



USD 497 News Release

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Board Reviews Back-to-School Preparations & Budget Update

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift welcomed staff, students, and families to the start of the 2025-26 school year, with Transition Day for Kindergarten, 6th, and 9th graders tomorrow, Tuesday, August 12 and the first day of school for K-12 students the following day, Wednesday, August 13. Dr. Swift thanked staff and teachers for preparing classrooms and schools to be warm and inviting learning environments for the more than 10,000 students arriving later this week.

In addition to highlighting district updates, Superintendent Dr. Swift shared the following:

- ParentSquare Implementation: Staff trained on the new district messaging platform, with more than 900 communications sent between August 7-8.
- The LPS Facilities & Operations team has completed final preparations across the district including HVAC repairs, playground updates, and a completed solar installation at Sunflower Elementary.
- Student Safety & Immigration Guidance: Dr. Swift reaffirmed the district's commitment to welcoming and protecting all students regardless of national origin, religion, or immigration status, following all state and federal laws.
- The district will continue to maintain a cell phone-free instructional day, with guidelines by grade level.
- Dr. Swift and board members lauded the Lawrence Schools Foundation's 2nd annual Kids Expo, which took place this past Saturday, August 9th, providing hundreds of visiting families and students with backpacks, school supplies, bike helmets, haircuts, and wonderful memories to kick off the 2025-26 school year.

[Read](#) and [watch](#) the full Superintendent's Report online.

Budget Update

Executive Director of Finance Cynde Frick provided the Board with a [2025-26 Budget Update](#). She reported an increase in the BASE state aid per pupil to \$5,615, up from \$5,378 in 2024-25. Due to a legislative change, enrollment for funding purposes will now be based on the higher of the September 20, 2024, or September 20, 2025 headcount.

Frick noted a decrease in Local Option Budget (LOB) state aid as a result of higher assessed valuation per pupil—dropping from \$2.8 million in 2024-25 to approximately \$729,000 in 2025-26. A less-than-one-tenth of one mill increase (.060) will offset part of this reduction.

The district is also experiencing a 15% increase in health insurance costs for 2025-26—about \$1.8 million—with further increases projected next year.

Frick reviewed the upcoming budget process, which includes a Revenue Neutral Rate hearing at 6:00 p.m. on September 8, followed by the budget hearing at 6:05 p.m. Both hearings will be held at the Educational Support Center. The Board approved publishing the mill levies and budget authorities in advance of these hearings.

Consent Agenda

The Board attended to policy updates, several business items listed on its consent agenda, including annual renewals, and other district business. Read the [full meeting agenda](#) online.

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