



USD 497 News Release

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Board of Education Hears an Update on Centennial Choice Campus, and Approves Student Meal Prices for the 26-27 School Year

Centennial Choice Campus – Report

The historic Centennial Campus will open in August as the **Centennial Choice Program**, offering students a personalized experience in a smaller, nontraditional learning environment. An informational update was provided to the board by Zach Harwood, who will serve as principal of Choice Campus at Centennial & Lawrence Virtual School; and Dr. Cole Amaya, associate superintendent, teaching and learning.

The presentation highlighted the personalized and flexible learning design of the program, the students who may benefit from enrollment at Centennial Choice, and next steps in preparing for an August 2026 opening. Students will have access to multiple learning options, including in-person support, online coursework, courses at comprehensive high schools, career-connected learning, and community-based experiences.

The campus will serve as a central hub where each student's pathway is intentionally built around their goals, graduation requirements, and postsecondary plans. Centennial Choice Campus is designed to provide flexible and supportive opportunities while connecting students to the full range of programs and resources available across Lawrence Public Schools.

[Click here for the informational presentation slides.](#)

Superintendent's Report

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

- **Lawrence High School students** recently partnered with **Explore Lawrence** to create a special welcome message for **Team Algeria**, base-camping in Lawrence for FIFA World Cup competition: video clip ([LHS Welcomes Team Algeria](#)).
- Celebrated the accomplishments of the **Adult Education Class of 2026** during the district's final commencement ceremony of the 2025-26 school year. A total of 54 graduates were recognized, including 25 students who earned high school diplomas through the **Lawrence Diploma Completion Program** and 29 students who completed a GED through the **Lawrence Adult Education Center**.
- Recognized **Ashley Vance**, Office Manager for the Deputy Superintendent, as [the Spring 2026 recipient of the district's Class Act Award](#). The Class Act Award recognizes classified staff members who exemplify leadership, teamwork, accountability, positivity, and a strong

commitment to supporting colleagues and students. Through the district's LEAP partnership, award recipients also receive a \$500 prize sponsored by Truist Credit Union.

- Last week, 160 5th and 6th grade students participated in Lawrence Public Schools' [2026 Summer Novice Music Camp at Lawrence High School](#). The camp serves as an important introduction to instrumental music for many students, and provides an opportunity to explore brass, woodwind, percussion, and string instruments while learning foundational skills from music educators.
- 6A Spring Sports State Post-Season Summary:
 - **Baseball: Free State High School** reached the state tournament for the tenth time in the last eleven seasons. The Firebirds entered state with a 25-4 record, and finished as state runner-up after a 4-3 loss to Washburn Rural in the title game. The season also marked the final year for longtime head coach Mike Hill, who announced his retirement after leading the program since the school's opening in 1997.
 - **Track and Field:** Lawrence Public Schools was well-represented at the 2026 KSHSAA State Track and Field Championships, with athletes from both **Lawrence High** and **Free State High** competing against the state's top performers. Among the highlights, **Free State's girls team** tied for fifth place at the 6A State Track & Field Championships and was led by **Sadie Reynolds** who earned a state championship in the girls discus with a throw of 145 feet.
 - **Boys Golf: Free State** golfers **Henry Thompson** and **A.J. Kimzey** earned top-20 finishes at the KSHSAA Class 6A State Golf Tournament at Firekeeper Golf Course in Mayetta. Thompson finished 17th with a two-day score of 150, while Kimzey placed 20th.
- Acknowledged representation by board of education members at the annual **Lawrence PRIDE Parade**, held on Mass Street last Saturday. This event takes place the first Saturday in June, and is aligned with the celebration of PRIDE Month.
- Year-end review of the [implementation of ParentSquare](#) beginning last July - has the district in a strong position for compliance with recent legislative action by the State regarding educator and school district communications with families and students. We are proud to report that **99.2% of LPS families** are contactable through the platform, and our team continues work to increase that percentage during the 2026-27 student enrollment window.

Further, approximately 3.5% of families have adjusted their user settings to receive district communications in their home language, spanning 12 languages: Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Burmese, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, and Vietnamese, with Spanish being the most common.

- Our district facility team is hard at work this summer to accomplish improvements, maintain facilities, and prepare for the start of the 2026-27 school year.

Improvement projects include:

- New preschool classrooms at **Deerfield** and **Prairie Park**
- Reconstruction of the **Free State** press box
- Track resurfacing projects at both comprehensive high schools
- Middle school theater upgrades at all middle schools
- Solar installation at **Woodlawn**
- The continued development of the district's **Family Engagement Center** located at the Educational Support Center.
- And students returning in August will also enjoy new playgrounds installed at **Deerfield** and **Prairie Park Elementary Schools**.

- Lawrence Public School's **special education** facts are as follows for the 2024-25 school year (per June 2025 audit):
 - Percent of students qualifying for special education services: 20.7%.
 - Special education staff: 455 total (220 certified educators; and 235 classified support paraeducators)
 - Total number of special education categories: 15, which includes 14 disability categories identified per IDEA, in addition to gifted education. Note that a student may qualify in more than one category.
 - Specialized programs: 28 total (10 elementary; 10 middle; and 8 high school).
 - Special education costs/expenditures: \$33.5 million.
 - Special education revenues/reimbursements from federal, state, and local special education funding: \$19.8 million.
- **Meeting the gap last year required a transfer from the general fund/local option fund for unreimbursed special education expenditures and interest of \$13.7 million.**
- Reminder: [Summer Meals for Kids programming during June and July this year](#). These meal opportunities, funded through the USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), help ensure students continue to have access to nutritious meals while school is out of session.

Lawrence Public Schools 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.

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

Meal Prices 26-27 School Year

Cynde Frick, Executive Director of Finance, and Julie Henry, Director of Nutrition & Wellness, answered questions from the board, as a follow-up to last meeting's presentation in consideration of proposed adjustments to student meal prices for the 26-27 school year.

The [May 26 board presentation](#) included breakfast and lunch student participation trends, current meal costs, food service fund balance status, and an overview of the USDA-funded summer food service program (June 1-July 24). Proposed adjustments for the 26-27 school year are an additional 15 cents per student lunch, and an additional 10 cents per student breakfast.

The board approved the motion with a 6-1 vote.

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda including approvals for Facilities and Operations Management Software - FMX (\$33,256.80 annually); Microsoft Licenses - CDW-G (\$66,215.86, annual renewal); District Facility Rental Fee Structure and Guide; Disposal Excess Items (Purple Wave); ParentSquare Family Communications Platform (\$158,911 total, three-year renewal); Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Capacity Builder Training (\$60,224); Responsive Classroom pilot implementation at Prairie Park and Deerfield Elementary Schools, from the Center for Responsive Schools (CRS) for (\$55,000, paid from The Stronger Connections Grant); Authentic Family

Engagement (consultation & training), from the Family Engagement In Education: Creating Effective Home and School Partnerships (\$55,000, paid from The Stronger Connections Grant; excess workers compensation insurance policy, with an annual premium estimated at \$79,337, to be paid from the worker compensation reserve fund; year end transfers; personnel report; monthly vouchers; financial reports; donation report; financial reports; monthly vouchers; and meeting minutes (May 26, 2026).

Consent agenda was approved with a 7-0 vote.

Board Reports

Board President Gordon-Ross noted attendance at adult education graduation, and the annual Lawrence PRIDE parade. Mr. Gordon-Ross also highlighted a number of items from the evening's consent agenda. He also reminded the board of the July 13 re-organizational meeting, and the pending election of a new board president and board vice-president.

Member Kimball provided a legislative update, including this week's State Board of Education meeting to discuss the issue of student screen time; and upcoming presentations by the State Department of Education specific to student cell phone usage, student walk-outs, district accreditation, and other education issues. She also summarized two days of meetings in late May of the Kansas Legislature's Education Funding Task Force. Member Kimball also summarized a recent meeting of the Facilities Committee, which reviewed community requests for district facility usage and the Facilities and Operations Department's online work order system.

Member Byers highlighted last week's meeting of the Equity Council and a preview of issues to consider during the 2026-27 school year, including family engagement and truancy. Member Cadue-Blackwood attended last week's Equity Council meeting.

Member Jones highlighted ongoing work of the Policy Committee, and specifically mentioned policy adjustments required for student cell phone access and staff social media usage.

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

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