TUESDAY MINUTES

Approved on August 11, 2026

The time stamps are coordinated with the KSDE Livemedia YouTube channel

Kansas State Board of Education
July 14, 2026

Call to Order

Chair Cathy Hopkins called the meeting of the Kansas State Board of Education to order at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 14, 2026, in the boardroom of the Landon State Office Building, 900 SW Jackson Street, Topeka, Kansas. Chair Hopkins recited the Board mission statement and then asked for a moment of silent reflection or prayer, followed by everyone standing and joining in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Emree Gabriel, a junior at Eudora High School, Eudora USD 491, sang the National Anthem. Her music teacher, Damien Johnson, Kansas Music Educators Association president, attended with her, as well as her father.

Roll Call

The following Board members were present:
Mrs. Betty Arnold
Mrs. Melanie Haas
Mr. Dennis Hershberger
Mrs. Cathy Hopkins, Chair
Dr. Beryl New
Mrs. Connie O'Brien
Mrs. Debby Potter
Mr. Jim Porter
Mr. Danny Zeck, Vice Chair
Mr. Mark Ferguson, Board Attorney and Commissioner Steel were seated at the Board table.

Mrs. Michelle Dombrosky was not able to attend the meeting as she was travelling.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR June 8, 9 and 10, 2026

Mrs. Haas moved to approve the minutes for the June 8 working session and the June 9 and 10 Kansas State Board of Education meeting. Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0-1 with Mrs. Potter present not voting.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the July agenda as presented. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

These items were on the consent agenda:

a.	Receive monthly personnel report and appointments to unclassified positions
b.	**Act** on Licensure Review Committee Recommendations
c.	**Act** on request from USD 259 Wichita, Sedgwick County for a Bond
d.	**Act** on request from USD 259 Wichita, Sedgwick County for Capital Improvement
e.	**Act** on request from USD 266 Maize for a Bond
f.	**Act** on request from USD 266 Maize for Capital Improvement
g.	**Act** to approve the yearly fee to participate in the National Association of State Boards of Education $20,080
h.	**Act** to approve contracts for Central Regional Executive duties for the 2026-2027 school year.
i.	**Act** to approve the Safe and Secure Schools grants

Mrs. O'Brien asked to remove items c, d, e, and f (school district requests) for a separate vote. Mrs. Potter asked to remove g (NASBE dues) for a separate vote.

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda without c, d, e, f, and g. Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA FOR A VOTE

Mr. Porter moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve items c, d, e, and f (requests from districts for bond vote and capital improvement). Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-3 with Vice Chair Zeck, Mrs. O'Brien and Mrs. Potter voting no.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve item g, the 2027 dues for the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-2 with Vice Chair Zeck and Mrs. Potter voting no.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Report
00:08:00

The Commissioner highlighted the Kansas Civics Bee as an example of public education's role in preparing students for active and informed citizenship. The event showcased students' abilities to identify community challenges, evaluate solutions, and engage in constructive dialogue about public issues.

Notable Recognition

- State Champion: Colin Burke a student of Salina USD 305 Student Outcome

Highlights Kansas Assessments (KAP)

- ELA proficiency has increased since 2022.
- Math proficiency has also improved since 2022.
- Despite an assessment transition between 2024 and 2025, overall achievement trends remain positive.

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress)

- The report reviewed Kansas' performance on NAEP, often called the Nation's Report Card, as a nationally representative measure of student achievement in reading and mathematics.

2025 Graduation Rate: 90.5%

- Graduation rates have increased since 2023.
- The Commissioner emphasized that graduation data reflects student persistence and continued engagement in school.

Chronic Absenteeism 2025 Rate: 19.56%

- Chronic absenteeism has improved since 2022 when the rate was 25.41%.
- While trending positively, absenteeism remains above pre-pandemic levels.

ACT Performance 2025 Kansas Average Composite: 19.0

- Slightly below the national average of 19.4.
- Statewide ACT performance has generally declined over the past decade.

Postsecondary Success Rate (Class of 2023): 54.9%
Effectiveness Rate: 48.3%

- Postsecondary success has declined over the past several years.
- Success is measured through certification attainment, postsecondary credentials, degree completion, sustained postsecondary enrollment, or approved transition services for qualifying students.

The Commissioner's central message was that the best way to improve student outcomes is to improve students' daily educational experiences.

Three key themes emerged:

1. Every student should receive high-quality instruction every day.
2. High-quality instructional materials are a critical foundation for success.
3. Teachers need ongoing professional support to implement those materials effectively.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

00:34:55

Nancy Bolz, Cognia (a non-profit school improvement company), spoke about the work her organization does with schools and requested time on a future agenda to present more about her work in the Midwest region with Cognia.

PRESENTATION ON AMERICA'S ORIGIN: FROM COLONIES TO A COUNTRY

History
00:52:00

History, Government and Social Studies Spotlight

Adam Topliff, recently hired as KSDE Humanities Program Manager for History, Government and Social Studies

Mr. Topliff provided a presentation in recognition of the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary. He presented the topic as if he were teaching a high school class and was very interactive with the Board members.

He drew connections between the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution, emphasizing that the two documents should be viewed as parts of a single story rather than separate moments in history.

The presentation explored how the Declaration of Independence articulates the nation's founding ideals, including equality, unalienable rights, liberty, and government by the consent of the governed, while the Constitution establishes the framework through which those ideals can be pursued. Mr. Topliff described the Declaration as identifying the nation's aspirations and the Constitution as creating the structure necessary to work toward those aspirations.

Using primary source analysis, Mr. Topliff demonstrated the importance of helping students read, interpret, and evaluate historical documents. He highlighted the Constitution's call to form "a more perfect Union" as evidence that the nation's founding documents recognize civic responsibility as ongoing work that requires continuous learning and engagement by each generation.

The presentation also emphasized the important role of civic education in preparing students to be informed and active citizens. Students who engage with foundational documents are not simply learning history; they are developing critical thinking skills, evaluating evidence, considering multiple perspectives, and understanding their role in improving their communities.

Mr. Topliff concluded by noting that public education plays a vital role in sustaining democratic institutions by promoting civic knowledge and informed participation. He encouraged continued focus on helping students connect historical understanding with the responsibilities of citizenship.

Report
1:20:20

PRESENTATION ON LICENSED PERSONNEL REPORT, AN UPDATE OF EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHICS ACROSS KANSAS

Director Shane Carter, Teacher Licensure

Mr. Carter presented the annual Licensed Personnel Report and vacancy data for the 2025-2026 school year. The report reviewed educator workforce trends, including entrance and exit data, demographics, retention rates, nontraditional licensure pathways, licensure activity, vacancy trends, and Seal of Literacy implementation.

The data showed that educator stability remains strong, with nearly 88 percent of educators remaining in the same district. Movement between Kansas districts, entry of new graduates, and educators entering from other professions continued to contribute to the workforce, while retirements and departures from the profession remained relatively stable. The largest group of educators had one to four years of experience, the average educator had 14 years of experience, and average salaries increased from the previous year for both first-year educators and teachers.

Teacher retention rates for educators entering their third year of teaching improved to just over 90 percent, reflecting continued progress since the implementation of two-year mentoring requirements. The report also highlighted growth and continued participation in nontraditional licensure pathways designed to expand the educator workforce.

A total of 24,319 licenses were issued during the 2025-2026 school year. The number of teaching licenses issued to Kansas graduates remained strong, while the number of licenses issued to out-of-state applicants continued a gradual decline. Career and Technical Education specialized licenses also increased from the previous year.

Mr. Carter reported that statewide vacancies decreased from fall 2025 to spring 2026. Special education, elementary education, mathematics, science, and English language arts remained the five highest-need areas. Special education continued to represent the largest area of need, although vacancies declined compared to the fall collection. Most vacancies were attributed either to individuals serving outside their endorsement area or a lack of applicants.

The Board also received an update on the Seal of Literacy initiative. More than 13,700 seals had been added to educator licenses as of July 2026. Implementation rates varied by license type, with approximately half of elementary educators and early childhood educators having completed the requirement. The Elementary Education Teaching Reading Subtest continued to show strong performance, with an overall pass rate of 86 percent.

He concluded with priorities for the 2026-2027 school year, including updates to:

- educator standards,
- leadership development standards,
- structured literacy alignment,
- expansion of apprenticeship programs for teachers, principals, reading specialists, and special education educators,
- updates to the Kansas Code of Ethics for Educators,
- and regulatory revisions.

VISIT TO CONSTITUTION HALL

As part of this year's focus on the 250th Birthday, the Board participated in a field trip. They visited one of the oldest buildings in Topeka (1855), which was involved in the early formation of the State and the decision about whether Kansas would join as a free state or a slave state. Constitution Hall was the free state, Kansas territorial-era capitol.

In 1861, Kansas joined the Union as a free state. For several years, Constitution Hall served as the state capitol, until construction started on the present capitol building.

Thomas Fulbright, history teacher at Hope Street Academy, a charter high school in Topeka USD 501, serves on the Board at Constitution Hall and was part of the recent renovation of the building.

PPC
03:30:20

ACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
R. Scott Gordon, General Counsel KSDE
Dr. Mischel Miller, Executive Director Kansas Educational Leadership Institute

PPC Case 25-PPC-47

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education adopt the findings of fact and conclusions of law of the Professional Practices Commission and suspend the Licensee in 25-PPC-47. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. **Motion carried 7-2 with Mrs. Potter and Mrs. O'Brien voting no.**

PPC Case 24-PPC-24

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education adopt the findings of fact and conclusions of law of the Professional Practices Commission and allow the Licensee 24-PPC-24 to maintain his license subject to public censure. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. **Motion carried 8-0-1 with Mrs. Potter present not voting.**

Professional Practices Commission Case 24-PPC-24

General Counsel Scott Gordon and Kansas Educational Leadership Institute Executive Director Dr. Mischel Miller presented the findings and recommendations of the

Professional Practices Commission regarding Case 24-PPC-24.

Board members were reminded that the Professional Practices Commission conducts evidentiary hearings on behalf of the Kansas State Board of Education and is responsible for issuing initial orders that may include no discipline, dismissal of a complaint, denial, suspension, or revocation of a license, or public censure.

The case involved allegations of inappropriate and overly personal conduct directed toward a student. The Commission conducted an evidentiary hearing and heard testimony from multiple individuals, including representatives from teacher licensure, higher education, and the student's family. During the proceedings, evidence was presented that the licensee had completed both the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction Course and an approved self-reflection program designed to address professional boundaries and ethical responsibilities.

Additional information indicated that the licensee had complied with recommended corrective measures and that the individual's current employer had reported no further concerns. Based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law, the Commission recommended that the Kansas State Board of Education allow the licensee to maintain his teaching license subject to public censure.

The presenters also shared broader lessons from the case, emphasizing the importance of consistent ethics training for educators, the value of early intervention when concerns arise, and the need for continued resources to support professional conduct and ethical decision-making within the education profession.

Reading
4:04:16

QUALITY INSTRUCTION: *Reading Corner*
Dr. Laurie Curtis
Amy Bybee, Curriculum Director, Ottawa USD 290
Board Minutes Summary – Quality Instruction Reading Corner
Ms. Bybee provided an overview of the district's efforts to strengthen literacy instruction and improve student achievement. The work began after accreditation findings identified the need for a documented, guaranteed, and viable English Language Arts curriculum due to inconsistencies in instructional practices and student outcomes.

District leaders and educators focused on developing a comprehensive curriculum, establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), clarifying learning targets, and aligning assessments across grade levels. Dedicated collaboration time and professional development helped create greater consistency in instruction throughout the district.

The district also implemented an instructional framework to support reflective teaching

practices and classroom improvement. While student achievement showed progress, leadership determined that stronger literacy knowledge and more research-based instructional practices were needed to accelerate student success.

To address this need, the district invested in extensive Science of Reading and LETRS® professional development. Training was provided to classroom teachers, reading specialists, special education staff, instructional coaches, psychologists, and administrators to build districtwide expertise in evidence-based literacy instruction.

As educators deepened their understanding of structured literacy, the district identified gaps between existing instructional materials and best practices. A comprehensive curriculum review process was conducted, with teachers playing a central role in evaluating and selecting resources. Decisions were guided by research, student achievement data, and evidence-based outcomes.

The district has since implemented new K-12 English Language Arts resources aligned with Science of Reading principles and incorporated literacy priorities into its continuous improvement efforts. Student achievement data shows notable gains in state assessment performance over recent years.

Looking ahead, the Ottawa USD 290 will continue aligning its practices with Kansas literacy initiatives, providing ongoing professional development, and focusing on ensuring all students develop the literacy skills needed for lifelong success.

PRESENTATION ON TRAINING OF ADMINISTRATORS AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

Training
04:48:00

Director Shane Carter, Teacher Licensure
Dr. Catherine Chmidling, Teacher Licensure

Guests:

- Susan C. Bon, J.D., Ph.D., Executive Vice President and Provost and Acting Dean of the College of Education, Pittsburg State University
- Douglas Huffman, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Teacher Education & Undergraduate Programs, The University of Kansas
- Jennifer Bessolo, Ed.D., Professor of Practice, Dept of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, The University of Kansas

Shane Carter provided an overview of the Higher Education Leadership Standards used in building and district-level educational leadership preparation programs. He noted that the standards were last revised in 2020 and highlighted the standards most closely related to information requests, personnel evaluation, and district initiatives.

He reviewed key leadership standards that guide administrator preparation:

- Standard 4 focuses on learning and instruction, emphasizing instructional leadership, curriculum, assessment, technology integration, support systems, and the use of data to improve student outcomes.

- Standard 6 addresses operations and management, including leading organizational change, managing resources, ensuring equitable systems, and applying laws, policies, and regulations.

- Standard 7 focuses on building professional capacity and fostering collaborative professional cultures through staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning. At the district level, Standard 7 also emphasizes policy, governance, advocacy, collaborative decision-making, and representing district needs in broader policy discussions.

The presentation emphasized that while building- and district-level leadership standards are distinct, they largely mirror one another and are designed to promote the success and well-being of students and staff through effective leadership, continuous improvement, and evidence-based decision-making.

Information was also shared regarding higher education partners involved in administrator preparation programs across Kansas. The presenters, from KU and Pittsburg State, explained how they train school leaders in many different areas of responsibility and in encouraging strong, collaborative culture with staff they support.

ACT ON KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUDGET OPTIONS FY2028

Budget Options 05:27:45

Dr. John Hess, Director, Fiscal Services and Operations

Dr. Hess presented budget options for Fiscal Year 2028 and reviewed major state aid categories, special education funding considerations, selected education programs, and agency operating budget needs.

The Board was presented with the options, offered choices of motions, and asked to take action.

Major Categories of State Aid:

Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education recommend the adoption of the consensus estimates for State Foundation Aid, Supplemental State Aid, Capital Improvement State Aid, and Capital Outlay State Aid for FY 2028. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. **Motion carried 6-3 with Mrs. Potter, Vice Chair Zeck and Mrs. O'Brien voting no.**

Special Education State Aid:

Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement for FY 2028 to be phased in over four years, to fund 92% of special education excess costs. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-1-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no and Mrs. Potter present no voting.

Career and Technical Education:
Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $600,000 for the CTE Transportation program for FY 2028. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no.

Mentor Teacher Program:
Vice Chair Zeck moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $2.3 million for the Mentor Teacher program for FY 2028. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

Professional Development
Mr. Hershberger moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $7.25 million in a three-year phase in of $2.5/2.5/2.25 million for the Professional Development program for FY 2028. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Mrs. Potter voting no.

National Board Certification:
Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $360,000 for the National Board Certification program for FY 2028. Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no.

Safe and Secure Schools:
Mrs. Potter moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $7.5 million for the Safe and Secure Schools grant program for FY 2028. Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

E-Rate Infrastructure Match:
Mrs. Haas moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $500,000 for the E-Rate Infrastructure Match for FY 2028. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Mrs. Poter voting no.

KSDE Agency Operating Budget/KSDE Office Rent for FY 2027:
Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $250,000 to cover the increase in the amount of KSDE office rent that must be paid out of the State General Fund in FY 2027. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-2 with Mrs. Potter and Mr. Hershberger voting no.

State Board of Education Compensation (KSDE Agency Operating Budget):
Mrs. Arnold moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $138,500 to provide for State Board member compensation to be commensurate with legislator compensation for FY 2028. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Mrs. Potter voting no.

Administrative Funding for E-Rate (KSDE Agency Operating Budget):
Mrs. Haas moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $95,920 to replace funding required to support school districts with the E-Rate process for FY 2028. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1 with Mrs. Potter voting no.

Universal Reading Screener (KSDE Agency Operating Budget):
Mr. Hershberger moved that the State Board of Education request a budget enhancement of $10.0 million to cover the full cost of the universal reading screener required by state law. Dr. New seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

ACT ON NOMINATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD VACANCY
Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

PSB Vacancy 07:17:24

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the appointment of Sydney Rummery to the Professional Standards Board in the Public School Teacher At Large position. Mrs. Potter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the appointment of Gretl Shelton to the Professional Standards Board in the Public School Teacher position. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

Mrs. Potter moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the appointment of Amy Ward to the Professional Standards Board in the Private School Teacher position. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

ACT ON NOMINATIONS FOR LICENSURE REVIEW COMMITTEE VACANCY
Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

LRC Vacancy 7:22:07

Dr. New moved that the Kansas State Board of Education act to appoint Phillip Wrigley to serve on the Licensure Review Committee representing the Public High School position. The appointed nominee will serve a three-year term through June 30, 2029. Chair Hopkins seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

Math Standards 07:25:00

ACT ON MATH STANDARDS FOR NEW EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mrs. O'Brien moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the new educator preparation program standards for Mathematics 5-8, General Mathematics 6-12, and Advanced Mathematics 6-12 , and accept the recommendations of the Evaluation Review Committee for educator preparation accreditation for Barclay College and program approvals for Bethany College, Kansas State University, Newman University, Ottawa University, and University of Saint Mary. Mrs. Potter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

Science Cut Scores 07:30:30

RECEIVE SCIENCE STATE ASSESSMENT CUT SCORES

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Zach Conrad Division of Accountability and Technology

Dr. Conrad presented recommendations for Grade 11 science state assessment cut scores to be voted on in August.

- A standard-setting event was held June 17-18, 2026, with 10 panelists who developed cut score recommendations for grade 11 science.
- Panelists were selected to represent diverse subject-area expertise, geographic regions, professional experience, and educational roles.
- The process used a three-round bookmark standard-setting method, with panelists reviewing impact data before final recommendations.

Recommended Science Cut Scores

Grade	Level 2 Cut	Level 3 Cut	Level 4 Cut
Grade 5	510	540	582
Grade 8	510	540	569
Grade 11	510	540	574

All science assessments use a scale score range from 400 to 700.

Grade 11 Science Performance Distribution (2026)

Performance Level	Percent of Students
Level 1	29%
Level 2	41%
Level 3	23%

Level 4	7%

Comparative Science Performance (2026)

- Grade 5: 23% Level 1, 30% Level 2, 34% Level 3, 13% Level 4.
- Grade 8: 33% Level 1, 26% Level 2, 19% Level 3, 22% Level 4.
- Grade 11: 29% Level 1, 41% Level 2, 23% Level 3, 7% Level 4.

The recommendation establishes grade 11 science cut scores at **510 (Level 2), 540 (Level 3), and 574 (Level 4)**. Under these recommended standards, **30% of Grade 11 students would be proficient or above (Levels 3 and 4)** and **7% would reach Level 4.**

Cell Policy And Walkout

07:37:50

ACT ON CELL POLICY CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Gabrielle Hull, Legislative Coordinator

Mrs. Haas moved that that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the cell phone and social media policy certification process as presented. Mrs. Potter seconded the motion. **Motion carried 8-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no.**

ACT ON STUDENT WALKOUT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Gabrielle Hull, Legislative Coordinator

Mrs. Potter moved that the Kansas State Board of Education move action on the student walkout complaint procedures to the August meeting. Mrs. O'Brien seconded the motion. **Motion carried 9-0.**

Chair Hopkins recessed the meeting until Wednesday morning at 9:00.

Kansas State Board of Education
July 15, 2026

Chair Cathy Hopkins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. All ten board members were present with Mrs. Dombrosky attending virtually.

PRESENTATION ON TECH IN THE CLASSROOM: THE VIEW FROM THE LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN KANSAS

Wichita Begins the Video

Dyane Smokorowski, teacher, USD 259, Wichita
Superintendent Dr. Kelly Bielefeld, USD 259, Wichita

Dyane Smokorowski, Coordinator of Digital Literacy for Wichita USD 259, presented a vision for using technology purposefully to enhance student learning. The presentation emphasized that technology should not be viewed simply through the lens of screen time or devices, but rather through the opportunities it creates for students to access learning, connect with others, and demonstrate their understanding.

A central theme was that technology is most valuable when it helps students become creators rather than passive consumers. Wichita USD 259 focuses on four key commitments:

- Removing barriers to learning
- Increasing access to information and resources
- Connecting students with real people and places
- Encouraging students to create, collaborate, and share their work

The presentation highlighted how technology can support students who are learning English, have reading challenges, or benefit from multiple ways of accessing information. Tools such as text-to-speech, translation features, and adaptable text displays help students engage with grade-level content while maintaining high academic expectations. Technology is also being used to expand learning beyond the classroom. Examples included virtual experiences that connect students with experts, professionals, historical sites, national parks, and other educational opportunities that may not otherwise be accessible. Programs such as Kansas Day Edventure and Virtual Career Days expose students to diverse careers, experiences, and perspectives while helping them make connections between classroom learning and future opportunities.

Another major focus was student creativity and agency. Wichita USD 259 encourages

students to use technology to design, build, code, communicate, and solve problems. Initiatives such as Creative Minds and the Code to the Future program at Spaght Elementary provide students with opportunities to develop computational thinking, collaboration skills, persistence, and confidence through authentic projects and coding experiences.

Mrs. Smokorowski acknowledged concerns regarding technology use in schools, including issues related to balance, attention, and digital wellness. However, the message stressed that technology should be guided thoughtfully rather than embraced uncritically or rejected outright. Effective technology integration depends on educators designing meaningful learning experiences that place student growth and achievement at the center.

The overall conclusion was that technology's value should be measured not by the devices themselves, but by what students are able to do because of them. When used intentionally, technology can increase access, strengthen connections, support creativity, and empower students to become active learners and creators of meaningful work.

Superintendent Bielefeld shared specific programs that were in place in the district.

QUARTERLY REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEAC)

SEAC
01:09:20

Dr. Lena Kisner, outgoing chair of SEAC
Deputy Commissioner Dr. Renee Nugent
Lindsey Graf, (new) Director of Special Education

Dr. Nugent introduced the new Director of Special Education at KSDE, Lindsey Graf.

Dr. Kisner gave a brief report on the past quarter with SEAC and handed out a comprehensive report.

QUALITY INSTRUCTION: KANSAS ECO SYSTEM

Kansas Eco System
01:21:30

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Renee Nugent, Division of Learning Services

Dr. Nugent presented the Kansas State Department of Education's vision for strengthening student outcomes through a coherent, statewide approach to education improvement.

She emphasized school improvement is achieved by aligning systems, resources, and instructional practices around four key components:

- Quality Instruction
- Standards Alignment
- Structured Literacy

- Balanced Assessment

The Kansas theory of action is based on the belief that when schools focus on a few high-impact practices and create greater coherence across the education system, students will gain more knowledge and skills, leading to increased opportunities and success.

Quality Instruction as the Foundation
Quality Instruction is identified as the foundation of all school improvement efforts. It is characterized by:

- High expectations for all students
- Deep student engagement in learning
- Standards-aligned tasks and materials
- Intentional and cohesive instruction
- Data-driven decision-making

The goal is to ensure that every Kansas student has access to consistent, evidence-based instruction that supports rigorous learning expectations.

Supporting Elements
The presentation highlighted three complementary areas that strengthen quality instruction:

- Structured Literacy: Explicit and systematic literacy instruction grounded in the Science of Reading.
- Standards Alignment: Ensuring lessons, instruction, and materials are clearly connected to Kansas academic standards.
- Balanced Assessment Systems: Using multiple forms of assessment to monitor student learning and inform instructional decisions.

A Shift in School Improvement
Kansas is moving from a traditional model focused primarily on monitoring schools to one centered on supporting educational systems. The emphasis is on building capacity, collaboration, and continuous improvement rather than compliance alone.

The Kansas Education Ecosystem
The Kansas Education Ecosystem is described as an interconnected network of state agencies, districts, schools, service centers, professional organizations, community partners, families, and educators working together to support students.
Students remain at the center of the ecosystem, with every organization and partner contributing to stronger teaching and learning. While responsibility is shared across the system, success ultimately depends on supporting the educators and schools that directly serve students.

Tiered Supports for Schools
Kansas provides varying levels of support based on need:

- Universal Supports available to all schools and districts, including instructional tools, professional learning, and resources.
- Targeted Supports for identified schools and systems needing additional assistance.
- Intensive Supports for federally identified schools requiring significant intervention and improvement efforts.

All supports are intended to be evidence-based and focused on improving student outcomes through quality instruction.

Dr. Nugent concluded that Kansas can improve outcomes for students by:

- Building statewide coherence.
- Focusing on high-leverage instructional practices.
- Supporting systems rather than simply monitoring them.
- Strengthening collaboration across the Kansas Education Ecosystem.

The ultimate goal is stronger classrooms, better-supported educators, and greater opportunities for every Kansas student.

STUDENT PRESENTATION: COLIN BURKE, WINNER OF THE KANSAS CIVICS BEE

Colin Burke
01:46:59

Commissioner Steel introduced Colin and described this year's Civics Bee, which he attended. Colin shared his three-minute winning speech and his civics in action project to provide personal health items to students in school who did not have access to these items. He not only produced the idea, but he implemented it at his school and got other students involved.

RECEIVE LIFE AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL PURPOSE SCHOOLS

Assessment
02:09:08

Dr. Jay Scott, Director, Implementation and Supports

Dr. Scott shared information regarding the proposed Life and Employability Skills Assessment for Kansas special purpose schools. The assessment is designed to measure postsecondary readiness through the evaluation of universal life and employability skills and serve as an alternative metric to graduation for accreditation purposes in special purpose schools.

The assessment will be administered to students in grades three through 12 twice each year, with a minimum of six months between administrations. Teachers will complete the observation-based assessment.

The assessment measures student performance in the domains of self-determination,

independent living, community engagement, vocational skills, and general skills that span multiple domains. Student performance is reported using four levels: Limited, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

Annual reporting will include pre- and post-assessment average scores for all students across each domain as well as overall assessment results.

Dr. Scott clarified that pending approval; full implementation is scheduled to begin during the 2026-2027 school year. Baseline performance standards are expected to be established in June 2027, with assessment results to be reported to the Board beginning in July 2027. This item will be voted on in August.

RECEIVE ACCREDITATION REVIEW COUNCIL (ARC) RECOMMENDATIONS

ARC
02:26:16

Dr. Jay Scott, Director, Implementation and Supports

The Board received an update on Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) version 2.0 and the recommendations of the Accreditation Review Council (ARC) for the 2025-2026 school year.

Dr. Scott reviewed the KESA 2.0 accreditation framework, which began in the 2024-2025 school year and focuses on system-level accreditation through a continuous improvement process designed to improve student outcomes. The accreditation model includes evaluation in the areas of school improvement, student outcomes, and compliance.

He explained of the roles and responsibilities of local education systems, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), the Accreditation Review Council (ARC), and the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) within the accreditation process.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Accreditation Review Council recommended accreditation for all participating systems except two. Hoxie USD 412 and Lutheran Schools were recommended for accreditation with conditions, with Lutheran Schools pursuing an appeal.

This item will be voted on in August.

Chair Report and Board Member Committee Reports

Reports and Comments
02:43:01

Chair Hopkins reminded the Board of the special meeting on July 28, at the 2026 KSDE Great Ideas in Education annual conference in Wichita. The purpose is to spend time with attendees and listen to their experiences about technology in the classroom.

Mrs. O'Brien and Dr. New both spoke about their experience in Washington D.C. in early

July, as they both attended the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) New Member Institute. They both enjoyed the experience very much and were grateful to attend.

Mrs. Haas also attended NASBE's New Member Institute and spoke at the conference, sharing her experiences as a State Board member of six years. She then stayed and attended the Education Commission of the States (ECS).

Mr. Hershberger had a virtual meeting with the leader of Ag in the Classroom, which Commissioner Steel also participated.

Mrs. Arnold shared she would be joining the Phillips Fundamental Learning Center as an ex-officio board member.

Board Travel Requests:

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the travel requests as submitted. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

Board Future Requests:

Mrs. Arnold: Could there be recognition of the teachers in the Special Purpose schools?
Mrs. Haas: A "lessons learned" review of the school redesign initiative.

Board Comments:

Mr. Hershberger addressed his comments on teachers and communism. He was extremely disappointed in the way the press (The Reflector and the Hutchinson News) reported his comments. He supports public education and does not want to create more public discontent. He is not against teachers or public education. Quite the contrary, he is supportive of teachers and public schools. His comments were misinterpreted. He is deeply sorry for any hurt or damage that his comments caused. The reporting of his comments took them out of context.

Mrs. Potter brought up that September is Constitution Month. Sept. 17th is a U.S. federal observance that commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, in Philadelphia. She suggested this would be a good day to go into classrooms.

Chair Hopkins thanked Vice Chair Zeck, and especially Mrs. Dinah Zeck, for providing the patriotic decorations and the wonderful cookies for the Board meeting.

PRESENTATION ON KANSAS OPEN RECORDS ACT (KORA)
Matt Bingesser, Administrative Counsel, Office of the Kansas Attorney General

KORA
03:34:00

The Board received a presentation from Matt Bingesser, Administrative Counsel with the

Kansas Attorney General's Office, regarding the Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) and the responsibilities of public agencies in responding to records requests.

Mr. Bingesser reviewed the purpose of KORA, which promotes public access to government records and requires public records to be available for inspection unless specifically exempted by law. Attendees were provided an overview of what constitutes a public agency and a public record, including records maintained in electronic formats such as emails, text messages, and other digital communications related to official duties.

The Board received information regarding public agency requirements, including the appointment of a Freedom of Information Officer, maintenance of records request procedures, and the responsibilities of records custodians. Guidance was also provided on handling requests for records, required response timelines, allowable fees, and the process for reviewing and redacting confidential information.

He outlined the distinction between records that must be withheld under federal or state law and records that may be exempt from disclosure at the discretion of the public agency. Common exemptions relating to personal privacy, personnel records, security information, internal communications, and other protected information were discussed.

Information was also provided regarding enforcement of KORA, investigative authority, potential penalties for violations, and resources available through the Attorney General's Office to assist public agencies in complying with open records requirements.

Chair Hopkins adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will take place on August 11, 2026, first floor boardroom of the Landon State Office Building, 900 S.W. Jackson in Topeka.

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Cathy Hopkins, Chair Deborah Bremer, Board Secretary