



USD 497 News Release

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Board Reviews Fall 2026 Facilities Update

2026 Fall Facilities Update

The Lawrence Board of Education received the 2026 Fall Facilities Update during Monday night's meeting.

Dr. Larry Englebrick, deputy superintendent, shared an overview of Capital Outlay projects completed during summer 2026, an overview of completed Capital Outlay work, and districtwide studies focused on future facility needs.

The district's Facilities and Operations team works closely with instructional staff and district leadership to support student success and to create and maintain safe, functional, efficient, and supportive learning environments across Lawrence Public Schools. Its work includes custodial services, facilities design and construction, grounds, and maintenance, with a focus on developing and maintaining long-lasting, sustainable, fiscally responsible, and adaptable facilities that meet the needs of students, staff, and the community.

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

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift shared several highlights with the Board from across the district:

- Students and staff members across [Lawrence Public Schools joined districts nationwide in celebrating AVID Day on September 18](#). District schools put their own spin on the celebration through activities focused on goal-setting, WICOR strategies, student leadership, collaboration, college exploration, and helping students take ownership of their learning.
- High school student artists gathered at Lawrence High School for the district's annual Portfolio Day, where they connected with representatives from 14 colleges and universities as well as working professionals to receive individualized feedback on their portfolios and learn about college programs, admissions, scholarships, and careers in the arts.

- Dr. Swift celebrated [Bella Padula of Billy Mills Middle School](#) and [Sadie Bakeberg of Sunflower Elementary School](#), who were surprised at all-school assemblies after being selected as the district's Horizon Award recipients. Bella and Sadie will now represent Lawrence Public Schools as nominees for the [Kansas Horizon Award program](#), which recognizes exemplary first-year educators from across the state. [Truity Credit Union](#) also presented each educator with a \$500 check.
- [Nearly 500 second-grade students at participating elementary schools received new bicycles and properly fitted helmets through the Let's Ride! program](#), a partnership between the [Lawrence Schools Foundation](#) and [Steve Tilford Foundation](#). Twenty volunteers spent 12 hours assembling hundreds of bicycles before staff and volunteers supported distributions at participating schools.
- [Lawrence Public Schools recently welcomed students into five additional preschool classrooms](#) at Kennedy Early Childhood Center, Deerfield Elementary School, Hillcrest Elementary School, and Sunflower Elementary School. District teams prepared classrooms, hired and onboarded educators, assembled furniture and materials, completed student screenings, and worked with families to prepare children for their first day on September 17.

Current preschool classrooms are filled and demand continues to outpace available seats. [Families interested in preschool are encouraged to complete the district's online application](#) to receive additional information and join the waitlist as the district continues working toward its vision of a preschool seat for every child in Lawrence.

- Amplify coaches recently partnered with teachers, district Instructional Systems Coaches, and building leaders to observe and strengthen implementation of the district's new Amplify ELA and CKLA resources. Coaches and district staff observed high levels of implementation, productive teacher inquiry, collaborative problem-solving, and a strong initial rollout and positive progress across the district.
- Dr. Swift recognized the [National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools](#), also known as [Orange Shirt Day](#), honoring children, survivors, their families and descendants, and Tribal communities impacted by the U.S. Indian boarding school system. She noted the particular significance of this history in Lawrence, home to [Haskell Indian Nations University](#).
- Looking ahead to October, the following important dates were noted for families, with necessary schedule adjustments to allow for parent-teacher conferences and the end of first quarter:

Friday, October 9: No School for Early Childhood–Grade 12

Monday, October 12: No School for Early Childhood–Grade 12 and district offices will be closed

Wednesday, October 14: Early Childhood–High School Parent-Teacher Conferences Night

Thursday, October 15: No School for Early Childhood–Middle School; Parent-Teacher Conferences

Thursday, October 15: High School Parent-Teacher Conferences Night

Friday, October 16: No School for Early Childhood–Grade 12

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

Consent Agenda

The Board approved a consent agenda including fall asphalt and concrete maintenance and improvements at Kennedy Early Childhood Center, Lawrence High School, and Southwest Middle School (\$147,670 contract with Philips Site Work, Inc., with a total project budget of \$177,270 from Capital Outlay funds); additional professional development for Amplify CKLA and Amplify ELA for the 2026-27 school year (\$28,000 from Title II funds designated for professional development); a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Lawrence and Lawrence Police Department for the School Resource Officer program for the 2026-27 school year; monthly vouchers; personnel report; and meeting minutes (September 14, 2026).

Consent agenda was approved with a 6-0 vote.

Board Reports

Board President Bob Byers shared an update on the work the Equity Advisory Committee is doing to partner with families and caregivers, staff, and community to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation coming up on Wednesday, September 30.

Board Member Carole Cadue-Blackwood also recognized the work by the Equity Advisory Committee and the upcoming National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Board Member and former Board President GR Gordon-Ross shared an update from the Lawrence Schools Foundation, including their success from the foundation's recent community breakfast, discussion on student scholarships, and the recent work to support the Let's Ride program bicycle donations.

Board Member Shannon Kimball attended the site council meeting at Quail Run Elementary School and heard updates about student achievement and family engagement at the school.

New Business

Appointment of Delegate to 2026 Kansas Association of School Boards Convention

Each year the Board of Education is asked to appoint one of its members to cast votes on behalf of the Board at the Kansas Association of School Boards' annual business meeting. The Delegate Assembly is scheduled for Saturday, November 7, as a part of this year's convention, which will be held November 6-8 at the Convention Center in Wichita, Kansas.

Board President Bob Byers was approved as the selected delegate to the 2026 Kansas Association of School Boards Annual Convention, with Member GR Gordon-Ross as the alternate with a 6-0 vote.

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

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