



USD 497 News Release

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Board Hears 25-26 District Needs Assessment Report

Spring 2026 District Needs Assessment

James Polk, director of data and assessment, presented a Spring 2026 Needs Assessment report highlighting direct feedback from building leaders to inform the board's priorities and future budget considerations for the school district.

The Needs Assessment process solicits building level perspectives from each school site to identify student achievement barriers, the board of education an opportunity to review district needs and consider the feedback provided from schools, and works to keep the community informed of ongoing school improvement efforts.

[Click here for presentation slides containing additional information.](#)

Superintendent's Report

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

- Highlighted video in recognition of [Teacher Appreciation Week](#) last week, and noted the daily impact that Lawrence Public Schools staff and educators have on students.
- Invited community survey participation to support ongoing planning of the [Safe Routes to School program](#), a collaborative local effort with the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, the City of Lawrence, and the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- **Free State High School** student participation and success at the DECA International Career Development Conference and the Kansas 6A State Speech Championship.
- **Community Connections at Pinckney** received a \$50,000 grant through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas's Pathways to a Healthy Kansas initiative to support the expansion of the Community Connections Bakery and launch of the new Empowering Brew Coffee Shop.
- The Spring 2026 issue of the Lawrence Public Schools quarterly newsletter was distributed to Lawrence Journal-World subscribers in early May, and is also [available in a user-friendly digital format](#).
- Lawrence Public Schools will transition [annual student enrollment](#) for the 2026-27 school year from its previous April and May timeline to a new enrollment window beginning in July. This adjustment is designed to better align district processes and ensure schools receive the most

accurate and up-to-date information from families before the start of the school year. Additional details, timelines, and resources for families will be shared across all of our communication channels later this week.

- [The Kansas Assessment Program](#) (KAP) includes a variety of assessments aligned to the Kansas statewide curriculum standards and scores are now available for Lawrence Public Schools students. These KAP assessments measure student progress toward Kansas grade-level standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science (Grades 5, 8, and 11). Families can access their student's KAP scores online through the [KSDE Kite Parent Portal](#), and schools will also send home hard copies of the reports this month.
- Graduation information (times, dates, location, and highlights) for the Class of 2026 can be found on our website at <https://www.usd497.org/graduation>. This landing page is also where viewers can find links to the livestreams for ceremonies at Lawrence High School, Free State High School, and Lawrence Virtual School.

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

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda including approvals for roof repairs and replacements for Billy Mills and West Middle Schools (\$427,366 total, to be funded from capital outlay funds); emergency fire suppression waterline repairs at Southwest Middle School (\$36,208, to be funded from capital outlay funds); renewal of medical/dental/vision plan benefits (effective September 1; new cost of \$834.03 per covered employee per month prorated for qualifying part-time employees); personnel report; monthly vouchers; financial reports; donation report; and meeting minutes (April 27, 2026).

Consent agenda was approved with a 6-0 vote.

Board Reports

Board President Gordon-Ross summarized highlights from a May 6 meeting of the Facilities Committee, including a number of capital outlay projects planned throughout the school district. He also provided a legislative update on behalf of Member Kimball, focused on future funding impacts to public schools and special education.

Member Lancaster summarized attendance at a Special Education Subcommittee, and ongoing efforts to solicit feedback from staff. He also shared his positive perspectives on Negotiations.

Member Jones and Member Byers noted tentative agreements reached with both Certified and Education Support Professional bargaining teams, and shared appreciation for all involved in the negotiations process.

Member Byers also summarized a May 3 meeting of the Equity Council which included a presentation on Family Engagement, and noted the group's intent to continue to meet throughout the summer.

Executive Session

The board held an executive session to discuss personnel matters of non-elected personnel with legal consultation and no action taken, and held an executive session to discuss personnel matters of non-elected personnel with action taken – addition of agenda item “New Business 4.1.”

New Business 4.1 was a resolution for the non-renewal of a staff member for the 26-27 school year (approved with a 5-0 vote, with 1 member recused).

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

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