



USD 497 News Release

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Board Hears NASS Update, Approves 2025 Legislative Priorities

After rescheduling its Monday meeting due to Indigenous Peoples Day, the Lawrence Board of Education on Tuesday heard an update about Native American Student Services (NASS) from the program's coordinator, David Farve. NASS services support American Indian/Alaska Native students who make up 8% of our school district's enrollment. About 376, or 5.6%, of the more than 831 Indigenous students representing more than 73 tribal affiliations in Lawrence Public Schools are currently verified with NASS to receive services.

Farve shared that these students represent tribes from Alaska to Florida, New York to California, and all areas in between. He said that our school population is heavily influenced by Haskell Indian Nations University, which currently has 128 Tribal Nations represented on its campus.

NASS receives federal Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (JOM) funding to support the unique cultural, language, and educationally related needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Farve said that JOM eligibility requirements recently changed to enable NASS to serve more students. To receive services now, students must have at least one parent or grandparent (living or deceased), who is a member of a federally recognized tribe.

Goals of NASS, according to Farve, are to be a resource for students in need, build relationships with students and families, incorporate cultural activities to establish a sense of belonging, connect with Intertribal Clubs, and listen to students about what's important to them. He said that NASS seeks to enhance and support students' overall growth and development through cultural and academic programs for students and families.

"Our job, ultimately, is to do what we can for the students, protect them at all costs, and make them feel safe," said Farve.

Among activities NASS supports are Intertribal Clubs at both high schools, Billy Mills Middle School, and Cordley, the first elementary club. Farve said that additional clubs are under development at West Middle School and Hillcrest and Schwegler Elementary Schools. Other services include student engagement, one-on-one follow-up, and after-school tutoring.

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“We all know that representation matters,” said Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift, interim superintendent. “We are honored by the presence of Native Americans in our district – as students, staff members, and as community members. We are honored by that representation. We are all richer for it.”

“I believe it presents not only an opportunity, but also a responsibility to support and be sure that all who come to our district and that our Native American students are served well by Lawrence Public Schools,” said Swift, adding that the program and diversity of the community helped attract her to Lawrence.

Steve Cadue, former chairman of the Kickapoo Nation of Kansas and the father of board member Carole Cadue-Blackwood, spoke during public comment. He encouraged board leadership of other locally elected bodies in showing respect through a land acknowledgement for Lawrence and Douglas County. Board members nodded a consensus in continuing work toward a land acknowledgement proclamation.

Board President Kelly Jones indicated that she would support additional staffing for NASS next year, given district goals around increasing opportunities for Indigenous students. Farve and a full-time administrative assistant administer the program. They are also working this semester with a social work intern from KU.

Legislative Priorities

As part of its consent agenda, the board approved its 2025 legislative priorities. These include advocacy of full funding of special education as required by state law, increased base state aid per pupil, rejection of proposals to spend public tax dollars on private education, and returning to a parent opt-out process for student surveys that inform health, wellness, and safety initiatives.

Other key priorities include embracing academic freedom and the teaching of critical thinking skills, repealing statutes that target and discriminate against students and staff, supporting a long-term, sustained commitment to state funding for the KPERS retirement program; and providing universal free meals to all students.

Additional legislative priorities support each goal area of our district’s strategic plan. The board also includes in these recommendations advocacy for what it considers good governance policies and practices. Several of the board’s legislative priorities align with those of the Kansas Association of School Boards.

Review the board’s [2025 Legislative Priorities](#).