



USD 497 News Release

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Board Reviews 2026-27 Budget and Receives Update on Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Update

At Monday's Lawrence Board of Education meeting, Senior Director of Data, Assessment, and Information Technology James Polk presented an update to the Board regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI). The report detailed the patterns and themes for consideration, shared recommended AI guidelines for the 2026-27 school year based on the work of the ad hoc committee, and articulated a timeline for next steps.

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

2026-27 Budget Publication of Hearing Notices

Executive Director of Finance Cynde Frick presented an overview of the proposed 2026-27 budget and requested Board approval of the mill levies and budget authority to be published in the district's notice of budget hearing and notice to exceed the revenue neutral rate.

The budget hearing and revenue neutral rate hearing will be held September 14 at the beginning of the regularly scheduled Board meeting.

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

The Board approved the mill levies and budget authority for publication in the notice of hearing for the 2026-27 budget and the notice to exceed the revenue neutral rate with a 7-0 vote.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Swift shared several highlights with the Board as the 2026-27 school year gets underway:

- Dr. Swift celebrated the start of the new school year and thanked staff members, families, and community partners for their hard work, flexibility, patience, and partnership in a strong start to the 2026-27 school year.
- Dr. Swift highlighted the district's continued expansion of early learning opportunities. [New preschool classrooms at Deerfield and Prairie Park elementary schools join existing programs](#) at Kennedy Early Childhood Center, New York Montessori, Sunflower,

and Woodlawn, allowing the district to serve more young learners and families across Lawrence.

In addition, Lawrence Public Schools continues to see strong family interest in preschool, with a high demand for placement. In response, **Dr. Swift announced the next phase of expansion for preschool by adding classrooms at Kennedy Early Childhood Center, Deerfield, Hillcrest, and Sunflower Elementary Schools.** We anticipate these classrooms opening for students in mid-September, and we look forward to hearing from families to confirm their interest in Lawrence Public Schools.

- Dr. Swift provided an update on student transportation as the district continues adjusting routes and schedules, transitions to new transportation partner Durham School Services, and responds to increased requests for transportation. The district has routed an estimated 1,400 students for bus transportation, and all students with high-priority needs, including Special Education students with transportation identified in their educational plans, have been routed. Routes were adjusted and added over the weekend, while district and Durham staff continue monitoring service and working through individual family needs.

Dr. Swift also shared that Durham has dedicated additional staff and technical support to address issues with the My Ride app and bus tracking and GPS systems. The Lawrence Public Schools Family Engagement Center remains available as an additional support site, with staff and translators available to assist families at (785) 330-1900.

- Looking ahead, **Portfolio Day will be held on Sept. 18.** Hosted at Lawrence High School, it will provide student artists from across the district an opportunity to share their work with colleges, universities, and community partners, receive feedback, explore postsecondary opportunities in the arts, and connect with professionals and college representatives as they consider their futures.

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

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda including approvals for Phase 2 furniture for the Choice Campus at Centennial from Circadia of Kansas City (\$89,323.74 from Capital Outlay funds); permanent and temporary construction easements to the City of Lawrence at the Educational Support Center in connection with the Safe Routes to School Improvement project (\$5,400 fair market value payment to the district); six-year purchase of Amplify CKLA Language Studio for K-5 multilingual learners (\$64,584 total from Title III funds); furniture and materials from Lakeshore Learning Materials for five additional preschool classrooms at Hillcrest, Kennedy Early Childhood Center, Sunflower, and Deerfield elementary schools (not to exceed \$185,000 from Capital Outlay funds); personnel report; monthly vouchers; and meeting minutes (August 10, 2026).

Consent agenda was approved with a 7-0 vote.

Board Reports

Board Member Matt Lancaster discussed the Special Education Subcommittee's work previewing the helpline tool for Special Education certified staff members.

Old Business

Board Policy IIBGC – Staff Online Activities (Second Reading)

Following its first reading on August 10, 2026, the Board considered revisions to [Board Policy IIBGC – Staff Online Activities](#) on second reading.

The revisions are intended to align district policy with current Kansas law, strengthen protections for students and staff, and clarify acceptable uses of social media and other online communication platforms. The updates distinguish between public, one-way communication used to share school information and prohibited two-way or private interactions with students through social media platforms.

The policy also reinforces the expectation that employees use board-approved communication tools for official district business while continuing to permit appropriate instructional and educational communications through district-approved platforms.

Policy IIBGC was approved on second reading with a 7-0 vote.

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

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