



USD 497 News Release

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Board Hears About Additional Program Enhancements, Approves Openings for Nonresidents

During Monday's Lawrence Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Jeanice Kerr Swift shared next steps in acting on community input to enhance educational opportunities for students and improve services for school families. In March, Dr. Swift announced five educational program enhancements coming in the 2025-2026 school year:

- Expanding access to preschool by opening neighborhood Pre-K classrooms at Sunflower and Woodlawn schools.
- Amplifying science for all students by adding it to the elementary art, music, and P.E. specials rotation.
- Growing New York Montessori into upper elementary.
- Advancing STEAM@LMCMS with Project Lead the Way curricula.
- Strengthening our Jayhawk Blueprint partnership with KU that offers college coursework and credit to high school students at one-third the cost of tuition.

Additional program enhancements shared by Dr. Swift Monday included:

- Completing Districtwide AVID Implementation by 2026.
 - AVID strategies support students with college and career readiness by focusing on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading. These five key strategies boost student learning and engagement and help students develop deeper understanding and improve their skills in all content areas.
- Unifying School-Based Communication
 - A rollout of ParentSquare in the fall will include a parent dashboard to house all school-based communication from principals, teachers, staff, coaches, and activity sponsors. The platform also offers two-way, translatable communication options.
- Equipping high school students with MacBooks
 - Based on student feedback and purchased with capital outlay funds, MacBooks will replace iPads to support student academics and college and career readiness.

"This is an amazing list of plans... It shows that the district is trying to listen to our community, our staff, and our students and take action," said board member Anne Costello.

Member Bob Byers encouraged the board to adopt policy regarding staff use of only district-managed communication tools with school families, building on Board Policy IIBGC Staff Online Activities, which already has some of these safety precautions to protect staff and students.

Noting that the board had previously committed to financially supporting New York Montessori's furniture, equipment, and supply needs, Board President Kelly Jones encouraged the board to make the same commitment to support Project Lead the Way costs for STEAM@LMCMS.

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Enrollment, Staffing Ratios, and Openings for Nondistrict Transfers

The board approved the superintendent’s recommendations related to enrollment, staffing ratios, capacities, and “open seats” for nonresidents:

2024-2025 Enrollment: 10,358

- Preschool Enrollment (Kennedy Early Childhood Center and New York Montessori): 220
- K-12: 9,581
- Lawrence Virtual School K-12: 557

Class Size Guideline - Desired Range

- Kindergarten: 18-22
- Grades 1-2: 19-26
- Grades 3-5: 20-27
- Grades 6-8: 22-28
- Grades 9-12: 23-29

Capacity allocated by level:

- Elementary: 4,189
- Middle School: 2,197
- High School: 3,105

**Staffing will follow student enrollment to maintain class sizes.*

Elementary

Cordley - K - 13,
1st - 11, 2nd - 14,
5th - 14
Deerfield - 1st - 9, 2nd
- 1
Hillcrest - K - 6,
1st - 4, 3rd - 1
Langston Hughes 1st -
6
New York - K - 16, 2nd
- 4, 4th - 14
5th - 14
Prairie Park- K - 4, 1st-
4, 2nd - 5,
3rd - 4, 4th - 4
Quail Run - K - 5, 1st -
7, 4th - 1
Schwegler - K - 12, 1st
- 11, 5th - 1
Sunflower - K - 6, 4th -
2, 5th - 4
Sunset Hill - K - 6, 2nd
- 6, 4th - 4
Woodlawn - K - 4, 1st -
4, 2nd - 9
3rd - 2, 4th - 5,
5th - 10

Middle School

BMMS
6th - 15
7th - 15
8th - 15
LMCMS
6th - 15
7th - 15
8th - 15
WMS
6th - 15
7th - 15
8th - 15
SWMS
6th - 15
7th - 15
8th - 15

High School

LHS
9th - 25
10th - 25
11th - 25
12th - 10
FSHS
9th - 25
10th - 25
11th - 25
12th - 10

“The first priority for enrollment will always be students living within our attendance zone and school neighborhoods...Everyone who lives in the area gets a seat,” said Dr. Swift. She added that while working to maintain class sizes within the desired range, in-district transfers are the second priority and nonresident enrollment comes third.

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As part of its consent agenda, the board approved:

- The Fringe Benefit Committee's recommendation to renew current medical/dental/vision employee benefits, effective September 1, 2025. The benefit cost rose to \$832.81/month per covered employee, prorated for qualifying part-time employees. The estimated increase to the total district cost of providing employee health insurance benefits is \$1.8 million.
- Adding age-appropriate playground equipment necessary to support the expansion of preschool programming, a community priority. The board purchased equipment at a cost of \$79,023 from capital outlay to outfit playgrounds for two new neighborhood preschool programs at Sunflower and Woodlawn Elementary Schools.
- Replacing aging vehicles by purchasing two utility vehicles, one for each high school, for \$60,777.68, as well as four tractors equipped with snow removal accessories for use at the middle schools for \$42,702.52 from capital outlay.

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