



**Board of Education
Superintendent Report
Monday, Sept. 14, 2026**

Hello Members of the Board and Lawrence Public Schools Community,

Before beginning tonight's report, I would like to extend a warm welcome to several of our Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) partners joining us this evening: **Ceri Goulter, Director of Member Engagement; Sarah Perez, Marketing Communications Manager; Tracee Miller, Member Engagement Coordinator; and Ali Colwell-Teter, Multimedia Specialist.**

We appreciate you joining us this evening and value KASB's continued partnership and support of Lawrence Public Schools and public education across Kansas.

As we near mid-September, it's a great time in Lawrence Public Schools; in classrooms and schools across the district, we observe students, teachers and support staff, families and community coming together to establish the rhythms of a strong fall semester.

State and Local Education Leaders Visit LPS Classrooms

On Thursday of this past week, we welcomed [Kansas State Board of Education Chair Cathy Hopkins, Kansas State Board of Education Member O'Brian, and Lawrence Board of Education Member Shannon Kimball](#) into classrooms at Deerfield and Hillcrest elementary schools for a firsthand look at teaching and learning across Lawrence Public Schools.

Throughout the morning, our guests visited classrooms across multiple grade levels to see elementary curricula and classrooms in action and the intentional ways our educators design lessons, implement technology-free and technology supported learning experiences to ensure a vision of quality instruction. The visits also highlighted the alignment of curriculum - specifically we observed the implementation of English Language Arts and the Amplify curricula, instructional practices across Lawrence Public Schools classrooms and campuses.

In the left photo, I very much enjoyed connecting with Sophia during her 3rd grade math lesson in Ashli Smith's classroom; Sophia and her table learning partners explained

their process beautifully as they independently illustrated an array of objects to represent multiplication algorithms; the lesson design, engaging teacher implementation, and visible cognitive lift by students are all impressive.

We appreciate our Deerfield and Hillcrest educators and students welcoming us into their classrooms and giving our guests an authentic look at the thoughtful, quality teaching and learning happening every day across our district.

College and Career Day

Today, Lawrence High School and Free State High School students had the opportunity to explore their options beyond high school during our **College and Career Day** at the Lied Center.

More than 40 colleges, universities, and programs participated, giving students the chance to speak directly with representatives, ask questions, and learn about a wide range of postsecondary pathways.

The college fair was presented in partnership with the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO), with Lawrence High and Free State students attending throughout the morning. We also extend our appreciation to the Lied Center for once again providing the venue at no cost and helping us create this valuable experience for our students.

Opportunities like College and Career Day are an important part of helping students explore what comes next and make informed decisions about their futures.

National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists

Lawrence Public Schools is proud to celebrate six high school seniors named as Semifinalists in the **2027 National Merit Scholarship Program**: **Ben Jackson, Connor Coons, Davian Copeland, Sadie Reynolds, Rhett Sullivan, and Sejun Yun.**

These students are among more than 16,000 Semifinalists nationwide, representing less than 1% of U.S. high school seniors. They now have the opportunity to advance to Finalist standing and compete for approximately 6,700 National Merit Scholarships to be awarded next spring.

Davian Copeland has attended Lawrence Public Schools since kindergarten, beginning his educational journey at **Sunflower Elementary School** before attending **Southwest Middle School**, and now **Lawrence High School**. As he reflected on this achievement, he shared the impact his teachers have had throughout his educational journey. Let's hear him share his experience: **[Play Video Clip Here](#)**

We congratulate Ben, Connor, Davian, Rhett, Sadie, and Sejun on this outstanding academic achievement and are incredibly proud to have them representing Lawrence Public Schools!

KSHSAA Student Female Athlete of the Week

Congratulations to **Lawrence High School** junior **Zoey Barber**, defensive Captain, LHS Girls' Flag Football, who was named the [KSHSAA East/Southeast Kansas Female Athlete of the Week](#) following an outstanding performance in the Lions' 44-7 win over Olathe Northwest.

Our girls flag football athletes are making history, as this fall marks the first KSHSAA-sanctioned season of girls flag football in Kansas, with both Lawrence High School and Free State High School competing in the newly sanctioned sport.

Congratulations to Zoey and the Lions on this outstanding recognition as they compete in the first KSHSAA-sanctioned season of girls flag football in Kansas!

Additional Details: Zoey is a defensive captain and made an impact on both sides of the ball in Lawrence High's 44-7 win over Olathe Northwest, recording four touchdowns and three interceptions as well as three flag pulls. She also added two punt returns for 45 yards.

Lawrence Schools Foundation Community Breakfast

We were proud to join our partners at the Lawrence Schools Foundation and so many from across our Lawrence community for another sold-out Community Education Breakfast, bringing together educators, community members, business partners, and supporters of Lawrence Public Schools.

This year's event raised more than \$124,000 in support of our schools and included 70 sponsors. We are incredibly grateful for the continued growth in community support for our students and staff.

We enjoyed hearing from Dr. Alex Hyler, a 2009 Lawrence High School graduate and scientist involved in groundbreaking health science work to better understand critical cancer detection and intervention, who returned to Lawrence as the event's guest speaker. The morning included a special remembrance of September 11 shared by former educator Chuck Law and a presentation of "Taps" by Curtis Marsh.

The Foundation also announced the new **Lawrence Schools Foundation Skilled Trades Fund**, created to support LPS students pursuing postsecondary technical education, certification programs and careers in high-demand skilled trades. It will fund tools, equipment, and gear necessary for students to participate in their programs.

Congratulations to Dena Johnston, Executive Director, the Foundation Board and team on such a successful community event to celebrate our schools. We appreciate the Lawrence Schools Foundation and the many community partners whose generosity, advocacy, and investment continue to create meaningful opportunities for our students and staff.

Additional details: The Lawrence Schools Foundation Skilled Trades Fund launched with \$30,000 in gifts, including \$25,000 from Truity, \$3,000 from McCownGordon, \$500 from Amcor, and \$1,888 raised through the event's "Yellow Cup ask." These funds will help students with needs such as certifications, tools, training, and equipment as they pursue their next steps.

2026 Student Champions

[Four Lawrence Public Schools seniors were recognized as 2026 Student Champions](#) during the Lawrence Schools Foundation Community Breakfast on Friday.

The Student Champion Award recognizes graduating seniors who demonstrate the potential to use their education, talents, and experiences to make a meaningful difference in their communities and future professions.

This year's Student Champions are Emery Lacle and Ben Lyles of Free State High School, and Baden Masenthin and Aaden Chee of Lawrence High School.

The honorees represent the qualities the district hopes to foster in its students, including leadership, service, and a commitment to making a positive difference for others.

Fiesta de Hillcrest Brings Families, School, and Community Together

Recently, families gathered at Hillcrest Elementary School for an afternoon intentionally designed to strengthen connections among Spanish-speaking families throughout Lawrence.

Held primarily in Spanish, with volunteers also available to provide English translation as needed, the [Fiesta de Hillcrest created an opportunity for families to connect with one another, build relationships with Hillcrest staff, and learn more about resources](#) and support available through Lawrence Public Schools and the wider Lawrence community.

Additional details: A representative from the **Lawrence Public Schools Family Engagement Center** joined the event to assist families with questions about school bus transportation and connect them with additional district support as needed. Other community partners shared information and resources with families throughout the afternoon.

Events like Fiesta de Hillcrest remind us that family engagement is rooted in relationships and belonging. We appreciate our Hillcrest staff and community partners for creating welcoming spaces where families can connect, celebrate, and be active partners in their children's education.

Looking Ahead

Five Additional Preschool Classrooms Will Open September 17

We are excited to welcome students into five additional preschool classrooms this Thursday, September 17, [expanding access to early childhood education for Lawrence families](#).

Over the past several weeks, teams across Lawrence Public Schools have worked quickly and collaboratively to prepare these new classrooms for students. This weekend, that work continued as staff assembled furniture, installed classroom materials, and put the finishing touches on learning spaces.

Last Wednesday, a team of LPS educators offered incoming preschoolers and parents the opportunity for screening to learn more about their learning and development as we prepare to serve them well. Students participated in hearing, vision, health, and the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, [DIAL screening](#).

We saw 32 students (of 36 students scheduled) participate:

- 10 of the students were 3-year-olds
- 22 of the students were 4-year-olds
- 8 students were referred for evaluation for possible special education support

We are also excited to bring forward highly qualified teachers for all five new classrooms for Board consideration this evening.

Opening these classrooms represents an incredible team effort across our district, and we appreciate everyone who has worked to ensure our youngest learners will walk into classrooms that are staffed, equipped, and ready to welcome them on their first day. We are *excited to welcome these students and families to Lawrence Public Schools on Thursday!*

Transportation Update

Progress continues as Lawrence Public Schools and Durham School Services strengthen their partnership through frequent meetings, collaboration, process changes, and problem solving.

An estimated 1600 students have been routed for bus transportation. This is up from 1400 as last reported on August 24, 2026. The district continues to work with families, schools, the Family Engagement Center, and Durham School Services to address individual family needs as well as bus registrations that continue to come in.

Through Durham School Services concentrated effort to build route efficiencies, we anticipate that the vast majority of school and family needs will have been addressed within the next three weeks. Communication will be a priority with families as updates and changes are made.

Over the next two weeks, we will enhance training with schools on using the technology, available through our Durham partnership, to better serve our families and programs including student transportation searches and activity bus requests.

Durham School Services reports fewer GPS and MyRide App issues. We will continue

to monitor. 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.

Also, to ensure adequate space for the effective colocation and operation of district Transportation services alongside Facilities and Operations division on one district campus, adjustments are needed to provide adequate areas for the servicing of buses on site as well as a bus driver center.

These modifications will ensure the continued operational effectiveness of Transportation, Facilities and Operations in their colocation.

In this endeavor, authorization is requested to proceed with completion of a capital outlay project, to include equipping two adequately sized bus service bays for school buses, the addition of an access ramp, and finishing a driver center space.

The goal is to have this project substantially completed and ready for use by November 30, ahead of the coldest part of the winter season.

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**.

Additional Details: 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.

AVID Day 2026

We are proud to be a district fully implemented with AVID programming, and we look forward to celebrating **AVID Day 2026** coming up Friday, September 18, when Lawrence Public Schools will join districts across the country in recognizing the impact of [Advancement Via Individual Determination](#) (AVID).

Additional Details: AVID strategies are used across Lawrence Public Schools to strengthen skills such as writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading while helping students build confidence and take ownership of their learning. AVID Day provides another opportunity to celebrate our students and educators and their commitment to preparing for success in college, careers, and life.

No School September 25

As a reminder to our families, our teachers will engage in important professional development on next Friday, and so a reminder that there will be **no school for students in early childhood through grade 12 on next Friday, September 25th.**

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