  
P.O. Box 218  
Little River, KS 67457  
Phone: 620-897-6325 or  
620-897-6324

Little River  
Jr/Sr High  
430 Waverly St.  
P.O. Box 8  
Little River, KS 67457  
Phone: 620-897-6201

Windom Elem.  
101 E. Olive Ave.  
P.O. Box 67  
Windom, KS 67491  
Phone: 620-489-6241