



**Board of Education
Superintendent Report
Tuesday, May 26, 2026**

Hello Members of the Board and Community,

We are grateful for a strong wrap up to the 2025-26 school year. Finishing the year strong is a team sport - the responsibility is shared by all of us; we are tremendously grateful to our students and staff, families and community for all the teamwork throughout this 2025-26 school year.

I am delighted to share the following end-of-school year highlights:

Congratulations Class of 2026

We excitedly celebrated the incredible accomplishments of the Class of 2026 during commencement ceremonies and graduation celebrations held across Lawrence From [Community Transition](#) and [Project SEARCH](#) to [Lawrence Virtual School](#), [Lawrence High School](#), [Free State High School](#), with Adult Education coming up on this Thursday. Students crossed the stage surrounded by proud families, educators, and classmates celebrating this important milestone.

As we honor the Class of 2026, we are proud of each graduate and grateful to the teachers, support staff, families, and community members who helped support students along the way.

Families and community members can continue exploring graduation highlights, stories, photos, and celebration coverage at the [Lawrence Public Schools Graduation Page](#).

We have one remaining commencement ceremony for the 2025-26 school year this Thursday, May 28, where we will recognize our Adult Learning Center and Lawrence Diploma Completion Program Class of 2026. That ceremony begins at 7:00 p.m. at the Lawrence College and Career Center.

Additional details: [Throughout graduation season, our schools also continued the meaningful tradition of Senior Grad Walks](#), where graduating seniors returned to their former elementary schools in caps and gowns to cheers of young students and former teachers. [This full circle moment for our graduates](#) also inspires our younger students who are at the beginning their

own educational journeys.

Mallory Johnson Earns Excellence in Teaching Award

Lawrence Public Schools proudly celebrates **Mallory Johnson, Secondary Therapeutic Classroom (STC) teacher at Community Connections at Pinckney**, who was recently [named the 2026 recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award](#), known locally as “The Bobs Award,” and received a \$10,000 prize through the Lawrence Schools Foundation. The recognition celebrates educators who demonstrate extraordinary instructional skill, deep commitment to students, and a profound impact on the lives of children and families.

Working in a therapeutic classroom setting, Johnson supports students through individualized, trauma-informed practices designed to help students grow academically, socially, and emotionally while creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Johnson’s recognition reflects the life-changing work happening every day inside our schools and the deep care educators across Lawrence Public Schools bring for students and families.

Additional details: Johnson was surprised with the announcement during a schoolwide assembly attended by students, staff members, family, former colleagues, Foundation board members, and district leaders. Community Connections at Pinckney Principal Jenna Viscomi praised Johnson’s ability to balance compassion with high expectations, sharing that “Mallory creates a classroom environment where all students feel safe, valued, and capable of growth.”

Parents also reflected on the extraordinary impact Johnson has made on students and families. One parent shared that Johnson was “the guiding force” behind her son’s ability to remain connected to school during an incredibly difficult time, while another described Johnson’s work supporting students with “warmth, good humor, and joy.”

This year marks the 30th anniversary of The Bobs Award, an honor established by anonymous community benefactors nearly three decades ago to recognize exceptional educators in Lawrence Public Schools.

Kansas Teacher of the Year District Finalists

Lawrence Public Schools is proud to celebrate two outstanding educators recently selected as the district’s 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year finalists. Each year, districts across Kansas nominate one elementary and one secondary educator to advance for regional and statewide consideration through the Kansas Teacher of the Year program.

Deborah Woodall-Routeledge, band teacher at Southwest Middle School, was [named the district’s Secondary Teacher of the Year finalist](#). Colleagues and school families highlighted her ability to create a supportive and motivating classroom environment while maintaining high expectations for students. Her nomination also recognized her leadership and commitment to the broader music community, including mentoring young musicians and supporting music programs across Lawrence Public Schools.

Jacey Yanek, kindergarten teacher at Quail Run Elementary School, was named the

district's Elementary Teacher of the Year finalist. Her nomination celebrated the joyful and engaging classroom culture she creates for students and the confidence and love of learning she helps foster in young learners. School families and colleagues praised her ability to make every student feel capable, valued, and proud of their growth.

Additional details: The Kansas Teacher of the Year program recognizes exemplary educators who demonstrate instructional excellence, strong communication and collaboration skills, commitment to public education, and the ability to support students of all backgrounds and abilities. District finalists advance for consideration at the regional level, with regional finalists ultimately eligible to become the Kansas Teacher of the Year and the state's nominee for National Teacher of the Year.

Angelia Perkins Named as Lawrence Public Schools Master Teacher Finalist

Lawrence Public Schools is proud to celebrate [Angelia Perkins, art educator at Lawrence High School, who was recently named as the district's nominee for the prestigious Kansas Master Teacher Award](#) through Emporia State University.

Perkins, who has taught at Lawrence High School for more than 30 years, was recognized for her extraordinary commitment to students, instructional excellence, and lasting impact on arts education within Lawrence Public Schools and the broader community. Students, colleagues, and community members highlighted her ability to inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to create meaningful artwork while encouraging personal expression, creativity, and confidence through art.

Additional details: Established in 1954, the Kansas Master Teacher Award recognizes Kansas educators who exemplify the highest standards of professional excellence and dedication to student success. Kansas school districts may nominate one educator annually for consideration. Candidates are evaluated on their teaching philosophy, instructional practices, professional growth, measurable impact on student learning, and community engagement. Finalists must also demonstrate strong support from colleagues, supervisors, students, and community members.

Author and Illustrator Visits Kennedy Early Childhood Center

Students in [Lindsey Cramer's classroom at Kennedy Early Childhood Center recently welcomed children's author and illustrator Lindsey Yankey](#) for a creative and engaging visit centered around storytelling, imagination, and the art of illustration.

Yankey shared her book, *The Dinosaur Seed*, before giving preschoolers an up-close look at her artistic process. Students watched as she layered colorful stamped backgrounds and demonstrated how illustrations come to life through printmaking techniques. One of the highlights for students was hearing the ink "talk," a term Yankey uses to describe the sound the ink makes when it is ready to print. Students especially enjoyed watching a rocket ship emerge from the artwork, complete with one of the young "rocket scientists" aboard the illustration.

Following the demonstration, students created their own collaborative collage artwork using

drawings, paper scraps, and imaginative designs. Several students even designed their own rocket ships, including one inspired by a butterfly.

The visit concluded with Yankey adding a final stamped illustration to the class's own collaborative artwork using the same technique featured in her books. Experiences like these help spark creativity and curiosity for our youngest students while strengthening early literacy and artistic exploration.

6A Spring Sports State Competition

We have a number of teams and student athletes who completed their Spring Sports season with appearances in state competition.

Boys Tennis: Lawrence Public Schools is proud to celebrate the outstanding performances of student-athletes from **Free State High School** and **Lawrence High School** at the [2026 KSHSAA 6A Boys Tennis State Championships, held May 15–16 in Wichita.](#)

In singles competition, [Micah Ward captured the 6A State Championship](#) with a first-place finish, while teammate **Ishaan Rao** earned a fourth-place finish in the state tournament.

In doubles competition, the Lawrence High School team of **Jack Bauch** and **Koh Brewer** finished seventh overall, while the Free State doubles team of Drew Harrison and Andrew McCall placed twelfth.

Additional details: Free State High School qualified its entire boys tennis team for the 2026 state tournament after a strong regional performance earlier this spring. Both Free State and Lawrence High School have established strong traditions of success in boys tennis competition, with student-athletes regularly advancing to postseason and state-level play while representing Lawrence Public Schools with excellence both on and off the court.

Girls Swimming and Diving: This past weekend, the 6A Girls 6A State Championships for Girls Swimming and Diving was held at the Shawnee Mission School District Aquatic Center. Highlights included a 5th place overall team finish for Free State High School, and a state championship for freshman Ella Marsh from Free State High School in the Girls 200 Yard Individual Medley.

Additional details:

[Girls 200 Yard Medley Relay](#) – Free State High School, 4th place (Ella Marsh, Helena Mattes, Siggie Mattes, Ruby Jiang)

[Girls 200 Yard Freestyle](#) – Bridget Collins (FSHS), 12th place

[Girls 200 Yard Individual Medley](#) – Ella Marsh (FSHS), 1st place; Helena Mattes (FSHS), 5th place; Ashlyn Tell (LHS), 13th place

[Girls 100 Yard Butterfly](#) – Ella Marsh (FSHS), 2nd place; Ruby Jiang (FSHS), 9th place; Ashlyn Tell (LHS), 11th place

[Girls 500 Yard Freestyle](#) – Siggie Mattes (FSHS), 6th place; Bridget Collins (FSHS), 8th place

[Girls 200 Yard Freestyle Relay](#) – Free State High School, 15th place (Bridget Collins, Alina Jones, Maria Fuentes Sanchez, Dylan Tenbrink)

[Girls 100 Yard Backstroke](#) – Siggie Mattes (FSHS), 6th place

Girls 100 Yard Breaststroke – Helena Mattes (FSHS), 4th place; Ruby Jiang (FSHS), 9th place
Girls 400 Yard Freestyle – Free State High School, 5th place (Siggi Mattes, Ruby Jiang, Helena Mattes, Ella Mash)

This week, several students from Lawrence High School and Free State High School will compete at the [State Track and Field Meet](#) scheduled for May 29-30 in Wichita, and Free State High School Boys Baseball played Olathe Northwest @ Blue Valley West late this afternoon in the [State Quarterfinals](#) for the chance to move onto the Semifinals which will be played at Wichita State University on Thursday evening. Also this week, the [Boys Golf State Tournament](#) takes place at the Firekeeper Golf Course in Topeka this Tuesday and Wednesday, with several golfers in contention from both Free State High School and Lawrence High School.

Miss and Junior Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence Coronation

This Thursday, May 28, from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the [Native American Student Services \(NASS\) building, located at 2704 Louisiana Street](#), the public is cordially invited to attend the Miss and Jr Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence Coronation. This is an opportunity to thank and celebrate our outgoing royalty, **NaFehna Farve** and **Riley Alva**, for their outstanding dedication and impact, while welcoming our new incoming royalty as they begin their journey.

Summer Meals for Kids

[Funded through the USDA's Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), Lawrence Public Schools is once again proud to support students and families through our [Summer Meals for Kids programming during June and July this year](#). These meal opportunities help ensure students continue to have access to nutritious meals while school is out of session.

We will host a **public meal site at Sunset Hill Elementary**. Children ages 1-18 can receive free meals while adult meals are \$5 served Monday through Friday, June 1 through July 24, from 12:00-12:45 p.m.

Please note there will not be meals served on the summer holidays: **June 19 and July 3**.

Families may also register to receive weekly summer meal kits containing five days of breakfasts and lunches to prepare at home.

Meal kits are designed to be easily assembled by upper elementary-aged students and older. Families can pick up the meal kits on Tuesday mornings from 7:00-9:00 a.m. (on June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and July 7, 14, and 21) at the Douglas County Fairgrounds Open Pavilion located at 2110 Harper St.

Registration is required for meal kits, which are free for children ages 1-18. To clarify, adult meals are not available with the kits, and to clarify these programs are fully funded through federal programming.

Lawrence Public Schools remains grateful for the many staff members, volunteers, and community partners who help make these meals possible. Full details and registration can be found on our district website under [Nutrition and Wellness](#).

We will be working diligently during the upcoming weeks, focused on preparations and setting the table for a strong start to the 2026-27 school year.

Next Steps:

Upcoming Professional Development - Family Engagement Center

Part of that work will include a professional development opportunity for our front-line staff, facilitated by our Student Services team this Thursday morning. Our administrative assistants, secretaries, registrars, parent involvement facilitators, and designated ESC staff who communicate directly with our families, have been invited for a 'working brunch' session.

This opportunity will allow our staff to share valuable feedback to help identify the needs of our families, and to learn how the Family Engagement Center will be designed to support students, families, and schools.

Transition to Durham Transportation

Dr. Englebrick shares the following updates on our transition process to Durham Transportation:

Durham Student Services completed the scheduled employee hiring events on the Facilities and Operations Campus; over four weeks, eight group interview sessions were held, and over 90 applications were received. Durham Student Services will continue to accept applications and conduct interviews throughout the summer in order to be fully staffed for fall.

We appreciate the patience and understanding of our current transportation team members who are navigating the required onboarding processes with a new company.

Building B on the Facilities and Operations campus has been prepared for use by Durham Student Services. Grounds department staff have relocated to a building previously used for storage. Durham Student Services staff anticipate beginning the move-in process in June.

The parking area to be used by Durham Student Services for bus and staff parking has been prepared.

Planning is underway in preparation for the fuel purchase cards. Durham Student Services is to provide the method for assigning fuel purchase cards. Facilities and Operations will work with the Business Office to order fuel purchase cards.

Facilities and Operations staff are working with Durham Student Services to determine the number of access keys that will be required, along with the number and method of assignment of gate access cards for Durham Student Services staff and buses.

Organizational Alignment Work Continues:

We are working diligently to continue to align the organization for effectiveness, efficiency and to ensure resources are prioritized to opportunities for students and compensation for staff.

In this effort, we will be sharing a number of adjustments to better align the organization over the

coming weeks of summer.

This evening, we are sharing two key adjustments, first, in bringing the technology teams, both instructional and physical properties side of the house together as **one Data, Assessment and Information Technology Team**.

We are sharing new assignments and additional responsibilities for two district leaders:

James Polk, Director, Data, Assessment and Information Technology

We are pleased to share that James Polk has accepted the role of lead information officer for the district. With responsibility for all data, assessment and information work in the district, the learning analytics role supports district efforts to improve student outcomes through the strategic use of data and evidence-based decision making.

This role will lead the collection, analysis, and interpretation of student learning, instructional, and systems data to help schools monitor progress toward standards, identify student needs, evaluate the impact of instructional practices and programs, and drive continuous improvement across the district. In addition, the position will encompass the physical equipment and network infrastructure and technology systems across the organization.

Information technology in service to and support of student achievement and employee effectiveness remains the vision and priority and with this organizational adjustment, these efforts will be streamlined in one team.

Summer Workman, Director, Communications

We are pleased to share that Summer Workman has accepted the role as lead communications officer for the district.

She will assume leadership responsibilities for all internal and external communications to support the Superintendent, Lawrence Board of Education, schools and furthering the USD 497 district vision. She will also oversee media, government, and community relations, and work to ensure transparent, timely messaging across platforms, including crisis communication and digital media.

Superintendent Statement Employee Agreements & Increases

We are proud this evening to achieve a significant milestone with the approval of both the Certified and the Educational Support Professional employee agreements, and in wrapping up this work prior to the end of the school year.

I am deeply grateful for the teamwork modeled over many weeks of long meetings, proud of the courageous work to face the organizational challenges inherent in our times: fringe benefits and compensation within limited, public resources - it's a triple threat that forces either innovation or stagnation in organizations.

The team effort mobilized by our employee group leaders, by lead negotiator Samrie Devin, and

district administrator team, as well as Members of the Board of Education, specifically Members Byers, Jones, and Lancaster - though all Members were fully engaged in this work - serves as a model of how to navigate, innovate, lead and thrive. We are all better for this work; it is based in years of developing and deepening relationship and team, as this affirmative outcome demonstrates.

The increases we achieve in bringing these agreements are historic, - **a \$51,000 annual beginning teacher salary and a \$20/per hour starting wage for educational support professionals**. Taking these steps, alongside ensuring a second daily professional planning time for teachers at all levels, achieved last school year, will continue to 'raise the level of play' in Lawrence Public Schools, supporting educators for the benefit of our students, and the enrichment of our Lawrence community today and into the future.

Achieving this milestone tonight, however, is only an initial step as we move forward together. We are committed to continue to innovate to achieve our shared goals of a world class education for our students, delivered by an extraordinary team of professionals, to attract and retain the talent, experience and continuing excellence the Lawrence Public Schools has long been known for, across Kansas and around the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and for the honor of serving the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools