



USD 497 News Release

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Board Elects New Leadership During Annual Organizational Meeting

Board Organizational Meeting

Monday's Lawrence Board of Education meeting marked the first scheduled meeting of the fiscal year and the annual organizational meeting, during which the board elected its president and vice president for the 2026-27 school year.

Election of Board President and Vice President.

Former Board Vice President Bob Byers was elected and affirmed as Board President. President Byers thanked his fellow members for their support and the opportunity to work alongside them.

Board Member Yolanda Franklin was elected and affirmed as Board Vice President, after nominations of both members Franklin and Carole Cadue-Blackwood.

"I look forward to continuing to serve our community," said Franklin.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Swift shared updates celebrating student achievement, summer learning, staff preparation, and back-to-school readiness across Lawrence Public Schools.

Among the highlights:

- **Five Free State High School students** represented Lawrence Public Schools on the [Kansas Ambassadors of Music European Concert Tour](#), performing throughout England, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany alongside students from across Kansas. Dr. Swift also recognized **Free State Band Director Eric Bradshaw** for his work and continued commitment to creating extraordinary learning experiences for students beyond the classroom.
- Lawrence Public Schools students and educators were well represented at last week's **Kansas Choral Directors Association (KCDA) Summer Convention**, hosted by the University of Kansas. Two students—one from Lawrence High School and one from Free State High School—were selected to perform in the Jazz Honor Choir, an elite ensemble featuring just 11 students from across Kansas. Additionally, 29 students from both high schools performed as members of the convention's 100-voice Honor Choir.
- **West Middle School student Éabha Klinksick** earned national recognition during the [2026 National History Day Contest](#), receiving the Equality in History Prize for her original performance, *Breaking Ground: Womontown*. Her project was also selected as one of only twelve performances showcased at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.
- Dr. Swift highlighted the district's **Extended School Year program**, which served 194 students this summer with support from 142 special education teachers, paraeducators, and related service providers. Students maintained an average attendance rate of nearly 89.9 percent while receiving individualized instruction designed to support continued progress toward IEP goals.

- Dr. Swift shared a year-in-review update on Special Education, outlining the district's continued implementation of strategic improvement efforts focused on strengthening Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), supporting staff recruitment and retention, expanding professional learning, and improving systems that support students.
- While district staff continue preparing classrooms and campuses, families are encouraged to visit the district's [Back-to-School Hub](#)—a one-stop landing page designed to help families prepare for the school year ahead. There they will find resources, including important dates, bus transportation request information, school supply lists, and more.
- Since [Annual Student Enrollment opened on July 8](#), more than 3,000 returning students—approximately 35 percent—have completed enrollment. **Families should complete Annual Student Enrollment by July 31.**
- Lawrence Public Schools is proud to partner with Durham School Services to provide safe, reliable transportation. Families who need bus transportation for the 2026-27 school year are encouraged to visit the district's [Transportation webpage](#) to submit a transportation request. Requests are reviewed in accordance with district transportation eligibility guidelines and help staff finalize routes prior to the start of school. **Transportation requests should be submitted by July 24.**
- Lawrence Public Schools is proud to partner with United Way of Kaw Valley, neighboring Douglas County school districts, local businesses, and community volunteers through the annual [Douglas County Back2School Donation Drive](#), helping ensure students begin the school year with the supplies they need to learn and succeed. In Lawrence, donated supplies will be distributed to students through the [Lawrence Schools Foundation's Kids Expo on August 8](#) and, for families unable to attend, through our schools. Together, these collective efforts help remove barriers to learning before the school year even begins and strengthen the supports and opportunities we provide for students and families. Community members can support the drive by donating new school supplies or making an online financial contribution. **For full details, visit: <https://www.uwkawvalley.org/back2school>**

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

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda including approvals for Centennial Choice Campus Phase 1 furniture (\$45,590.24); second annual renewal of the boiler preventative maintenance service agreement with P1 Service, LLC (\$60,958.80); Fire Alarm and Protection Systems Inspections and Monitoring with Tech Electronics and Conley Sprinkler (\$111,495.00); printing maintenance and supplies through SumnerONE, Inc. (up to \$215,000); registration for Lawrence Public Schools educators attending the AVID Summer Institute in Kansas City (\$27,975); adoption of the 2026-27 Board of Education meeting schedule; authorization to continue using the 1,116-hour instructional time accounting method for the 2026-27 school year; annual appointments and designations for the 2026-27 school year, including the Clerk of the Board, District Treasurer, Deputy Clerk, Deputy Treasurer, authorized representatives, legal counsel, authorized bank signers, district depositories, and official newspapers; resolution waiving Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) reporting requirements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027; financial reports; donation report; monthly vouchers; and meeting minutes (June 22, 2026).

Consent agenda was approved with a 6-0 vote.

Board Reports

Member Cadue-Blackwood gave an update from the Equity Advisory Committee's work in establishing goals. Member Franklin also attended the committee meeting.

Member GR Gordon-Ross gave an update on the Facility Planning Committee including the City of Lawrence's upcoming presentation to the Board of Education at the Aug. 10 meeting, ongoing work related to high school track construction, and updates to the Family Engagement Center. He also shared a summary of the collaborative work with Durham School Services ahead of the start of the school year.

New Business

Personnel Report

The board approved the personnel report with a 5-1 vote

Renewal of Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Membership and Season Pass

The board approved renewal of the district's Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) membership and season pass (\$17,031.85) by a 5-0 vote.

Renewal of Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Legal Assistance Fund Contract

The board approved renewal of the district's Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Legal Assistance Fund contract (\$3,100) by a 5-0 vote.

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

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