



USD 497 News Release

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August 12, 2024

Lawrence School Board Unanimously Approves the Hiring of Interim Superintendent



The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday unanimously approved the hiring of Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift as interim superintendent, effective August 30, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Larry Englebrick will act as superintendent until her start date.

A Michigan educational leadership consultant, Dr. Swift met with members of our school community during the Lawrence Schools Foundation's Kids Expo Saturday and a meet and greet prior to the board meeting. She will visit all schools during this first week of the new school year, as well as attend the Community Back-to-School Safety Fair from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. this Saturday in South Park.

“Dr. Swift is a woman with an over 30-year education career as an English and Spanish teacher, principal, and district-level administrator. She is a highly qualified interim superintendent candidate. The board's initial confidence to select her as an interim superintendent is rooted in not only in her career accomplishments, but also in the formal feedback we received from both employee unions and the district leadership team, as well as parents and community members who serve on school board committees,” said Board President Kelly Jones.

“Since announcing her pending hire, I have in my capacity as board president received words of congratulations from individuals who worked directly with Dr. Swift in Ann Arbor Public Schools, including former school board members, teachers, parents, and staff, who praised her as a superintendent. This input has further assured me that we are hiring a public educator who will work to build relationships and trust with the people who make up Lawrence Public Schools, and in particular our students,” Jones said.

“We are going to work very hard to create more opportunities for her to meet with Lawrence Public Schools' staff and communities,” she said. “We want Lawrence to be led by someone who has the type of experience Dr. Swift has, and I am excited that we have this opportunity.”

Board member Bob Byers added, “We stand firm behind our choice. We think she will be an excellent superintendent. I want to welcome her to our community.”

“My warmest welcome to Dr. Swift. I very much look forward to working with you as part of our leadership team this year,” said Shannon Kimball, board past president.

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In her remarks following a standing ovation by the board, Dr. Swift said, “It is a tremendous honor to be named the Interim Superintendent of Lawrence Public Schools. Many thanks to the students, staff and community members who gave their time during summer days to participate in the selection process - it was wonderful to meet so many folks and to have such enriching conversation...

“Strong, vibrant communities are known for their care, engagement, and the priority they place on the learning and growth of their children, and sustaining high quality public schools to serve them. In Lawrence, we see that fundamental value lived in the collective commitment to students, staff, schools and community for which Lawrence Public Schools is well known. At the heart of this work is a shared responsibility to ensure educational equity and excellence and a culture of dignity and belonging for every child...

“I am inspired to experience high levels of care, engagement and participation as we observed just last Saturday at the Lawrence Schools Foundation’s Kids Expo; so many community organizations and staff came together to extend support and services for our students and families at this important back-to-school time...

“Together, we will dedicate our energies to serving the students of the Lawrence Public Schools community and to supporting our teachers and staff, families, and community. I am committed to listening, learning, and engaging in the work together as a team, to fulfill the critical mission of ensuring a high-quality educational experience for every child, every day,” she said.

Following the June 29 resignation of Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis to lead the Durham, North Carolina, schools, the board worked with the Kansas Association of School Boards to collect and fully vet applicants for the interim position and interviewed three finalists, including Dr. Swift.

She has served as an educational leadership consultant since January, supporting PreK-12 education leaders, leadership teams, and board trustees. She previously served the Ann Arbor Public Schools as superintendent for over a decade. In Colorado Springs School District 11, she served as assistant superintendent, executive director, principal, assistant principal, resource coach, and a secondary English and Spanish teacher for 13 years. She also taught ten of those years in the Hurst-Eules-Bedford School District in Texas. Dr. Swift earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Arlington, her master’s at the University of Colorado, and a doctorate at the University of Denver.

The Michigan Association of School Administrators named Swift its Superintendent of the Year in 2018. The National School Public Relations Association recognized her as a Superintendent to Watch for demonstrating dynamic leadership with a strong emphasis on communication.

Dr. Swift becomes the tenth superintendent to lead Lawrence USD 497 since our district’s unification in 1965: Dr. Carl Knox (1962-84), Dr. Dan Neuenswander (1984-92), Dr. Al Azinger (1992-98), Dr. Kathleen Williams (1998-2000), Randy Weseman (2000-09), Dr. Rick Doll (2009-2016), Kyle Hayden (2016-17), Interim Superintendent Dr. Anna Stubblefield (2017-18), and Dr. Anthony Lewis (2018-Present).

The board plans to hire a firm this fall to conduct a national search for a long-term superintendent to begin their service July 1, 2025. This timeline provides ample opportunity for expanded community engagement to guide the board in hiring the best person to lead our district and serve our community moving forward.