



## USD 497 News Release

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### **Board of Education Hears Annual Report from Native American Student Services and Approves 26-27 & 27-28 Calendars**

#### **Native American Student Services Annual Report**

David Farve, coordinator of Native American Student Services (NASS), [provided an annual informational report](#). He was joined by students NaFehna Farve, Lawrence High School (25-26 Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence) and Riley Alva, Southwest Middle School (25-26 Junior Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence).

NASS serves as a resource for students in need, builds relationships between students and families, incorporates cultural activities to establish a sense of belonging, connects with intertribal clubs, and solicits student voices. 73 tribal nations from across the country are represented in Lawrence Public Schools' student enrollment, with a total of 810 students self-identified as native american.

#### **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 26-27 calendar reflects that the district will be closed for Indigenous Persons Day, which will be no school for students and designated as a paid holiday for staff. Calendars for both the 26-27 and 27-28 school years were approved with a 7-0 vote.

#### **Superintendent's Report**

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

- Celebration of **National School Counseling Week** (February 2-6) and the 31 school counselors that support Lawrence Public Schools, and special recognition that **Sunset Hill Elementary** School was designated as the first and only school in Kansas to earn the American School Counselor Association's Recognized [ASCA Model Program \(RAMP\)](#) status.
- Overview of the **2026 All-City Choir Concert** at the Lied Center of Kansas Performing Arts Center last week, which brought together the district's four middle school choirs and two high school choirs. The **All-City Middle School Choir**, composed of students from **Billy Mills Middle School, Liberty Memorial Central Middle, West Middle, and Southwest Middle** schools, performed under the direction of **Dr. Gabe Lewis-O'Connor**, Associate

Director of Choral Studies at the University of Kansas. The All-City High School Choir, with student choral singers from **Lawrence High School and Free State High School**, was guided by three directors: **Joshua East**, Free State's Director of Choirs; **Oliva Henning**, Free State's Associate Director of Choirs; and **Rachel Naughtin**, Lawrence High School Director of Choral Activities.

- **Lawrence High School** students earned **57 top awards** in the [Scholastic Art Awards Mid-West Regional competition](#), which includes Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois. from more than 4,000 entries Honors included 1 Gold Art Portfolio, 22 Gold Keys, 12 Silver Keys, and 23 Honorable Mentions, selected by professional jurors evaluating originality, skill, and personal voice. Twenty-two artworks and one portfolio will advance to the **national finals in New York City**, where students may be eligible for scholarships of up to **\$12,500**. Awards span categories such as painting, photography, sculpture, digital art, fashion, and illustration.
- **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 ([www.usd497.org/future](http://www.usd497.org/future)).

Upcoming sessions are as follows:

- **Woodlawn Elementary** — Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m.
- **Billy Mills Middle School** — Feb. 17, 6:00 p.m.
- Recap and summary of the 10th anniversary of **Ovation! 2026** district talent show, hosted by the **Lawrence Schools Foundation**, on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at the Lied Center.
- Lawrence Schools Foundation's annual BOBS dinner and reception held last week, which celebrated **Woodlawn Elementary School's Gina Carter** for Excellence in Teaching.
- Families are 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)**.
- The **early enrollment window for 2026-27 Preschool applications remains open 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 available at: [www.usd497.org/preschool](http://www.usd497.org/preschool)

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

## Board Reports

Board President Gordon-Ross highlighted recent district events and activities, and noted multiple items recommended for purchase on the consent agenda: generator at Educational Support Center (\$155,400); replacement chiller at Lawrence High School (\$352,076 plus a 10% contingency of \$35,207); and Turf Tank equipment for athletic field striping (\$17,700 for year one, and annual fee for years two and three for \$16,000 per year).

Member Kimball provided a comprehensive legislative update specific to public education funding considerations and several unfunded mandates that have been proposed. Updates were also provided from Negotiations, Policy, and Equity Advisory committees.

**Consent Agenda**

The board approved a consent agenda of approval of project bid for a generator replacement; project bid for a chiller replacement; multi-year agreement for Turf Tank equipment; incubator kitchen grant purchase; talent-perform solution services; personnel report; monthly vouchers; financial reports; board meeting minutes (January 27, 2026). Consent agenda was approved 7-0.

**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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