

Lakeland Joint School District #272

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**LJSD Vision: A community committed to academic excellence ...
dedicated to student success.**

Board Report August 19, 2026 Board Meeting

Dear Members of the Board,

Summer is an especially busy time for the HR Department. In addition to hiring and onboarding new employees, we are managing open enrollment for benefits, issuing classified Letters of Intent, creating contracts and assignments, and ensuring everything is in place so employees are set up correctly and paid accurately as we begin the new school year.

We recently wrapped up open enrollment for the 2026–27 benefit year. This year presented some additional challenges due to the significant increases in insurance premiums. As a District, we communicated these increases extensively with employees prior to the end of the school year and gathered staff feedback as we explored plan options. One of our primary goals was to provide an option that would minimize the impact on employees' take-home pay while continuing to offer quality medical coverage.

Throughout open enrollment, I sent multiple communications encouraging employees to log in, carefully review their benefit elections and associated costs, and make changes if their anticipated payroll contribution was not within their comfort level. We wanted employees to understand the financial impact of their selections ahead of time and, most importantly, avoid anyone being surprised by their first payroll deduction in September.

Additionally, new this year, I personally conducted benefits workshops to help employees better understand the benefit options available to them and make informed decisions for themselves and their families. While participation was not as high as I had hoped this first year, the employees who attended were very appreciative of the information and the opportunity to ask questions.

I hope to continue offering these workshops in future years and increase participation as employees become more familiar with the opportunity. Benefits can be complex, and I believe it is important that our employees understand not only what they are selecting, but also the value those benefits provide. The benefits they choose are an investment in their own future, financial security, and the well-being of their families.

One thing that became very apparent throughout this process is how much our employees value their medical coverage. Even with the availability of a lower-cost option, a significant number of employees chose to remain on the higher-cost medical plan, fully understanding that doing so would result in a larger payroll deduction and reduced take-home pay. I believe this demonstrates that, for many of our employees and their families, the level of medical coverage they receive is just as important as their take-home pay.

As we move toward the start of the new school year, the HR Department will continue working to ensure our employees have the information, resources, and support they need for a successful transition into 2026–27.

Respectfully,

Brook Cunningham, Director of HR