Kansas State Board of Education
May 12, 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, May 12, 2026, in the boardroom of the Landon State Office Building, 900 SW Jackson Street, Topeka, Kansas. Chair Hopkins read the mission statement for the Board and then asked for a moment of silent reflection or prayer, followed by everyone standing and joining in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was livestreamed and is archived on YouTube KSDE Livemedia. The time stamps refer to those videos.

ROLL CALL

Meeting starts at 4:45

Ten Board members were present:
Mrs. Betty Arnold
Mrs. Michelle Dombrosky
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 Watson were in attendance at the Board table.

ACT ON APRIL MINUTES

Mrs. Arnold moved to approve the minutes for the April 14 & 15, 2026 Kansas State Board of Education meeting. Dr. New seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0-1, with Mrs. Potter present but not voting.

APPROVE MAY AGENDA

Mrs. Potter requested her motion from last month, to make Friday notes and itemized expenses for the Board and for the Board legal counsel to be made public, be on the agenda. There was a discussion and the Chair asked the Board to vote on this issue at the end of the meeting on Wednesday.

Mr. Porter moved to approve the agenda as amended for May 12 & 13, 2026. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mrs. O'Brien asked to pull item e (Bond/Cap for USD 434) for discussion and a separate vote.
Mrs. Dombrosky pulled f (RFP process for AmeriCorps), g (AmeriCorps grants), I (Preschool-aged At-risk) and j (funding for Preschool pilot grants) for a separate vote.
Mrs. Potter pulled h (salary of Commissioner) for discussion and a separate vote.

The Chair moved the items for discussion e and h to the end of the meeting.

Mrs. Arnold moved to approve the consent agenda without items e,f,g,h,I and j , Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

Consent Items approved 10-0 were:
a. Receive monthly personnel report
b. Act on local professional development plans
c. Act on recommendations for Visiting Scholar license
d. Act on Licensure Review Committee recommendations.

Consent Items voted on separately f. g. h. I were moved by Mr. Porter and seconded by Mrs. O'Brien, carried 7-3 with Mrs. Potter, Mr. Zeck and Mrs. Dombrosky voting no.

Consent items approved 7-3 were:
f. Act to initiate RFP process for AmeriCorps
g. Act on 2026-2027 AmeriCorps Kansas grant awards
i. Act on recommendations for approving Preschool Aged At Risk programs
j. Act on funding Kansas Preschool Pilot grants

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Dr. Randy Watson

Dr. Watson 18:30

After 12 years, Dr. Watson addressed the Board once last time. Month by month, from the early days of the Kansans Can initiative, through visiting communities throughout the state, learning and growing in his role as commissioner, facing the challenges of the covid era, recovering, and leading the Kansas educational community day by day, he now stood before the Board for the last time, as their Commissioner.

He started by saying, "We're going to talk a lot about students today."

Each region represented by the Board (there are ten) include approximately 50,000 students. He noted that when Board members first consider running for office, someone might have noted that the job is only two days a month. (There was general laughter at this remark.) In reality the job of a Board member takes a great deal of time and effort. Dr. Watson showed a series photos of the Board with him in school classrooms. The joy of learning, the joy of engaging young people, that is, he noted, the heart of all this. Graduation is taking place across the state. He stated emphatically that the work of the

Board matters.
He spoke about the emerging research about devices in classrooms. He then showed a regression analysis, done in a beta format, looking at elementary grades (3,4 and 5) and the relationship between poverty and student success. The 74 group has done extensive research on the connection between student achievement scores 3/4/5 and the level of poverty in the school district. KSDE researchers reproduced this research for Kansas specifically (last year). Generational poverty is exceedingly difficult to break. So, why do some schools have high student success in areas of high poverty?

The Kansas school district that was an outlier, successful in a high poverty district is the Valley Heights district, north of Manhattan. Valley Heights Elementary school last year had the highest scores in the state (with Branches Academy in Wichita). He mentioned that there are rural districts throughout the state, suburban and urban.

Dr. Watson shared a photo of his granddaughter, who is the class of 2039. He shared that the decisions that the Board makes today will impact the class of 2039. Policy decision can affect students for decades.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

Forum
43:15

Speakers included:

- Jill Gonzalez-Bravo, Olathe, Associate Dean at the School of Education, MidAmerica Nazarene University, representing Kansas Association of Private Colleges of Teacher Education (KAPCOTE). Dr. Gonzales-Bravo shared the KAPCOTE teacher recruitment and retention initiatives.

- Grace Isch, Emporia student, Miss Butler County, Representing Fill Your Cup, spoke in support of social emotional learning and recommended updating the SEL standards.

PRESENTATION: GATHERING INFORMATION ON DEVICES IN SCHOOLS

Devices
51:00

Vice Chair Danny Zeck
Mrs. Haas
Dr. Watson

The presenters explained that decision-making will be informed by several sources of data, including feedback from district staff and families, survey data, and research on learning outcomes. Device use is already widespread, noting that a large majority of districts reported using devices for at least some instruction in kindergarten through second grade (and of course in Middle/High school). This existing reliance underscored the importance of establishing clear guidance and standards rather than eliminating technology altogether.

The discussion also placed Kansas's efforts within a broader national context. It noted that several states, including Alabama, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia, had already enacted

legislation to reassess the role of technology in education. These examples demonstrated a growing trend toward limiting nonessential screen time, particularly for younger students, and requiring that technology use be developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, and clearly tied to improved learning outcomes. The presentation conveyed that additional states were considering similar measures, reinforcing the sense that this was a widespread and evolving policy issue.

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education provided a philosophical foundation for the recommendations. The presentation emphasized that technology, when used appropriately, could be a valuable tool for learning and increasing access to educational opportunities. It also recognized the role of technology in strengthening connections between families and educators. However, it stressed that technology was most effective when combined with active engagement from adults or peers, rather than being used in isolation.

Building on this foundation, the Board's discussion focused heavily on establishing policy expectations for accreditation compliance. It described a shift toward more restrictive and intentional use of devices, particularly in early grades. Instructional time for younger students was recommended to be largely screen-free, and parents were to be given the right to opt their children out of one-to-one device programs. Schools would be required to provide non-digital alternatives, such as textbooks and paper-based materials, to ensure equitable access for all students.

Mrs. Haas and Vice Chair Zeck emphasized that developmentally appropriate use must be the guiding standard, with technology serving clearly defined curriculum goals rather than driving instruction. It discouraged the use of devices as rewards or during recess and prioritized physical activity, social interaction, and hands-on, play-based learning. At the same time, it recognized the importance of preparing students for a digital world by requiring explicit instruction in digital citizenship and mandating that districts demonstrate structured plans for teaching these skills.

In addition, the presentation addressed significant concerns related to data privacy and security. It outlined strict expectations for transparency and accountability, requiring that any one-to-one device program include a publicly disclosed and annually audited data governance plan. Families need to be informed in advance about data collection practices and the vendors involved, with ongoing opportunities for education and engagement. Technology use was to be limited to clearly defined educational purposes, particularly for students with specific learning needs or accommodations.

Finally, the recommendations included statewide standards for information technology and information security professionals, along with requirements for robust content filtering systems. These safeguards were intended to apply not only to school staff but also to external contractors, ensuring consistent protection of student data across all parties involved.

RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RELATED TO BLUEPRINT FOR LITERACY (UNIVERSAL SCREENER)

Deputy Commissioner Nugent
Dr. Curtis

Blueprint
1:48:00

Dr. Nugent emphasized that literacy served as the foundation for all learning and that early identification of student needs was critical. When reading challenges were not identified early, schools often spent years attempting to close gaps that could have been addressed sooner. The effort was therefore framed as a proactive approach focused on identifying students early, ensuring consistency across districts, and aligning systems to support reading success.

The initiative was grounded in legislative action requiring districts to adopt a single statewide universal screener in partnership with state agencies. This requirement shifted Kansas from a decentralized approach—where districts selected from a list of approved tools—to a unified system in which all districts would use the same screening instrument within a comprehensive literacy implementation plan. The shift came with a clear timeline for statewide implementation, moving toward full adoption by the 2027–2028 school year.

The presentation acknowledged that Kansas had already made significant progress in literacy screening prior to this mandate. Schools had been screening for dyslexia since 2019 and had been using validated tools aligned to local instructional systems. Districts had also identified key reading subskills and built processes tailored to their needs. However, the move to a single screener introduced new challenges, particularly because it was not accompanied by dedicated funding, which created understandable concern at the local level.

A central rationale for the change was the need to address inconsistencies across districts. The presentation described how variation in tools, training, and implementation practices resulted in inconsistent data and made it difficult to compare results or scale support statewide. These inconsistencies limited the ability to provide targeted interventions and ensure that all students received equitable support.

In response, the state positioned its role as implementing the requirement in a way that respected existing district efforts while improving outcomes for students. The approach aimed to minimize disruption, build on current strengths, and ensure that the transition resulted in meaningful improvements rather than simply meeting compliance expectations.

Dr. Curtis outlined the specific literacy skills that the universal screener would assess. These included foundational early reading components such as letter naming, letter-sound recognition, phoneme segmentation, and decoding through nonsense word fluency, as well as more advanced measures like oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. Together, these components provided a comprehensive view of student reading development across multiple stages.

Clear expectations were established for the quality of the screening tool. It needed to be nationally normed, valid, and reliable, and aligned with required subskills at each grade level. It also needed to be instructionally useful, easy for educators to administer, and capable of producing clear, actionable reports for both teachers and families. These expectations reflected a balance between technical rigor and practical use in classrooms.

The selection process for the screener was designed to be structured and inclusive. It involved gathering input from stakeholders, evaluating potential tools using a defined rubric, and issuing a request for proposals. A review team would analyze submissions, and a final recommendation would be made for approval by the state Board. Stakeholder input included educators, specialists, administrators, and experts in multi-tiered systems of support, ensuring that the chosen tool would meet a wide range of needs.

The implementation timeline was phased to allow for a smooth transition. Districts would initially continue using their current screening tools while beginning to align reporting practices, including the use of composite scores derived from multiple subskills. Screening would expand to include a broader range of grade levels, extending from early childhood through the early high school years. After a final tool was selected, the state would provide guidance, contracts, and professional development before full implementation began.

The presentation also outlined the impact on districts. Schools would be required to adopt the selected screener and would receive training and support to ensure effective use. The screener would serve as a consistent benchmark within broader literacy and support frameworks, including multi-tiered systems of support. Data from the screener would also inform individualized literacy plans for students identified as high risk and would be used for reporting to the legislature on student progress.

STUDENTS FROM WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY WITH TEACHER MRS. LAURA CLUKE

Williams
3:34:30

Kindergarten and first grade students from nearby Williams Elementary were led by teacher-extraordinaire Mrs. Laura Cluke in a number of cheerful, enthusiastic songs, all memorized by the children, complete with many hand gestures and expression of joy. As usual, all present were reminded of the reality that is the student population of Kansas: children who thrive with excellent teaching and positive school cultures. In all the seemingly abstract policy, there is the life of a small child and the future that is possible for each one of the young students that lined up in front of the Board table and sang their hearts out.

READING CORNER: Roesland Elementary School

Dr. Curtis, Assistant Director
Hailey Hawkinson, Reading Teacher, Dighton School District

Reading
3:52:10

Dr. Curtis introduced Hailey Hawkinson, who drove out to Topeka all the way from Dighton. Hailey is a reading teacher and shared the work they have been doing with young children in the district.

The work was presented as a collaborative effort involving both educators and students, demonstrating how a cohesive team approach supported instructional consistency and student ownership of learning. The overall framework was organized around four major strategies that were identified as transformative to student growth.

A central component of the approach was a structured vocabulary routine grounded in explicit instruction. Students were introduced to new words with a deep focus on meaning, origin, and usage. Lessons began by defining the word and exploring its background, including how it evolved linguistically. Instruction then moved into spelling patterns and word relationships, where students examined how words changed form and connected to synonyms and antonyms. This process helped build both vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of language structures.

Students were also guided to develop clear, student-friendly definitions and to practice using new vocabulary in context. Instruction included examples, questions requiring judgment about correct usage, and opportunities for discussion. This repetition and application ensured that students not only recognized words but understood and used them accurately in speaking and writing.

Another key strategy focused on sentence construction using a structured routine built around simple connectors that helped students organize and expand their ideas. Students learned to begin with a central statement and then extend it by explaining reasons, introducing contrast, or showing cause-and-effect relationships. This method strengthened both comprehension and writing by teaching students how ideas connect logically within a sentence and across a paragraph.

The presentation also highlighted a research and writing project that emphasized student inquiry and organization. Students followed a structured research process that began with book-based research before moving to carefully selected online sources. They were trained to gather information systematically using notecards, limiting each card to a small number of facts and recording sources for accountability. This process reinforced both research skills and academic integrity.

Once research was complete, students organized their notes into groups based on related ideas, using those groupings to form paragraphs. Multiple paragraphs were then combined into full articles, supported by outlines that helped students structure their thinking before writing. This step-by-step method supported clarity in writing and helped students understand how to build cohesive, multi-paragraph pieces. The final products were presented in a format that allowed students to showcase their work publicly, reinforcing pride in their learning.

Another major focus of the instructional model was sentence diagramming, which was used to strengthen students' understanding of grammar and sentence structure. Students

practiced breaking sentences into their components, identifying subjects, verbs, phrases, and modifiers. This visual representation helped students see how parts of a sentence functioned together, improving both their reading comprehension and writing accuracy.

The presentation also outlined plans to expand sentence diagramming across all grade levels as part of a schoolwide initiative. Expectations were clearly defined for each grade, beginning with basic identification of subjects and verbs in early grades and progressing to more complex grammatical structures in upper grades. This approach ensured that students built their skills progressively over time, with each year adding new layers of complexity and understanding.

Throughout the presentation, there was a clear emphasis on consistency, structure, and intentional practice. Instructional routines were designed to be predictable and repeatable, allowing students to focus on mastering skills rather than adjusting to new formats. At the same time, the approach allowed for creativity and engagement through projects and discussions that made learning meaningful.

RECEIVE REGULATIONS AND RULES REVIEW

Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

R & R
4:11:00

A central priority was simplifying the process for individuals seeking licensure from outside the state. The proposed changes established a clearer and more consistent set of requirements for these candidates. Individuals would need to demonstrate that they held a valid, unrestricted license in another state, possessed the appropriate academic degree for the role they were pursuing, and completed standard application procedures. These procedures included submitting an application, paying required fees, and completing a fingerprint-based background check. The intent was to reduce unnecessary barriers while ensuring that all candidates met baseline qualifications and safety standards.

The presentation placed significant emphasis on the role of interstate agreements designed to support professional mobility. These agreements were described as formal, legally binding arrangements enacted through state legislation that allowed licensed professionals to move between states more easily. They were positioned as part of a broader national trend across multiple professions to improve workforce mobility while maintaining consistent expectations for qualifications and practice.
Within these agreements, specific criteria were required for educators to qualify. Candidates needed to have completed a state-approved preparation program, hold at least a bachelor's degree, and maintain a current, unrestricted license. The definition of an unrestricted license was clarified to ensure that only fully credentialed professionals—those without probationary, provisional, or temporary limitations—would be eligible for streamlined licensure pathways. This ensured that the system remained rigorous while still improving access.

Additional requirements were outlined for specialized roles, particularly for school psychologists. These candidates were expected to meet higher standards, including completion of an advanced degree at the specialist or doctoral level, successful completion of a supervised internship, and passing a national examination. These expectations reflected the additional expertise required for these roles while still aligning with the broader goal of facilitating mobility across state lines.

Beyond the specific requirements of interstate agreements, the presentation established consistent expectations for all candidates entering the licensure system. Every applicant was required to complete an application process, pay applicable fees, and undergo a background check administered by the licensure team, including submission of fingerprint documentation. These requirements ensured that all candidates, regardless of pathway, were subject to the same verification and safety standards.

The review also incorporated statutory provisions designed to expedite licensure for certain groups, particularly military service members, their spouses, and individuals relocating to establish residency. These provisions created faster processing timelines and, in some cases, eliminated application or renewal fees. The intent was to remove obstacles for individuals facing time-sensitive moves and to support workforce entry for military families.

To qualify under these expedited pathways, candidates needed to demonstrate that they held a valid out-of-state license and had recent professional experience. The presentation distinguished between general professional experience and accredited experience, noting that only certain types of teaching work met established standards. Accredited experience was defined as teaching completed under contract in a recognized school setting while holding a valid endorsement, ensuring that experience counted toward licensure met clear quality expectations.

The presentation also clarified the relationship between interstate agreements and broader statutory requirements. Interstate agreements were limited in scope, applying only to specific license categories and to individuals coming from participating states. In contrast, state law provisions applied more broadly across a range of license types and candidates. This distinction helped explain how different licensure pathways would operate depending on the candidate's credentials and circumstances.
Proposed updates were presented to create greater consistency across multiple license categories. For teaching roles, candidates would need a bachelor's degree, a valid license, and completion of application and background check requirements. For school specialist and leadership roles, a graduate degree would be required in addition to similar licensure and verification steps. These standardized expectations were designed to clarify requirements and ensure alignment across different professional roles.

RECEIVE LICENSURE APPLICATION FEE CHANGES

Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

App Fees
4:11:00

Director Carter explained the need to adjust licensure application fees by outlining the legal framework and financial conditions that influenced the decision. It began by identifying the statutory and regulatory requirements that govern how licensure fees are established, collected, and used, including provisions related to initial licenses, renewals, endorsements, and specialized categories such as career and technical education and extensions tied to military service.

Mr. Carter provided historical context, noting that for several years prior to 2022, the licensure fee fund maintained a stable and growing balance. This stability was largely due to minimal increases in salaries and low inflation, which kept operational costs relatively flat. Because expenses remained controlled during this period, there was no immediate need to raise fees, and the existing structure adequately supported licensure services.

The presentation then described a shift in financial conditions beginning around fiscal year 2022. Costs began to rise significantly, particularly in salaries and benefits, driven in part by legislative pay adjustments that increased personnel expenses. Salary and benefit costs grew substantially over a few years, and additional expenses such as office lease costs also increased noticeably. These combined factors placed increased pressure on the fee fund and reduced its long-term sustainability under the current fee structure.

In response to rising costs, he explained, steps were taken to limit spending. These included reducing leased office space and decreasing the number of staff within the licensure team. While these actions helped mitigate some expenses, they were not sufficient to fully offset the broader increases in operational costs.

He further explained that the agency had intentionally allowed expenditures to exceed revenues for a period of time in order to reduce the existing cash balance in the fee fund. This approach was used to delay fee increases and spread the financial impact over a longer period. However, as costs continued to rise and revenues declined, the fund balance steadily decreased.

At the same time, revenue into the fee fund had begun to decline. One contributing factor was a change in the educator workforce, as more experienced teachers holding higher-level licenses retired and were replaced by individuals holding initial licenses, which generated less fee revenue. This shift reduced overall income and contributed to the imbalance between revenue and expenditures.

As a result of these combined trends—increasing costs, reduced revenue, and the depletion of reserve funds—the presentation concluded that maintaining current fee levels was no longer sustainable. It emphasized that an increase in licensure fees was necessary to ensure that the agency could continue providing consistent and timely services to educators and school districts.

Overall, the presentation conveyed that the proposed fee adjustments were the result of long-term financial trends rather than a single issue. It highlighted that cost-saving measures and use of reserves had already been implemented to delay increases, and that the decision to raise fees was intended to preserve the quality and continuity of licensure services moving forward.

RECEIVE AGRICULTURE AND SPEECH/THEATER STANDARDS
RECEIVE EVALUATION REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION APPROVAL/PROGRAM REVIEWS

Dr. Catherine Chmidling, Teacher Licensure

Standards
4:44:50

Dr. Chmidling described two primary categories of standards that guided program development, including those focused on general teaching knowledge and skills expected of all educators and those focused on subject-specific knowledge tied to particular endorsement areas. Together, these standards created a comprehensive framework for preparing effective teachers across disciplines.

The revisions to agriculture-related preparation programs reflected an effort to modernize and streamline expectations. Updates included revised language, a stronger emphasis on foundational program design and management, and consolidation of earlier standards into a more efficient structure. Additional elements were included to address adaptability to changing expectations, as well as college and career readiness and professional behavior.

The updated expectations emphasized a comprehensive instructional model that integrated classroom learning, laboratory experiences, work-based learning, and leadership development. Teacher candidates were expected to demonstrate knowledge across established pathways and integrate core academic subjects into instruction. There was also increased emphasis on real-world application, critical thinking, communication skills, and the effective use of technology to support learning.

Instructional practice expectations were strengthened by combining previously separate expectations into a unified approach that required candidates to plan instruction, assess learning effectively, and apply content knowledge in practical settings. The revisions also reinforced the importance of preparing students for postsecondary success and workforce readiness, along with maintaining strong professional responsibilities such as continuous learning and collaboration..

The updates to speech and theatre preparation programs focused on reorganizing and modernizing expectations to better reflect current practices. Changes included updated language, realignment of content areas, and the addition of expectations related to pedagogy, program management, and field experience to strengthen preparation for teaching roles.

The revised expectations emphasized a broad range of communication skills, including interpersonal, group, and public communication, along with understanding mass communication concepts. They highlighted the importance of debate and forensics activities in developing student skills such as research, writing, critical thinking, and performance within both instructional and co-curricular settings.

The theatre-related components expanded expectations to include knowledge of dramatic literature, performance techniques, technical theatre, and directing. Additional emphasis was placed on preparing teacher candidates to effectively manage programs that included both classroom instruction and extracurricular activities.

Further revisions emphasized instructional methods that connected learning to real-world communication and application, along with field experiences that provided candidates with hands-on opportunities working with students in classroom, performance, and competitive settings. These experiences strengthened practical readiness for teaching roles.

Chmidling also described recommendations from an evaluation review process for educator preparation programs. One program was recommended for continued approval with no identified areas for improvement, while other programs were approved with stipulations requiring continued monitoring and progress reporting over a defined period.

She explained that newly developed programs could receive conditional approval while being implemented, with required progress reporting to ensure standards were met. This approach supported innovation while maintaining accountability and continuous improvement.

ACT ON CTE
A. CLUSTER REVIEW
B. PATHWAY CREDENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Beth Fultz, Director
Career, Standards and Assessment Services

CTE
5:21:40

A. Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the Career and Technical Education CTE 2025-2026 Cluster and Pathway Review recommendations approved by the Kansas Advisory Committee for Career and Technical Education. Mr. Hershberger seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0-1 with Mrs. O'Brien present not voting.

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the:
(1) List of 2026-2027 SB123 qualifying industry-sought credentials, that career and technical education students may request school districts pay any fees charged for any assessment or other examination that is required for such student to obtain an approved industry-sought career and technical education credential.

(2) List of 2026-2027 high-value industry-recognized career and technical education credentials and a list of standard career and technical education industry-recognized credentials.
Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0-1 with Mrs. O'Brien present not voting.

ACT ON SCHOOL BREAKFAST WAIVER RECOMMENDATIONS
Kelly Chanay, Director, Child Nutrition and Wellness

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the recommendations from the waiver committee for school breakfast programs. Dr. New seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0. — Waiver 5:27:15

ACT ON BOARD POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPDATING THE CITIZENS' FORUM POLICY
Mrs. Melanie Haas, Chair, Board Policy Committee

Mrs. Dombrosky moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the updated policy for Citizens' Forum as presented by the Board Policy Committee. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0-1 with Mrs. Potter present not voting. — Policy 5:28:50

LEGISLATIVE REPORT
Deputy Commissioner Harwood

Several high-profile education-related bills were discussed, particularly those that passed both legislative chambers but were vetoed. One proposal focused on requiring instruction about certain political ideologies in upper grade levels and introducing a civics exam as a graduation requirement. The exam included specific expectations for format, language, and passing criteria. Another proposal addressed student physical activity, requiring daily recess for elementary students and directing the creation of a statewide fitness assessment. Although this measure was vetoed, there was recognition of shared goals around increasing physical activity, with an indication that similar initiatives could be pursued through existing programs and future collaboration. — Legislative 5:30:40

Another vetoed measure addressed property tax policies by introducing a formal process allowing taxpayers to challenge increases above certain thresholds. While the proposal applied broadly to taxing entities, it did not include school districts and other specified categories, reflecting an effort to balance taxpayer protections with exemptions for critical funding areas. The presentation also described legislation that was approved and would impact school districts in future years. One provision required school boards in districts with high numbers of students eligible for free meals to consider participation in a federal nutrition program or provide justification if they chose not to participate. This requirement was structured with a delayed implementation timeline, allowing districts time to prepare before taking action. Additional provisions adjusted application procedures for districts seeking innovative status, including changes to submission deadlines and timelines for approval decisions.

In addition to legislative outcomes, the presentation provided an update on ongoing work related to education funding. A state task force had begun meeting to review funding structures and discuss various components of the formula. Initial meetings focused on gathering input and perspectives, with additional meetings scheduled during the interim period. At the time of the update, no formal recommendations had been finalized, but the task force was required to present its findings to the legislature in early 2027.

ACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COMMISSIONER PPC RECOMMENDATIONS
R. Scott Gordon, KSDE General Counsel

A (Denials) 25-PPC-36, 26-PPC-01, 26-PPC-04 and 26-PPC-07 — PPC 6:02:30

Mr. Porter move that the Kansas State Board of Education deny the pending applications in the following cases: 25-PPC-36, 26-PPC-01, 26-PPC-04, and 26-PPC-07. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

B (Revocations) 25-PPC-37, 25-PPC-05 and 26-PPC-08

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education revoke the teaching licenses in the following cases: 26-PPC-05, 25-PPC-37 and 26-PPC-08. Mrs. Dombrosky seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

The Chair asked for action on the two consent items pulled for discussion and vote.

ACT ON CONSENT ITEM E: — Consent Motions 6:12:00

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education act on consent item e,
a. that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 434, Santa Fe Trail, Osage County, to hold an election on the question of issuing bonds in excess of the district's general bond debt limitation,
b. that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 434, Santa Fe Trail, Osage County, to receive capital improvement (bond and interest) state aid as authorized by law.
Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0-2 with Mrs. Potter and Mrs. O'Brien present not voting.

ACT ON CONSENT ITEM H:

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education act on consent item h, and approve the start date of June 1, 2026, and salary of $255,500 for Dr. Jake Steel. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (To discuss the subject of non-elected personnel) — EXEC Session

Vice Chair Zeck moved that the Kansas State Board of Education recess into Executive Session to discuss the subject of non-elected personnel matters, which is justified pursuant to the non-elected personnel exception under KOMA, in order to protect the privacy interest of the individual(s) to be discussed.

This session will begin at 4:40 p.m. on May 7th and continue until 5:00 p.m.; no action will be taken during this session. Dr. Jake Steel, Dr. Randy Watson, Wendy Fritz and Mark Ferguson will be invited to join this executive session. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

Motion 7:05:30

After the executive session, the following motion was made:
Mr. Hershberger moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the creation of the Deputy Commissioner of Accountability and Technology position and that Dr. Zackary Conrad be hired to that position effective July 1, 2026, with a salary of $193,961.61. Mrs. Potter seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

The meeting was recessed until the following morning at 9 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MINUTES

Kansas State Board of Education
May 13, 2026

PRESENTATION FROM USD 494 SYRACUSE ON K-12 DIGITAL HEALTH AND SAFETY EDUCATION
Paul Larkin, Superintendent
Liz Plunkett, Elementary School Principal
Taran Parks, Parent of three students in the district

Superintendent Larkin started by thanking Dr. Watson for his many years of service. He met Randy many years ago and he has always respected the focus on student achievement that the Commissioner has centered on throughout his long career as an educator in Kansas.

Mr. Larkin and others in the district have been concerned about digital devices, screen time and the effect on students. They have reduced device use but did not know how to move forward with educating students, families and the community about these issues. After connecting with Screen Guardians, Katie Longhauser, through a family friend, the district decided to proceed as a pilot project.

They started with teachers and decided to kick things off in the second semester and had meetings with parents. Parents are involved in the program. The Screen Guardians is not a one time assembly, but an all-inclusive K-12, mental health, digital safety, reduction of screen time and the integration of families and community.

Mrs. Plunkett shared her perspective as a principal. Her focus was what happened in the classroom. Katie and her team have developed simple, relevant lessons that are easy to use. She has noticed in recent years that kindergartners are arriving with less ability to pay attention, inability to self-soothe, and they lack the ability to focus on a task for any length of time. Screen time has been increasing for children no matter what their age. Screentime definitely plays into what they are seeing with these young children. Also they do not have motor skills; they cannot hold a pencil, do not know how to hold scissors, and so on. Even her kindergarten teachers came to her two years ago and said, “Do we have to use the iPads?” She told them, “No!” There is no tech used in her building for kindergarten or first grade.

Mrs. Plunket expressed that tech devices were sold as the magic fix for the kids but overtime it became clear that that is not the case. They are starting to put textbooks back in front of the kids. They want the students to be engaging with the teacher, with each other and not with devices. Kids are talking about what the devices do to them, for instance, a child might say, “My dopamine cycle is out of whack.” They can teach children things like, ‘When you

spend 7 seconds on a Tik-Tok reel, you have just created a digital footprint, and now the creators of those programs know what you are interested in." The lesson that made the greatest impact on her was instructing a group of six graders about the "echo chamber effect." That is, when you spend time on any of those platforms, and you set a digital footprint which creates an algorithm that is set to you individually. When we talk about the mental health crisis in this country and let us say a child is having a sad day, so they are using Tik-Tok reels and all the reels are feeding into that sadness. It is an echo, bouncing back to a child nonstop. They have been able to share with students all the things that they can do to put some guardrails, and some limits on the effect that platforms and devices have on their lives.

She shared letters from one of their 4th grade class about what they have learned.

Parent Taran Parks spoke about how she got involved with Screen Guardians through an ad in the paper. As an involved parent she attended. She was a little skeptical at first, but she learned about the research and stats and she left feeling concerned and had some mom guilt about what was happening in her household. Like many families, she said, their use of technology started from a good place. Her son's IEP included an app on an iPad. They purchased one, and over time it evolved to games and increased screen time. Soon the whole family had game consoles and iPads. Using the Parent Portal of Screen Guardians she began to change rules in her house. The first change was to put all devices away at 7 p.m. It was a difficult transition. Phones are no longer in the kids' bedrooms. The older two children have been very accustomed to the devices, and it has been more difficult to let them go. Her younger son does not have much of a problem doing other activities. Doing more activities as a family has become a priority. Her children are now aware of their dopamine, for instance they will say, "My dopamine is sky high, I need to go outside for a while." The hardest part of the journey is the pushback from the kids.

There was a lively discussion with the Board. Katie Longhauser was present and answered questions from the Board. Mrs. Longhauser stated that technology is not good or bad, but students need to learn how to navigate a virtual world that is not going to go away. Screen Guardians does not want to ban devices, but rather to educate students, teachers, administrators and especially families about the complex issues that come with technological devices.

PRESENTATION ON NEW LAW ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS
Deputy Commissioner Nugent

New Laws
1:12:25

Dr. Nugent highlighted that social media and device use were nearly universal among students and brought both benefits and risks. While these tools could support connection and communication, excessive use was linked to concerns such as increased anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and reduced attention. The information presented underscored that higher levels of daily use were associated with greater risks to mental health, reinforcing the need for thoughtful boundaries.

The law established two primary requirements. First, it required school districts to prohibit the use of personal student devices during the school day. Second, it prohibited school staff from using social media to communicate with students for official purposes. These provisions were intended to create clearer boundaries around both student behavior and professional communication.

She emphasized that this change represented more than a simple policy update; it was described as a systems-level shift requiring careful design and implementation. The effectiveness of the law would depend on how districts structured their practices, with the goal of supporting learning rather than simply enforcing rules.

A key aspect of the communication requirement was ensuring that interactions between staff and students occurred in appropriate, transparent, and documented environments. This approach was intended to enhance student safety while also protecting educators by maintaining clear professional boundaries.

The presentation also highlighted several important considerations for implementation. Districts would need to address how to handle emergency communication situations, ensure consistent application of the policy across schools, determine appropriate instructional uses of devices, and avoid framing the policy solely as a disciplinary issue. It also stressed the importance of building community understanding so that stakeholders could support the changes.

It acknowledged that reactions to the law would vary across communities, with some viewing it as a necessary safeguard and others seeing it as a limitation on flexibility. Rather than eliminating these differing perspectives, Dr. Nugent emphasized the importance of leading through them with clarity and purpose.

RECEIVE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

Ethics
1:32:56

R. Scott Gordon, KSDE General Counsel
Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

Mr. Gordon and Mr. Carter described the responsibilities educators held within their school systems, including fulfilling contractual obligations, reporting information honestly, and using school resources appropriately. Educators were expected to follow established procedures when conducting school business and to avoid any form of misrepresentation, reinforcing the importance of integrity and accountability in their roles.

The presentation highlighted the broader responsibility educators had to their profession, stressing the need to uphold professional standards, maintain valid licensure, and comply with laws and policies. Providing accurate information to governing agencies and consistently demonstrating ethical behavior were identified as essential components for maintaining trust in the profession.

A central theme focused on the use of an ethical framework designed to guide educators in making thoughtful, responsible decisions. This framework was described as a resource for reflection and professional growth rather than a tool for punishment. It encouraged educators to recognize potential ethical challenges, engage in meaningful discussions, and develop sound judgment through ongoing learning and self-awareness.

The presentation also emphasized key principles that guided ethical practice, including a strong commitment to professional responsibility and competence. Educators were expected to hold themselves and their colleagues to high standards while continuously improving their knowledge and skills. This commitment ensured that their practice remained effective and aligned with ethical expectations.

Another important focus was on maintaining positive and appropriate relationships within the school community. Educators were encouraged to foster respectful, collaborative interactions with students, colleagues, families, and other stakeholders, supporting a constructive and professional learning environment.

The responsible use of technology was also addressed, with an emphasis on maintaining professional boundaries in digital communication and being mindful of how information was shared and accessed. Educators were expected to consider the impact of their digital presence and ensure that all communication remained appropriate to their role.

ACT ON NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE CONTRACT FOR POST SECONDARY DATA — Contract
Dr. Randy Watson — 2:07:50

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education authorize the Commissioner of Education to amend the current contract with the National Student Clearinghouse for the purpose of providing postsecondary data on Kansas high school graduates. The amendment will extend the contract for an additional three years from January 2027 – December 2030. The total extension cost shall not exceed $225,000.00. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-3-1 with Vice Chair Zeck, Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Dombrosky voting no, Mrs. O'Brien present not voting.

RECEIVE AND ACT ON MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANING (MOU) BETWEEN THE KANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (KSD) AND THE KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (KNEA) — KSD/KNEA 2:29:44

Board Attorney Mark Ferguson and Kansas School for the Deaf liaison for the Board Mrs. Dombrosky explained the need to approve the MOU between KSD and KNEA. Because of the legislation that was recently enacted, the provisions of the MOU need to be put into action as soon as possible.

Mr. Porter moved that the Kansas State Board of Education suspend the rules and vote on this item immediately. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-1 with Mrs. Potter voting no.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas National Education Association Bargaining Unit at the Kansas School for the Deaf which adds six additional days of instruction for the 2025-2026 School Year. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

UPDATE: REGISTERED STUDENT TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Apprentice
2:39:30

Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

Director Carter described the USD 230 Youth Apprenticeship Program as a districtwide effort that broadened real-world learning opportunities and strengthened the pipeline of future educators. He emphasized that the district expanded pathway options to close gaps in existing coursework, giving students more continuous and meaningful learning experiences.

The program also served as a "grow your own" strategy, intentionally cultivating a sustainable pool of future teachers from within the Spring Hill community. At the same time, it aligned with new state graduation requirements and addressed the persistent teacher shortage by preparing students to step into roles that had become increasingly difficult to fill.

Student apprentice Ashley Anderson was present and spoke to how the program impacted her life. She spent time in authentic classroom settings, observing instruction, supporting students, and gradually taking on more responsibility as her confidence grew. Her apprenticeship allowed her to earn college dual-credit, giving her a head start on postsecondary coursework and reinforcing her commitment to pursuing education as a career.

Through these hands-on experiences, she developed essential professional skills—such as communication, classroom management, and collaboration with mentor teachers—that would shape her future as an educator. The presentation framed her journey as evidence of how the apprenticeship model created meaningful, practical preparation for students considering careers in teaching.

RECEIVE ORION ADULT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION WAIVER APPLICATION

Orion
3:18:10

Deputy Commissioner Harwood
Jill Lackenmyer, Executive Director of Orion
Joani Purdy, Associate Director of Orion
Don Potter, Superintendent, Circle District USD 375

The proposal highlighted that current adult education options were limited to either fully in-person or fully virtual instruction, with no option for a blended approach. The waiver sought

to address this gap by introducing a flexible model that combined both in-person and online learning, allowing students to move between formats based on their needs and schedules.

The rationale for the waiver centered on the unique circumstances faced by adult learners. Many individuals in this population had significant external responsibilities, such as employment and family obligations, which made traditional attendance requirements impractical. The existing requirement for full-time, on-site attendance limited their ability to make progress toward a diploma while maintaining stability in other areas of their lives.

The presentation emphasized that increased flexibility was essential for adult learners, both in scheduling and instructional delivery. The proposed model would allow students to attend in-person for individualized support from licensed teachers while also completing coursework online when needed. This approach was intended to maximize learning opportunities and provide continuity even when life circumstances disrupted regular attendance.

It also addressed barriers related to technology and academic readiness. While online learning could provide flexibility, some students lacked the necessary digital skills, reliable access to technology, or reading comprehension abilities to succeed independently. By maintaining in-person learning opportunities, the program ensured that students could receive the support they needed while still benefiting from online options.

Additional considerations included the fact that adult learners were not subject to compulsory attendance laws, allowing for more flexibility in how educational services were delivered. The program proposed maintaining access to in-person learning centers with extended availability while allowing students to choose between fully in-person or blended participation.

The proposal also emphasized a commitment to continuous access to education throughout the year, even outside standard funding windows. This approach recognized that adult learners often required services at different times than traditional students, and districts committed to providing these opportunities even when state funding would not apply.

To support the new model, the presentation outlined modifications to attendance and funding calculations. Each student would have an individualized schedule based on availability, and attendance would be measured using a defined time window with flexibility for learning at various times of day. Students would be allowed to engage in extended daily learning hours to accommodate nontraditional schedules.

The program also detailed how both in-person and online learning would be documented. On-site attendance would be tracked through sign-in and sign-out records, while online participation would require system-generated reports that captured login times and activity. Safeguards would ensure that only active learning time counted toward attendance, with limits placed on inactivity.

Legal and compliance requirements were addressed by outlining the documentation that districts would maintain for each student. This included enrollment information, transcript analysis, and individualized graduation plans to ensure that students were working toward meeting all requirements for high school completion.

Additional reporting requirements were proposed as part of the pilot, including detailed tracking of enrollment dates, attendance history, and credits earned. Districts would also maintain records of participating students and key academic dates to support auditing and evaluation of the program.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports
Comments
Travel
Requests
3:58:32

The Chair discussed the possibility of having a special meeting on June 8th in the afternoon which would focus on devices in schools (the topic that Vice Chair Zeck and Mrs. Haas have been working on). The Board was positive towards this plan.

Mrs. Dombrosky shared that the KSD Site Council went very well and she was there in person.

Mr. Porter explained the KSHSAA vote on the 500 rule for activities and noted that girls flag football was approved.

Mrs. Potter attended the Teacher Vacancy committee meeting and the KACEE meeting which were actually held at the same time. KACEE discussed financial games to be used in the classroom.

The Chair spoke about the BOOST event on June 28 and 29.

Mr. Hershberger gave a brief report on Ag in the Classroom.

TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the travel requests for May 2026 as presented. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

FUTURE AGENDA REQUESTS

Mrs. Dombrosky asked for more clarity between the terms “assessments” and “testing.”

Mr. Hershberger is interested in teacher training on using devices in the classroom. How are teachers trained in terms of instruction? Dr. Watson noted that this would be a topic Catherine Chmidling could prepare.

Dr. New was curious about the term "present not voting" which she has not encountered in other voting bodies.

Mrs. Potter made the following motion and explained her rationale: The public is a key component in reviewing information provided the Board for accuracy and accountability. It has been demonstrated that the public has found this process to be costly, cumbersome, confusing, and often ineffective at attaining information in a timely manner.

Mrs. Potter moved that the following documents be made available to the public at the same time as they become available to Board members: Invoices from Board legal counsel, the itemized expense reimbursements paid to the Board members, pre and post agenda informational letters to the Board as a Whole by the Commissioner, commonly referred to as "Friday Notes." Mrs. O'Brien seconded the motion. **Motion failed 3-6-1 with Mrs. Haas, Mr. Hershberger, Dr. New, Mrs. Hopkins, Mr. Zeck, Mrs. Arnold and Mr. Porter voting no, with Mrs. Dombrosky present not voting.**

The meeting was adjourned and the Board will meet again on June 8th.

_____ _____

Chair Cathy Hopkins Board Secretary Deborah Bremer

Note: Some of the presentation summaries were developed using Copilot (AI tool).