



USD 497 News Release

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Board Approves Budget for 25-26 School Year

Budget Hearings - Revenue Neutral Rate and 25-26 Budget

The Lawrence Board of Education hosted budget hearings for Revenue Neutral Rate and for consideration of the 25-26 Budget.

Each year, Douglas County provides the neutral tax rate that USD 497 would need to adopt in order to levy the same amount of tax as the prior year. If that tax rate is to be exceeded, the board of education must adopt a resolution authorizing the district to exceed the revenue neutral tax rates for the identified funds.

The Board of Education approved a resolution authorizing USD 497 to exceed the revenue neutral tax rates by less than a one-tenth of one mill increase (.060) in the identified funds for the 2025-2026 budget year (approved with a 7-0 vote); approved a budget for the 25-26 school year (approved with a 7-0 vote); and approved a local option budget resolution (7-0).

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift highlighted recent informational presentations and meetings with the Jayhawk Rotary Breakfast Club and DCCCA. The intent of this outreach is to keep the community-at-large informed of Lawrence Public Schools' accomplishments, initiatives, and updates - as well as to strengthen key partnerships in support of students and staff.

Additionally, Superintendent Dr. Swift shared the following:

- LPS staff and representatives recognized as 2025 Best of Lawrence winners via Lawrence Journal-World and Sunshine Publications:
 - Best Place to Work (100+ employees): Lawrence Public Schools, 3rd Place
 - Community Leader, Racial Justice/Equity Issues: Demetrius Kemp, Free State High School, 1st place; Carole Cadue-Blackwood, member, Board of Education, 2nd place
 - Principal: Amanda Green, Sunflower Elementary, 1st place; Kady Carson, West Middle, 2nd place; and Summer Moeckel, Deerfield Elementary, 3rd place
 - Teacher (K-5): Jaclynn Williams, Langston Hughes, 3rd place; Ingrid Yew, Sunset Hill, 4th place; and Michelle McLenon, Langston Hughes, 5th place
 - Teacher (6-8): Blair White, LMCMS, 1st place; Stephanie Jaramillo, LMCMS, 2nd place; Jay Deiser, Billy Mills, 3rd place; Marisa Scott Pope, Billy Mills, 5th place

- Teacher (9-12): Sophia Coen, FSHS, 1st place; Bryce Jones, FSHS, 2nd place; Debby Ziegler, FSHS, 3rd place; Susan Carey, FSHS, 4th place; and Aubrey Trowbridge, LHS, 5th place
- Mascot: Chesty the Lion, LHS, 2nd place; Freddie Firebird, FSHS, 4th place; and Warhawk, West Middle School, 5th place
- Lawrence Virtual School (LVS) recently received academic comparison data:
 - In Math, LVS has 21.33% fewer students in Level One, and 13.25% more students in Levels Three and Four.
 - In English Language Arts, LVS has 14.4% fewer students in Level One, and 16.34% more students in Levels Three and Four.
 - In Science, LVS has 11.9% fewer students in Level One, and 18.022% more students in Levels Three and Four.
- FastBridge Universal Screenings began K-12: FastBridge is a research-based assessment that measures students' reading and math skills. All students are screened in fall, winter, and spring to identify who is on track, who may need support, and to identify trends.
- The addition of second specials: Enrichment, Library, and Science, directly addresses long-recognized student needs through engaging science experiences, AVID skill-building, and expanded social-emotional learning. Established specials: Art, Music and P.E. continue to meet important learning, creativity and physical movement developmental needs of our students.
- Friday, September 12, is National AVID Day, intended to bring awareness to the program that has supported student achievement for 45 years. All LPS schools will be in full implementation of AVID by 2026. Several schools across the district will participate in celebrating on the 12th including Sunflower Elementary, Southwest and Billy Mills Middle Schools, and Free State and Lawrence High Schools.
 - A video testimonial from Lawrence High School's Class of 2021 graduate, Jelani Ragins, was referenced during the report: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5j86iDcrbY&ab_channel=ScottLane
- ParentSquare is being used by all LPS schools to keep families informed. The district will be testing emergency alert notifications this September, in advance of winter weather season.
- Langston Hughes Elementary is utilizing 34 goats from Cackling Owl Homestead to help clear overgrown vegetation, for approximately one month. At the estimated 1/2 way mark, the goats have cleared nearly 3 acres in the last 2 weeks.
- Free State High School was recognized by the Kansas State High School Activities Association as a Performing Arts School of Excellence. Free State is the only school to have earned this recognition twice.
- There is no school for students on Monday, September 15. This is a scheduled day off in order to facilitate districtwide professional development sessions. The Teaching and Learning team is

launching the “LPS Learning Exchange” with an emphasis on teacher-led sessions and teacher networks to collaboratively plan professional learning.

- Elementary teachers will engage in math/OpenUp and data-informed instruction, while specialists will participate in job-alike collaboration, including Early Childhood and Montessori. Secondary staff will engage in content/level teams.

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

9 Dell II Neighborhood Revitalization Area Request

Representatives from a proposed apartment project, located on a currently vacant parcel at the northwest corner of East 9th Street and Delaware Street, appeared to seek district approval of a Neighborhood Revitalization Area (NRA) cooperative agreement.

As part of this proposal, developers are also requesting participation from the City of Lawrence and Douglas County. The request is for a 15-year, 95% tax rebate on the increased property value resulting from the development.

Information was presented by Tom Kaleko, Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors; Brandon McGuire, City of Lawrence assistant city manager; and Tony Krsnich, Flint Hills Holding Group.

The board voted to participate in the cooperative agreement (approved with a 5-2 vote).

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda including the purchase of Dell computers; implementation of an interscholastic ESports program at the secondary level beginning in the 2025–2026 school year; settlement of an employee's workers' compensation case; donation report; monthly voucher disbursements; personnel report; and meeting minutes (consent agenda was approved with a 7-0 vote).

Reports

Reports were also provided by board president, GR Gordon-Ross; representatives from the Lawrence Education Association; and board member and committee reports.

Access a link to the [full meeting agenda](#) online.

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