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Welcome Back & Opening of School Report

Purpose

To update the Board of Education on the successful launch of the 2026–2027 school year, summarize the opening District Presentation, outline the activities completed during the building Teacher Institute Days, and highlight our strong community engagement at recent family events.

Background and Information

The 2026–2027 school year is off to a smooth and highly successful start across Streator Elementary School District 44. While opening week naturally presented a few minor operational adjustments such as fine tuning new transportation routes, balancing classroom rosters, and acclimating staff to newly installed classroom technology and phone systems, our administrators, teachers, and support personnel resolved these promptly.

We hosted wonderful turnouts across all buildings for our Family Backpack Nights. Seeing our hallways filled with enthusiastic students, supportive families, and dedicated staff created incredible momentum. The administration and staff are energized, aligned, and deeply excited for the school year ahead.

All District Welcome Back Presentation

On Monday, August 10, all district staff gathered at Northlawn Junior High School for the opening district presentation focused on SES44 FOCUS 26–27. Key highlights shared with the staff included:

- The district reaffirmed its mission, vision, and four primary focus areas centered on modernizing operations, elevating academic outcomes, strengthening community and governance, and building a positive culture.
- Leadership shared updates on launching the IASB Policy Manual Customization Project, developing Vision 2030, initiating our 10 Year Life Safety Survey to guide a 5 Year Facilities Plan, and managing long term reserves.
- Key academic initiatives presented included the rollout of the School Instruction Maturity Model to support continuous classroom improvement, ongoing ELA curriculum reviews and pilots, and expanding MTSS frameworks.
- Operational updates emphasized restructuring administrator emergency response protocols, implementing building safety improvements, and finalizing the installation of new teacher desktops (Kimes) and classroom phone systems districtwide.

Building Level Teacher Institute Days

Following the all district welcome, staff transitioned to their respective buildings on August 10 and 11 for specialized professional development, safety training, and team planning.

Kimes Elementary School

- Staff participated in building safety briefings led by Safety Director Jordan Risley, coordinated dismissal procedures, and held dedicated meetings for certified and non certified personnel.
- Teachers conducted grade level and small group SIT meetings, reviewed MTSS frameworks, and discussed core strategies including Look and Learns, attendance tracking tiers, and student centered core instruction.
- Teams conducted target sessions specifically tailored for Pre K, Kindergarten, First Grade, Paraprofessionals, and Lunch and Recess Supervisors.

- Kimes hosted a successful Backpack Night for self contained students on Monday, followed by First Grade Backpack Night on Tuesday.

Centennial School

- Professional development commenced with an all staff meeting, Regional Office of Education professional development, and specialized meetings for Special Education, BIST behavior intervention, and social committees.
- Comprehensive safety protocols were reviewed with Safety Director Jordan Risley for all staff alongside dedicated onboarding sessions for new personnel.
- Grade level teams for second, third, and fourth grades collaborated on curriculum, Tier 1 instruction, and classroom setup.
- Staff welcomed families during Backpack Nights held across two evenings with second grade and CARES on Monday, followed by third grade, fourth grade, and self-contained on Tuesday.

Northlawn Junior High School

- All Northlawn staff were introduced to The Energy Bus philosophy to drive school culture alongside staff evaluation orientations and grade level planning.
- All staff completed facility safety training and active shooter protocol reviews with Safety Director Jordan Risley, which were followed by targeted sessions with custodial, secretarial, and lunchroom teams.
- Special Education teams met to refine target supports, while teachers engaged in Dashboard data training.
- The school hosted well attended Backpack Nights split by grade level, with fifth and sixth grade on Monday, followed by seventh and eighth grade and CARES 3 and 4 on Tuesday

Administrative Recommendation

This report is provided for informational purposes to keep the Board of Education fully apprised of district operations, professional development initiatives, and the successful start of the 2026–2027 school year. No formal action is required.