



USD 497 News Release

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Board Approves Tuition Rates for 26-27 Preschool Programming

Presentation of Preschool Aged Tuition for 26-27 School Year

Dr. Swift presented the expansion of Lawrence Public Schools' preschool programming as an equity strategy to improve opportunities, access, and school readiness for the youngest students in USD 497. Phased expansion includes additional preschool classrooms at Deerfield Elementary and Prairie Park Elementary for the 26-27 school year.

The preschool program is funded via preschool aged at-risk funding and is offered free to 3 and 4 year olds who meet eligibility requirements. The board has prioritized limiting tuition rates to a calculated portion of district's costs for a certified educator and preschool instructional aide in each classroom, resulting in a tuition rate much lower than preschool rates at other locations throughout the area.

Tuition for those that do not meet eligibility requirements was proposed at a cost of \$690/per month for next year, to be paid monthly for 9 months. Recommendation approved 6-0.

Reuter Buildings Development Presentation

Patrick Watkins, Watkins Law Office; and Tom Kaleko, Baker Tilly Municipal Advisor LLC presented a project development proposal of two historic sites located at 612 New Hampshire. The 32,362 square foot parcel is currently zoned for commercial and industrial usage.

Developers are seeking approved participation by the City of Lawrence, Douglas County, and Lawrence Public Schools as a Neighborhood Revitalization Area (NRA). The request was made for a 15-year, 95% tax rebate on the increased property value resulting from the project. Approval was passed with a 5-1 vote.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Swift shared a wide range of updates and highlights from throughout Lawrence Public Schools, including:

- Acknowledgement of last week's Martin Luther King, Junior celebrations and events, including **Jayhawk Breakfast Rotary Club** community breakfast and scholarship award for Ewa Adedipe (Free State High School); **New York Elementary** 39th annual MLK Chili Dinner/Community Meal; and [MLK One Dream event at the Lied Center](#).
- Gratitude for Performing Arts Day at **Free State High School**, with performances from high school students to younger grade levels to share information with younger grade levels.

- **[Community Conversations](#) are being scheduled for Winter 2026.** These community engagement opportunities will serve as opportunities for feedback to be received and assist with the district's update of the strategic plan. Planned sessions are as follows:
 - **Educational Support Center (Boardroom)** – Jan. 28, 6:00 p.m.
 - **Hillcrest Elementary** – Feb. 5, 6:00 p.m.
 - **Woodlawn Elementary** – Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m.
 - **Billy Mills Middle School** – Feb. 17, 6:00 p.m.
- Clarification on [Kansas State Department of Education statement](#) related to student and family immigration status, and Lawrence Public Schools' sustained commitment to supporting ALL our students and their families, regardless of national origin, religion, or immigration status; we stand in strong support of our students and their families. It is important to note, despite announcements, that the law has not changed. The [KSDE statement](#) clarifies, “...**We remind school personnel that their ultimate responsibility is the education and protection of all students. All students have a constitutionally protected right to receive an education.**”
- Families were encouraged to attend **Spring Parent-Teacher conferences**, taking place on **February 11-12 (early childhood and elementary)** and between **February 9-12 (middle and high schools)**.
- Preview announcement of the 10th anniversary of [Ovation! 2026](#) district talent show, hosted by the **Lawrence Schools Foundation**, at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at the Lied Center.
- The **early enrollment window for 2026-27 Preschool applications open from February 2 thru March 22.** Next year there will be a total of 6 preschool programs located throughout the district (Sunflower, Woodlawn, Deerfield, and Prairie Park), in addition to Kennedy Early Childhood Center and New York Montessori. More information and updates available www.usd497.org/preschool
- Board members were presented with a piece of student artwork, provided by **Deerfield Elementary**, as a token of gratitude for civic service in conjunction with January's designation as **School Board Recognition Month**.

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

Board Reports

Board President Gordon-Ross summarized a recent meeting of the Facilities Committee, and highlighted two items on the evening's Consent Agenda – engineering services for Choice Campus at Centennial and renewal of Centegix panic alert system; and reiterated Lawrence Public Schools' commitment to student voice and expression and providing inclusive classrooms of belonging.

Member Jones highlighted work of the Policy Committee and two second-read policies presented on the evening's board agenda for approval. Member Kimball provided a comprehensive legislative update specific to K-12 education budget considerations; special education funding; and a wide-range of proposed legislation and hearings regarding board of education election schedules, student cellphone

ban, etc.

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda of approval of fringe benefits broker (Holmes Murphy); engineering services approval – Choice Campus at Centennial (Lankford | Fendler & Associates LLC); annual renewal of Centegix panic alert system; renewal of site membership fees and AVID weekly online subscriptions; board policy DD – fund balance; board policy BCBK – executive session; board policy HAK – ratification procedures; board policy JBC – enrollment of nonresident students; board policy JQI – adult students; board policy KM – visitors to the school; personnel report; monthly vouchers; board meeting minutes (January 12, 2026). Consent agenda approved 6-0.

Staff and Community Calendars for the 26-27 and 27-28 School Years

James Polk, director of data and assessment, presented the work of a calendar committee comprised of certified, classified, building-level, and district administrators (16 total staff members). The committee recommended staff and community calendars for both the 26-27 and 27-28 school years, aligned with the Board of Regents and the University of Kansas' recognized spring break.

The board discussed the possibility of including Indigenous Persons Day as a recognized day off on school calendars moving forward. The committee will reconvene, and provide recommendations to the board for approval at the Monday, February 9 meeting.

Executive Session – Evaluation of the Superintendent

The board met in executive session for the purpose of evaluation of the Superintendent. No action was taken.

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

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