



**Board of Education
Superintendent Report
Monday, August 24, 2026**

Hello Members of the Board and Lawrence Public Schools Community,

Welcome Back, Lawrence Public Schools!

The 2026–27 school year is officially underway, and it has been wonderful to see our students and staff back together in classrooms and schools across Lawrence. Together, across our classrooms and schools, students and staff, parents and community are focused on establishing the routines of school.

We began this school year with Transition Day on August 12 for our kindergarten, sixth, and ninth-grade students before welcoming all K–12 students back the following day. Our youngest learners joined us on August 18 as Early Childhood and Preschool classrooms began their school year.

Starting a new school year is a districtwide effort, and I appreciate the hard work, flexibility, patience, and partnership our LPS team, families, and community have shown as we continue refining our systems and settling into the year.

Additional coverage from the first days in Lawrence Public Schools:

Our kindergarten, sixth-grade, and ninth-grade students had the opportunity to get a head start on the school year during Transition Day.

Across the district, our schools intentionally created opportunities for students to learn their new environments, meet teachers and classmates, and begin building a sense of belonging before all students returned.

At both of our comprehensive high schools, LINK Leaders welcomed the Class of 2030 with cheering lines and activities designed to help freshmen begin making connections. At Southwest Middle School, student leaders helped sixth graders explore their new building through a scavenger hunt.

And for some of our youngest students at Sunset Hill Elementary, the day included activities such as a *Pete the Cat* scavenger hunt as they learned their way around elementary school for the very first time.

These moments may look different from school to school, but the purpose behind them ensures that students begin a new chapter knowing there are people ready to welcome, support, and

encourage them.

Lawrence's Youngest Learners Begin Their Year

[We welcomed our Early Childhood and Preschool students for their first day of the 2026–27 school year.](#)

This year's opening marks another important step in expanding access to early learning opportunities across Lawrence. [New preschool classrooms at Deerfield and Prairie Park](#) elementary schools join existing programs at Kennedy Early Childhood Center, New York Montessori, Sunflower, and Woodlawn.

These additional classrooms allow us to serve more young learners and families while providing students with high-quality early learning experiences that help build a strong foundation before kindergarten.

We are excited to welcome these students and families and look forward to watching our youngest learners grow throughout the year.

Expanding Early Learning Opportunities in Lawrence

Based on family and community interest and need, we are excited to share that we will be opening opportunities for additional preschool classrooms at Deerfield, Hillcrest, Kennedy Early Childhood Center, and Sunflower Elementary. Over the weekend, we have opened first opportunities for these limited early childhood seats to families with children on our waitlist, and will open the opportunity to the wider community in an announcement to be shared this evening.

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.

Transportation Update

As is always the case during the first days of a new school year, transportation routes and schedules require adjustments as actual ridership patterns become clear. This year, that work has also included the transition to our new transportation partner, Durham School Services, and responding to increased requests for transportation.

We know that while many families have experienced a smooth start to bus service, some families are still working through individual transportation registration and routing questions.

We are proud to be serving more students than in recent years and remain focused on making the necessary adjustments to ensure consistent and safe transportation for students.

Our teams continue to mobilize to meet this increased need and this evening I am sharing specifics on our work across our teams to refine transportation service. We are committed to continue to work together to get this transportation delivery right; many thanks to our Sara Knight and our Durham Team, Kristen Ryan, Tina Mitchell, Lori Stithem and all who are working to improve each day and ensure safe and timely transportation service.

Specific updates:

- We have **1,853 students** registered for bus transportation so far, with an **estimated 1,400 students routed**.

- All students with high priority needs, including Special Education students who have transportation needs identified in their educational plans, have been routed; the team continues to work on recent additions to this list.
- Routes were adjusted/added over the weekend as Durham works with families registering for transportation; additional staff were placed on routes for training.
- The Durham team is continuing to monitor routes this week, with KU students back in class this week and with traffic volume and construction around Lawrence at high levels.
- Lawrence Public Schools Family Engagement Center remains open as an additional support site, with translators and staff available to assist families who can call for assistance **(785) 330-1900**.
- Refinements continue with the **My Ride app**; the Durham team has dedicated additional staff to resolve technical issues with the app, specifically with the bus tracker, and we will update parents on this tool as the team realizes progress.
- A technical team is working overnights to completely resolve some glitches and ensure 100% accuracy with app and bus GPS systems.
- For those who may be interested in a position, we will share more about a hiring fair coming soon, Durham is offering \$4,000 signing bonus for those with CDL, \$2,000. signing bonus for those who need a CDL (and training is free), and \$1,000. For attendant signing bonus. \$22,50. Starting hourly wage for drivers and Durham offers 401k and other benefits.

The goal of this work is to meet the needs of families and to continue building a system that provides improved transportation service over time with intention and by design.

Additional details: [Superintendent Statement and update to families](#)

Looking Ahead

Portfolio Day: Connecting Student Artists With Their Future

Student artists from across our district will have a unique opportunity to connect directly with colleges, universities, and community partners during **Portfolio Day on September 18**.

The event gives our students an opportunity to share their work, receive feedback, learn more about postsecondary opportunities in the arts, and connect with professionals and college representatives who can help them think about their next steps.

The event is also an opportunity for our students to see the many ways their creativity and talents can translate into opportunities beyond high school. We appreciate our visual arts educators and community partners for creating an experience that can have a meaningful impact on students as they consider their futures.

We look forward to sharing more from Portfolio Day in September.

Thank You, Andrew Beaven

Tonight, we would like to recognize **Andrew Beaven, our Multimedia Communications Coordinator**, who will soon be leaving Lawrence Public Schools to pursue a new opportunity.

As a familiar face in our buildings, Andrew has been a beloved member of our Lawrence Public Schools community for the past four years. A University of Kansas graduate, he has brought tremendous creativity, talent, and care to the way we share the stories of our students, staff, and schools. Andrew is driven by a purpose and passion for students and equity in education, and

that commitment shows through clearly in all the work he produces. He has played an important role in our district and school websites and has become a familiar voice through videos, podcasts, and other multimedia projects.

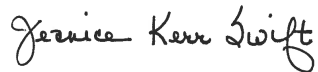
Andrew is an especially gifted photographer, and so much of the story of Lawrence Public Schools over these past several years has been shown through his lens. From the excitement of the first day of school and celebrations of student achievement, to graduations, student curiosity, and the everyday moments where he has captured the incredible impact of the work we all do.

We are grateful for the mark Andrew has left on Lawrence Public Schools and for the thousands of moments he has preserved for our community along the way. While we will certainly miss his creativity, his talent, and his presence on our team; we are excited for him as he begins this next opportunity and wish him all the best in what comes next.

We are excited about this 2026-27 school year; we will continue to address our challenges and embrace the opportunities ahead. We are grateful to be in partnership with our Lawrence community as we continue working with intention and by design, and on behalf of every student.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and for the honor of serving the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift".

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools