Kansas State Board of Education
Tuesday, September 8, 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, September 8th, 2026, in the Boardroom of the Landon State Office Building, 900 SW Jackson Street, Topeka, Kansas. Chair Hopkins recited the Board mission and vision statements and then asked for a moment of silent reflection or prayer, followed by everyone standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

The following 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
Commissioner Steel was seated at the Board table.
Board Attorney Mark Ferguson was not present.

APPROVAL OF THE August 2026 MINUTES

Mrs. Dombrosky moved to approve the minutes for the August 11 and 12, 2026, Kansas State Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. **Motion carried 9-0-1 with Mrs. Potter present not voting.**

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER AGENDA

Chair Hopkins removed the 25-PPC-27 case to be moved to October. She amended the School for the Deaf vote on the search firm to an update on that process. The consent item 3. b. should read Licensure waivers, not Licensure Review Committee.

Mrs. Haas moved to approve the agenda for September 8 and 9, 2026. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. **Motion carried 10-0.**

CONSENT AGENDA

Mrs. Potter asked to pull consent item c, h and k for a separate vote.
Vice Chair Zeck asked to pull consent items h and i for a separate vote.
The Chair noted that these would be voted on after item 7 on the agenda (the presentation on Bonds and Capitol Improvement).

Mrs. Haas moved that the remaining consent agenda items be approved. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

Consent items that were approved:

a. Receive monthly personnel report and appointments to unclassified positions.
b. Act on licensure waivers.
d. Act on request from USD 476, Copeland, Gray County, to receive Capital Improvement (Bond and Interest) State Aid.
e. Act on request from USD 308, Hutchinson, Reno County to receive Capital Improvement (Bond and Interest, State Aid). No bond election approval needed for USD 308 as bond indebtedness is below 14% bond debt limit.
f. Act on request from USD 484, Fredonia, Wilson County, to hold a bond election.
g. Act on request from USD 484 Fredonia, Wilson County, to receive Capital improvement (Bond and Interest) State Aid.
j. Act on request from USD 339 Jefferson County North, Jefferson County, to receive Capital Improvement (Bond and Interest) State Aid. No bond election approval needed as it is below the 14% debt limit.
l. Act on request from USD 380 Vermillion, Marshall County, to receive Capital Improvement (Bond and Interest) State Aid.
m. Act on request from USD 340 Jefferson West, Jefferson County, to receive Capital Improvement (Bond and Interest) State Aid. No bond election approval needed as it is below the 14% debt limit.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA FOR A VOTE (this voting occurred later in the meeting; after item 7)

Item c.

Dr. New moved that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 476, Copeland, Gray County, to hold an election on the question of issuing bonds in excess of the district's general bond debt limitation. Mrs. Haas seconded. Motion carried 8-2 with Mrs. Potter and Mrs. O'Brien voting no.

Item h.
Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 329, Wabaunsee, Wabaunsee County, to hold an election on the question of issuing bonds in excess of the district's general bond debt limitation. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-3 with Mrs. Potter, Mrs. O'Brien and Vice Chair Zeck voting no.

Item i.
Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 329, Wabaunsee, Wabaunsee County, to receive capital improvement (Bond and Interest) state aid as authorized by law. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no.

Item k.
Mr. Porter moved that the Kansas State Board of Education issue an Order authorizing USD 380, Vermillion, Marshall County, to hold an election on the question of issuing bonds in excess of the district's general bond debt limitation. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-2 with Mrs. Potter and Mrs. O'Brien voting no.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT
Commissioner Steel highlighted the Kansas State Board of Education's mission, goals, and priorities focused on quality instruction, school improvement, leadership development, and policy alignment.

Key updates included collaboration among districts through shared professional development opportunities with the Great Western Activities Conference, continued support for school districts through 255 budget review meetings covering 236 district budgets, and leadership development efforts through KELI, LINKS, new superintendent support, and literacy initiatives.

The report also noted that all Kansas school systems submitted required cell phone policy certifications, and KSDE plans to survey districts regarding elementary school recess. Additional efforts focused on strengthening internal policies, improving KORA request tracking, and developing an Accountability Advisory Committee that would include educators, legislators, parents, and other stakeholders.
Looking ahead, the October Commissioner's Report will include the annual narrative on school improvement and updated state assessment metrics.

There were no participants in the Citizen's Open Forum

Quality Instruction: Civics Education

Presentation on the *Third Grade Mock Trial* taking place nationwide on Constitution day, September 17, with Judge Wonnell of the 10th District Judicial District Court in Olathe and Julie Fishburn, Director of Social Studies for USD 233, Olathe.

Adam Topliff, KSDE Humanities Program Manager, introduced Judge Wonnell and Julie Fishburn. Mrs. Fishburn outlined the development and expansion of the Constitution Day Mock Trial program for third-grade students. Beginning in 2015 with a courthouse visit and a mock trial activity, the program grew steadily over the years, adapting to virtual delivery during the pandemic and expanding through partnerships with schools and the judicial system. What began as a local initiative evolved into a districtwide, statewide, and ultimately nationwide educational program.

Judge Wonnell shared his story of having students visit his courtroom and quickly coming up with the idea of having them participate in a mock trial as to whether Goldilocks was trespassing. This gradually led to an educational experience that grew year after year, as he and Mrs. Fishburn developed the Constitution day experience.

By connecting classroom learning to real-world legal processes, students gained a greater understanding of the U.S. Constitution, citizenship, civic responsibilities, and the judicial system. The initiative emphasized standards-aligned instruction, active student engagement, and exposure to careers within the justice and legal professions.

By 2026, the event had expanded to include more than 30,000 third-grade students across 39 states. The program received support from educators, judicial leaders, and state departments of education, helping to increase awareness and participation nationwide.

Presentation: Bonds and Caps 101

Dr. Frank Harwood, Deputy Commissioner

Dr. Harwood provided an overview of school district bond elections and explained the purpose and use of general obligation bonds, the legal requirements for conducting bond elections, and the limitations placed on bonded indebtedness for Kansas school districts. He outlined the process districts must follow when seeking approval to exceed the standard 14% debt limitation, including application requirements and review procedures.

The presentation also reviewed Capital Improvement State Aid, which helps school districts offset bond repayment costs and supports more equitable funding for school facilities. Information was provided on bond caps, eligibility requirements, and factors that may affect a district's ability to receive state aid, including facility use and enrollment trends.

In summary, local boards may initiate bond elections, districts exceeding debt limitations must obtain State Board approval, and eligible districts may apply for state aid to reduce the local property tax burden associated with bond payments. Approved bond proposals are ultimately submitted to district voters for consideration.

Receive Item: Policy Regarding the Effective Use of Instructional Technology in Kansas Schools

Commissioner Steel

The Kansas State Board of Education received a draft policy and plan regarding the effective use of instructional technology in Kansas schools. The proposal emphasized that technology should enhance instruction and learning, support student well-being, align with curriculum goals, and complement rather than replace meaningful human interaction. This policy was developed in August 2026 with Board members and KSDE staff input. The policy will continue to evolve, and the Board will be asked to vote on a final version in October.

The draft policy would require public school districts and accredited nonpublic schools to adopt and regularly review technology-use policies and plans developed with stakeholder input. Local plans would address topics such as student access and use, digital citizenship, artificial intelligence, privacy and security, and expectations for responsible technology use.

The presentation also outlined requirements for public accessibility, parent notification and acknowledgment of technology use policies, and communication of policy revisions. The State Board discussed next steps for reviewing and finalizing the policy and developing resources to assist schools with implementation.

Quality Instruction: Reading Corner, The Constitution of Structured Literacy

Dr. Laurie Curtis, Asst. Director, Teaching and Learning
Adam Topliff, Humanities Program Manager, Teaching and Learning
Mary Lonker, English Language Arts Program Manager

Adam Topliff, Mary Lonker, and Laurie Curtis presented on structured literacy and

high-quality reading instruction. The presentation emphasized the Simple View of Reading, explaining that successful reading comprehension depends on both word recognition and language comprehension, and highlighted the importance of oral language development.

Presenters reviewed key components of structured literacy, including explicit, systematic, cumulative, and data-driven instruction. They discussed instructional practices that help students develop reading skills, including building vocabulary, background knowledge, context, and opportunities for meaningful engagement with texts.

The presentation also explored gradual release of responsibility, effective text pairing, and instructional strategies that support student learning. Participants were guided through a process for analyzing texts and planning instruction to promote strong literacy outcomes and high-quality classroom instruction.

Act on Professional Practices Commission (PPC)
Ashley Stites-Hubbard, KSDE Office of General Counsel
Hannah Miller, KSDE Office of General Counsel
Dr. Christy Ziegler, Vice Chair of PPC

a. Act on Complaint filed with the Professional Practices Commission (revocation)
Mr. Hershberger moved that Kansas State Board of Education censure the teacher licensure in case 25-PPC-08. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-4 with Mrs. Haas, Vice Chair Zeck, Chair Hopkins and Mr. Porter voting no.

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education revoke the teaching license in the case 25-PPC-29. Dr. New seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

b. Act on Complaint filed with the Professional Practices Commission (approval)
Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the pending application to renew the emergency substitute teaching license for 25-PPC-45. Dr. New seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-1 with Mrs. Potter voting no.

c. Act on Complaint filed with Professional Practices Commission (revocation)
Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education revoke the teaching license in the following case: 25-PPC-26. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-3 with Mrs. Arnold, Mrs. Potter and Mrs. O'Brien voting no.

Act on Evaluation Review Committee Recommendations
Dr. Catherine Chmidling, Teacher Licensure

Mrs. Arnold moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve the recommendations of the Evaluation Review Committee Recommendations for Bethany College, Newman College and Ottawa University. Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion carried 10-0.

Update: School Improvement Days

Dr. Jay Scott, Director, Implementation and Supports

Dr. Scott outlined the 2026-2027 School Improvement Days and emphasized a statewide focus on strengthening coherence across Kansas through a small number of high-leverage actions that support improved student outcomes.

School Improvement Days were designed to help school systems engage in reflection, collaboration, and planning. During the morning sessions, participants shared and discussed implementation of their current KESA Action Plans with peers and system teams. Afternoon sessions focused on reviewing the School Improvement Model, examining current strengths and needs, and developing or refining the next KESA Action Plan.

The School Improvement Days were scheduled throughout the school year and hosted by Educational Service Centers and participating school systems. The events provided dedicated time for districts to collaborate, reflect on progress, and plan future improvement efforts in support of continuous school improvement.

Dr. Scott encouraged all Board members to attend these days within their district.

Presentation: Kansas School for the Deaf and Kansas State School for the Blind new procurement procedures (HB 2513)

Dr. Harwood, Deputy Commissioner

The Deputy Commissioner presented the new procurement procedures for the Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB) and the Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) resulting from HB 2513.

Because the schools are state agencies rather than unified school districts, they previously followed state agency purchasing requirements. Under the new law, KSSB and KSD will follow procurement procedures similar to those used by Kansas school districts during fiscal years 2026 and 2027, with several modifications.

Under the revised procedures, school superintendents may approve purchases of

less than $5,000. Any purchase exceeding $5,000 must be approved by the Kansas State Board of Education and will be included on the Board's consent agenda. Purchases of $20,000 or more generally require a sealed bid process to promote competition and ensure responsible use of public funds.

Certain purchases are exempt from the sealed bid requirement. These include services; purchases made through state contracts or cooperative purchasing agreements; motor fuels, natural gas, food products, and copyrighted materials; replacement purchases covered by insurance; purchases necessary to ensure student safety; and educational, medical, or assistive technology equipment.

Dr. Harwood clarified the responsibilities of school administrators and the State Board in reviewing and approving purchases under the new procurement framework.

Presentation: Kansas State School for the Blind Overview and Budget to present to the Legislature

Superintendent Jon Harding

Superintendent Harding provided an update on the Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB), highlighting the school's mission of ensuring students receive the right help, at the right time, and in the right location. He emphasized KSSB's statewide impact through campus-based instruction, residential services, and outreach programs that support children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired across Kansas.

Superintendent Harding reviewed the school's governance, funding structure, and operations. He explained that KSSB is funded through State General Fund and capital funding sources but does not participate in the traditional K-12 school finance formula. He also discussed the challenges associated with maintaining an aging campus and the importance of continued investment in facilities and infrastructure.

He highlighted the expertise of KSSB staff, noting the school's team of highly qualified vision professionals, including teachers of students with visual impairments, orientation and mobility specialists, braille specialists, deafblind specialists, rehabilitation professionals, and a pediatric ophthalmologist. These specialists support both campus students and individuals served through statewide outreach programs.

A significant portion of the presentation focused on KSSB's outreach services.

Superintendent Harding shared that the school provides support to infants, toddlers, children, and young adults through early intervention, field services, transition programs, and collaborations with local school districts. He noted that outreach efforts continue to expand, serving hundreds of students across Kansas and experiencing increased demand for specialized services.

Superintendent Harding also discussed student programming designed to foster independence, career readiness, and life skills. He highlighted career and technical education initiatives, community partnerships, technology-focused learning opportunities, athletic programs, and employment preparation experiences that help students prepare for successful futures.

The presentation included updates on recent budget actions, facility improvements, salary increases, and future enhancement requests. Superintendent Harding outlined plans to restore operating funds, renovate facilities to support career and technical education programming, improve accessibility, and continue modernizing the campus environment.

He concluded by reviewing upcoming events, conferences, advocacy efforts, and partnership opportunities that will continue to strengthen services and create meaningful educational experiences for students who are blind or visually impaired throughout Kansas.

Presentation: Kansas School for the Deaf Overview and Budget to present to the Legislature

Interim Superintendents Joelle Allen and Joan Macy

Interim Superintendents Allen and Macy provided an update on the Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD), highlighting the school's continued commitment to serving deaf and hard of hearing students through campus-based programs and statewide outreach services. They shared enrollment and service data demonstrating KSD's broad impact across Kansas and its role in supporting students, families, educators, and school districts throughout the state.

They reviewed KSD's educational programs, which include academic instruction, student leadership opportunities, extracurricular activities, athletics, and career preparation experiences. They emphasized the school's focus on providing a comprehensive educational environment that promotes student success and future readiness.

The update also focused on KSD's statewide outreach efforts, which provide services for children from birth through age 21. These services include early intervention,

family support, consultation, mentoring, language development resources, and professional learning opportunities designed to expand access to quality deaf education across Kansas.

Mrs. Macy and Mrs. Allen discussed the school's strategic priorities and commitment to improving student outcomes through high-quality instruction, effective assessment practices, targeted interventions, and continuous improvement efforts. Budget priorities were reviewed, including the restoration of previously reduced funding, continued exemption from state agency budget reductions, and the use of a superintendent search firm as part of leadership planning efforts.

At present, among all the other activities, KSD is seeking a permanent superintendent. To that end, they are requesting bids from various search firms. They plan to be prepared in September to share those with the Board so that a vote can be taken.

Receive recommendations for Professional Practices Commission nominations for members

Shane Carter, Director, Teacher Licensure

Director Carter presented recommendations for appointments to the Professional Practices Commission (PPC). The commission is responsible for exercising disciplinary and advisory functions related to educator licensure, hearing cases involving the issuance, suspension, revocation, or reinstatement of licenses, and investigating matters involving professional responsibility and competency. Board members were advised that candidates must be licensed educators actively practicing in Kansas with the required professional experience.

Three vacancies were identified for appointment to the commission: one Public Middle School Teacher position, one Public High School Principal position, and one Public Elementary School Principal position.

Public Middle School Teacher Nominees

- Amanda Voth, Baldwin USD 348
- Amber Castaneda, USD 347 Kinsley-Offerle
- Ashley Umphrey, USD 233 Olathe Public Schools
- Genie Scruton, USD 512 Shawnee Mission
- Jami Clark, USD 436 Caney Valley
- Nathaniel Clevenger, USD 248 Girard
- Patricia Jellison, USD 300 Comanche County

Public High School Principal Nominees

- Justin Coffey, Ulysses USD 214
- Tyler Alexander, USD 229 Blue Valley
- Amy Welch, ANW Special Education Cooperative

Public Elementary School Principal Nominees

- Stacey Sperry, USD 229 Blue Valley
- Stefanie Lane, USD 379 Clay County

The Kansas State Board of Education will be asked in October to appoint one candidate from each category to fill the vacancies on the Professional Practices Commission for terms ending June 30, 2029.

Q and A: Policy Regarding the Effective Use of Instructional Technology in Kanas Schools; clarifying questions work session.

The end of the day was a discussion about the policy document regarding instructional technology. The Board and the Commissioner worked together to continue crafting the policy document. The process will continue on Wednesday.

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

Kansas State Board of Education
Wednesday, September 9, 2026

The Chair noted that Mark Ferguson, Board Attorney, was not able to attend due to a family tragedy, and that his presentation later in the day would be postponed. Chair Hopkins made a motion to amend the agenda; Mrs. Haas seconded the motion. Motion passed 10-0.

Receive Item, Instructional Technology, Working session
The Board and Commissioner Steel spent several hours working on the language for the Policy document. The final document, with a number of motions for the Board to vote on, will be presented in November.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Mrs. O'Brien reported on the Kansas Advocacy Committee for Indigenous Education and encouraged members to attend the September 18-19 Powwow at Haskell University.

Mr. Hershberger reported that last Friday he attended a debriefing from Child Nutrition and Wellness on the food chain with local schools. He invited members to the State Fair in Hutchinson where Ag in the Classroom would be having a booth.

Dr. New reported on the NASBE High School Innovation Series.

Mrs. Haas shared that the Volunteer Commission will host an event at the Docking State Office Building on October 28. She gave an update on the Board Policy committee. She explained there would be a receive item from the committee at the October meeting.

TRAVEL REQUESTS
Mrs. Arnold moved that the travel requests be approved. Mrs. Dombrosky seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0-1 with Mrs. Potter voting present not voting.

BOARD COMMENTS
Mrs. Potter reported that she attended the September 7th Board Policy meeting as an observer. She was disturbed by some of the policies. Mrs. Arnold called for a

point of order. Mr. Porter moved that the Board have an immediate adjournment. Mrs. Arnold seconded the motion. Motion passed 10-0.

Chair Hopkins adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be October 13th.

#1 Special Board meeting with the Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD)
September 24, 2026 Virtual meeting

Present:
Vice Chair Danny Zeck
Melanie Haas
Michelle Dombrosky
Connie O'Brien
Chair Cathy Hopkins
Dennis Hershberger
Betty Arnold
Jim Porter
Absent: Dr. Beryl New and Mrs. Debby Potter
Joelle Allen, Interim Superintendent KSD
Joan Macy, Interim Superintendent KSD
Amanda Wittman, ASL Interpreter
Peter Boklund, ASL Interpreter
Commissioner Jake Steel

Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order. She read the Board vision; all joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Kansas School for the Deaf interim superintendents, Joelle Allen and Joan Macy, met with the Kansas State Board of Education to review and approve a search firm that would guide the process of finding a permanent superintendent for KSD. The superintendents shared the process of sending out a request for proposal. There were two firms that responded, Innivee and Yes! You Can! They are recommending Yes! You Can! This firm offered more in person engagement throughout the process, had a two-step screening interview process and were significantly less expensive.

After the Board asked questions and had a discussion, there was a motion.

Vice Chair Zeck made a motion to suspend the rules and vote on this issue immediately. Mr. Hershberger seconded them motion. Motion carried 8-0.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve hiring the search firm Yes! You Can! to work with the Kansas School for the Deaf to conduct the search and hiring process for a permanent superintendent. Vice Chair Zeck seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

The meeting was adjourned.

#2 Emergency Special Board meeting with the Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD)
September 29, 2026 Virtual meeting

Present:
Vice Chair Danny Zeck
Melanie Haas
Michelle Dombrosky
Connie O'Brien
Chair Cathy Hopkins
Dr. Beryl New
Dennis Hershberger
Betty Arnold
Debby Potter
Jim Porter
Mark Ferguson, Board Attorney
Joelle Allen, Interim Superintendent KSD
Joan Macy, Interim Superintendent KSD
Kim Braithwaite, ASL Interpreter
Commissioner Jake Steel

Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order.

The KSD interim superintendents explained that the original choice of search firm, Yes! We Can!, has decided not to accept the job. Therefore, they are asking that the Board approve the second firm, Innivee. They negotiated four changes and they are pleased with the new proposal.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education suspend the rules and vote on this issue immediately. Mr. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-1-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no and Mrs. Potter present not voting.

Mrs. Haas moved that the Kansas State Board of Education approve hiring the search firm Innivee to work with the Kansas School for the Deaf to conduct the search and hiring process for a permanent superintendent. Dr. New seconded the

motion. Motion carried 9-1 with Vice Chair Zeck voting no.

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

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Cathy Hopkins, Chair Deborah Bremer, Board Secretary