

# HAPPY ENDINGS, NEW BEGINNINGS

  
**LAWRENCE**  
Public Schools  
May 2024  
NEWSLETTER



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## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Neighbors,

Spending time with our scholars, like the Billy Mills Middle School students here, makes my day. Listening to students informs our work to ensure that we provide high quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction. If we want to know if we prepare our students for graduation, college, and careers, we must ask them.

A Student Advisory Council provides me regular checkpoints throughout the school year. My sincere thanks to Becca Craft, Gayla Gao, Jayne Landers, Maya Lee, Thomas Patton, Sophie Racy, Brandon Sikes, Lois Xie, FSHS; and Jeffery Clark, Arabella Clipp, Bryndal Hoover, Brynnae Johnson, and Prairie Mulligan, LHS.

A District Student Equity Council supports our work. Thanks to Victoria Anyim, Jessie Banh, Autumn Beach, Trumara Ewing, Cyrenity Hardy-Billy, January Jackson, Skylar Kennedy, Maxx Krause, Destiny Savannah, and Honesty Starr, LHS; Iseoluwa Adedipe, Leilani Bidwell, Aylechia Freeland, Ashlynn Lansing, Kaitlyn Sumowski, Koree Shields, Ahlaya Thomas, and Jordan Walker, FSHS; and Adriana Cazares and LaMonica Ephriam, LVS.

It makes me proud when our students advocate for changes important to them. Advocacy is one of the skills we try to teach them. When LHS student journalists raised concerns about a new safety management system, we listened and found a solution that supports their reporting process. We look forward to their input improving board policy.

We enjoy students contributing during board meetings to discussions affecting their school experiences. LVS students Lawrence and Daniel Dao and Eian Pracht shared their eCybermission Team research about using AI in



academic settings. We will review it as we discuss policies, training, and teaching around AI.

It's especially impactful when our scholars serve as student board members, as did Jeffery Clark, Becca Craft, Brandon Sikes, and Bryndal Hoover this year.

During an April board meeting, LHS senior Jean-Luc Esperance spoke passionately about his brother's death at the age of 23, and of recent violence affecting our community. "We are not invincible. I have realized that we take life for granted. I have realized how much we get in our own way. Constantly, we tell ourselves excuses on why we can't do something," he said.

"I am here tonight to ask, why can't we? I call out to all of us to encourage one another. I dare us to follow up and hold each other accountable. I ask that we try our best at being understanding, to be empathetic, to not be afraid of having those conversations with one another," Jean-Luc said.

I could not have said it better. Our scholars have much to say and many contributions to make. When our seniors graduate next week, they will go out and change the world!

Sincerely,

Anthony S. Lewis, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



## Board Meeting Calendar

The Lawrence Board of Education meets at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, unless otherwise announced, at 110 McDonald Drive.

### Upcoming Meetings:

May 28

June 10 & 24

The board approves its 2024-2025 meeting schedule in July.

- Review agendas at [usd497.org/SchoolBoard](https://usd497.org/SchoolBoard).
- Write to the board at [SchoolBoard@usd497.org](mailto:SchoolBoard@usd497.org).
- Sign up to speak at [PublicComment@usd497.org](mailto:PublicComment@usd497.org) before 6 p.m. on the date of the meeting.
- Watch meetings/archives at [usd497.org/Webstream](https://usd497.org/Webstream) or on Midco channel 26.



Find it at  
[www.usd497.org](https://www.usd497.org)

- Job Openings
- 2024-2025 School Calendar
- New Student Registration
- STEAM @ LMCMS
- PowerSchool Instructions
- News Releases



Lawrence Public Schools  
110 McDonald Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66044-1063  
785-832-5000  
[www.usd497.org](https://www.usd497.org)

Anthony Lewis, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

USD 497 Executive Director of Communications Julie Boyle and Multimedia Communications Specialist Andrew Beaven produce this newsletter in partnership with the Lawrence Journal-World.

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# Our COMMUNITY'S PLAN for School Progress

## OUR PROCESS



### LISTENING & LEARNING TOUR



## STRATEGIC PLAN



**1** COHESIVE CURRICULUM



**2** STUDENT-CENTERED  
LEARNING



**3** SAFE & SUPPORTIVE  
SCHOOLS



**4** EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEES



**5** DATA-INFORMED  
DECISIONS



## OUR PROMISE



Lawrence Public Schools will ensure that **students of all races, backgrounds, and abilities achieve at high levels, demonstrate proficiency in reading by third grade and in math by eighth grade, and graduate on time prepared for success in college and careers.**

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# 2023-2024 Fun Facts By the Numbers

## Nutrition & Wellness

(Stats as of 4/24/24)



**233,465**  
Student Breakfasts



**695,023**  
Student Lunches



**104,872**  
After-School Snacks



**105,000**  
Un crustables



**48,161**  
Chicken Sandwiches



**12.6 tons**  
of Baby Carrots



**10,597 cups**  
of Roasted Broccoli

## Health Services

(Stats as of 4/25/24)



**49,200**  
Bandages



**42,063**  
Student Health Office Visits



**18,000**  
Gloves

Top Reason for Visit:  
**Stomachache**

## Human Resources

(Stats as of 4/25/24)



**1,623**  
Employees



**875**  
Certified Staff



**748**  
Classified Staff



**82%**  
Certified Retention Rate



**80%**  
Classified Retention Rate



**24**  
Returning Former Employees

## Facilities & Operations

(Stats as of 4/25/24)



**10,384**  
Facility Requests for After-school and Weekend Events



**522**  
Electrical Repairs



**5,600**  
Maintenance Work Orders Completed



**709**  
Plumbing Repairs

## Technology Services

(Stats as of 4/26/24)



**14,920**  
iPads



**1.1 Million**  
Webex Meeting Minutes



**3,963**  
MacBooks



**5,693**  
Tech Work Orders Completed



**11 Million**  
Emails Received (Since October)



**8,129,591**  
Malicious Network Threats Blocked

## Printing Services

(Stats as of 3/31/24)



**8,903,058**  
Black & White Pages Printed



**1,416,364**  
Color Pages Printed



**112**  
Multifunction Devices (Copiers)



**7,192,919**  
Pages Printed on Copiers

## First Student Transportation Services

(Est. 2023-2024)



**1 Million**  
Miles Driven



**15**  
Monitors Hired



**25**  
Drivers Hired



**53 hours**  
of Training Per Driver (Avg.)



# Free Middle School Summer STEAM Learning Experience

Next year's middle school students can extend their learning this summer with career exploration in the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. Our four middle schools will pair to offer a free, month-long Summer STEAM Learning Experience in June.

Through fun, hands-on learning and career discovery, students will develop critical thinking, teamwork, and soft skills while exploring various STEAM fields. They will participate in community circles and team challenges while spending time with friends and making new ones!

USD 497 families may sign up their rising sixth, seventh, and eighth graders now for the Summer STEAM

Learning Experience 8:30-11:30 a.m. Mondays-Thursdays June 3-27. (Summer STEAM will not meet on the Juneteenth holiday, June 19.) Billy Mills Middle School will host students attending Billy Mills and Southwest Middle Schools next year. Liberty Memorial Central Middle School will host students attending Liberty Memorial Central and West Middle Schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

Don't miss this opportunity to give your student a head start in their academic, college, and career journey. Scan the QR code on this page to register now. Please direct questions to Dr. Carissa Miles, Southwest MS principal, at MilesC@usd497.org.



Save the Date!

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STEAM SUMMER LEARNING

JUNE 3-27, 2024  
8:30-11:30 a.m.

Save the date for an exciting, FREE STEAM summer learning camp hosted exclusively for USD 497 middle school students Mondays - Thursdays in June!



SCAN ME

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# Prairie Park Elementary Pilots Solar Power

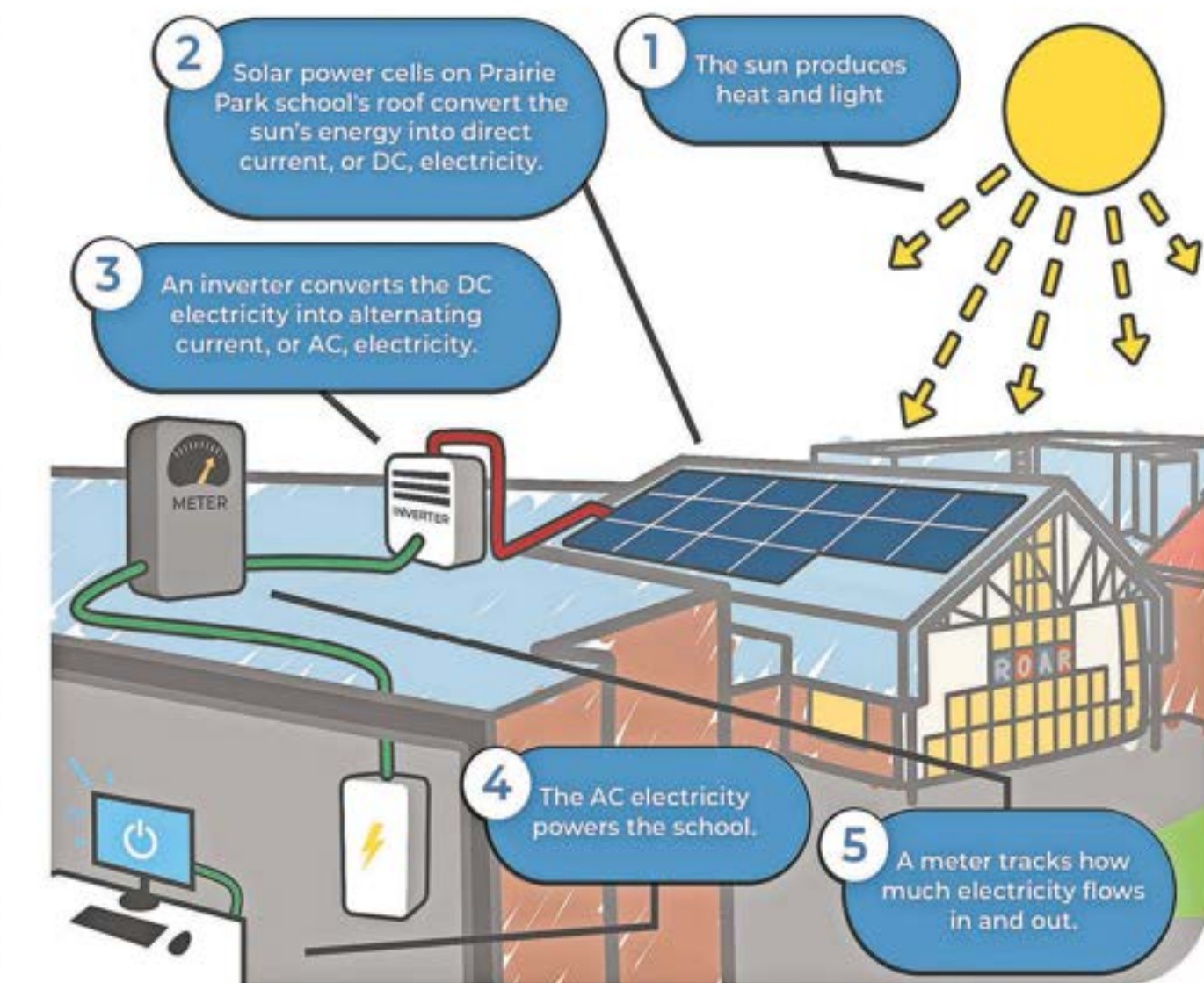
Prairie Park Elementary School returned from spring break energized! In addition to rested and ready-to-learn students, solar panels adorned the school's roof.

Our first pilot renewable energy project grew out of a Futures Planning Committee recommendation to explore solar power to realize General Fund budget savings and protect the environment. The General Fund supports staff salaries and benefits and student educational programming.

Staff determined that the south-facing sections of Prairie Park's metal roof, which has a 50-year life expectancy, made the school a prime site for the project. In September, the school board awarded a \$240,590 contract to Cromwell Environmental, Inc. for the project's installation. The district will pay installation costs from its Capital Outlay Fund. These dollars, by law, must be used for capital expenses, such as the purchase and maintenance of land, facilities, equipment, and furnishings.

Cromwell Environmental also will assist the district in identifying government incentives, tax credits, and grants. Staff estimate federal government incentives will cover at least 30% of the project's costs.

"This allows us to take capital funds and invest them, much in the same way that we did with the (fiber) wide area network. Over its lifetime, (the solar energy project) will return a profit of \$480,000 to the district's General Fund," said Dr. Larry Englebrick, chief operations officer.



Dr. Englebrick's reference recalls the district's launch in August of its own fiber wide area network (WAN). This project's goals include expanding broadband capacity, improving the reliability and security of the network, and better serving the technology connectivity needs of the school community. The district estimates \$3 million in savings to its General Fund during the life of its contract with WANRack™, a



*"This really gets exciting. It's great to go green and reduce our operating costs, but then there's the impact we can have on students' futures – the impact of a study site that could be used academically across the district."*

*- Dr. Larry Englebrick*





Kansas City company founded by Lawrence High alumnus Rob Oyler.

In addition to saving money and helping the planet, Prairie Park's solar energy pilot project promises educational benefits for students and staff districtwide.

"This really gets exciting. It's great to go green and reduce our operating costs, but then there's the impact we can have on students' futures – the impact of a study site that could be used academically across the district," said Dr. Englebrick.

"One of the things we wrote into this (project) was to have an energy data dashboard available to our students and teachers...so not only would this be a tool to produce energy and reduce our energy consumption and energy bills, it could transcend those goals and also be an instructional tool," he said.

Students will learn about the photovoltaic effect, the phenomenon of converting solar energy into electrical current, and the advantages of renewable energy. Solar power generates electricity in any climate, reduces carbon emissions and utility costs, and offers low maintenance costs.

In addition to the Prairie Park solar energy project, Jay Rusk, facilities construction manager, has led a district effort to convert facilities from fluorescent to LED lighting to reduce energy costs. LED lights are energy efficient, ecologically friendly, and last longer.



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**Community Education Breakfast**  
**Friday, September 13, 2024**  
7:30–9:00am • Lawrence DoubleTree by Hilton

featuring guest speaker **Jaunelle White**, '96 LHS graduate, vice president of intercollegiate athletics for Point University




**Ovation!**  
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# School Volunteers Needed to Help All Students Succeed

"I just love to see the kids, I love to be engaged with the teachers, and I could just give something back for what teachers give me," said West Middle School parent Kathleen Lohfeld of why she volunteers at her child's school. Lawrence Public Schools annually recognizes outstanding school volunteers, like Lohfeld, from each of our schools and our district.

"Kathleen has never passed up the chance to support West staff and students. She often leads volunteer opportunities by stepping up when there is a call for help, always with kindness and a smile, and often providing delicious food! Kathleen makes our community and schools stronger with support and genuine care that lifts the spirits of our school family," said Interim Principal Therese Edgecomb of Lohfeld, who has a child at West and two children attending Free State High School.

"It always helps if parents engage with the teachers and the schools. There is always space and things to do for everyone," said Lohfeld. She adds that volunteering makes the kids happier and more successful.

Each school has a parent-teacher organization. At the secondary level, parent boosters support co- and extra-curricular activities. Some Lawrence elementary schools use the Watch D.O.G.S. program to invite "Dads Of Great Students" to sign up to spend time at school.

"I would say that it's important to volunteer just to give back to the teachers and the staff. They put in so many hours," said Alicia Hanna. Free State honored Alicia and her



Free State recognizes Lew and Alicia Hanna as its "Friends of Education."

husband, Lew, as outstanding volunteers this year.

"The Hannas have helped organize meals for parent-teacher conferences, which our staff looks forward to each fall and spring. They also have been active 'cross country parents,' helping with meets and whatever else is needed," said Principal Amy McAnarney.

Lew Hanna said their kids inspired the couple's volunteer efforts. "That window of opportunity to be a part of their lives is so short, and once it's gone, it's gone. Your opportunity to volunteer and make a difference with a teacher and make a difference in the lives of kids is so short. It's a precious opportunity. You have to take advantage of it," he said. The Hannas have a son graduating from Free State.

"I volunteer because I wanted a way to give back to my community and the district," said Carrie Poe. The

school district recognized Poe and Kristi Heintzelman, who co-chair the Lawrence Special Education Advisory Committee (L-SEAC), as outstanding districtwide volunteers this year.

Director of Special Education Laura Basham says that this duo leads parent meetings, informational nights, and coffee meetups and dedicates their voices to partnering with the district to improve services and strengthen engagement with parents of students with exceptionalities.

"Volunteering gives you a way to be more connected," said Poe. "We could definitely use more voices at the table because the better representation we have from various schools throughout the district, the better we're really able to advocate for all the kids. We have a lot of varying degrees of exceptionalities, and we need better representation, so we really would encourage anyone just to attend a meeting."



Kathleen Lohfeld chuckles as West Middle School Interim Principal Therese Edgecomb honors her volunteerism.

The mission of the L-SEAC is to represent the needs and interests of students with exceptionalities. In addition, it will advise the special education department on program needs, review parental concerns of a programmatic nature, and serve as a conduit and advocate for educating consumers about what constitutes special education. More information about this parent committee may be found at [www.usd497.org/SpecialEducation](http://www.usd497.org/SpecialEducation).

"I volunteer just because it's a way to give back to the school. It's a way to give to the students. It's a way to give to the teachers, and it's a way to help with the families," said Jamie McNally, the parent of a fourth grader. Prairie Park Elementary chose her as its outstanding school volunteer this year and during the 2019-20 school year.

"Jamie leads and supports our school in a kid-friendly way, ensuring that all students can participate in events at no cost. She fosters a PTA environment in which parents who had never participated found a welcoming place and ways to support Prairie Park," said Jason Townsend, principal.

Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis told the school volunteers honored





Director of Special Education Laura Basham thanks Kristi Heintzelman and Carrie Poe for volunteering districtwide, with congratulations from Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis.



Jamie McHally listens as Prairie Park teacher Lori Greenfield and Principal Jason Townsend praise her volunteer service.

as "Friends of Education" during American Education Week that it takes the involvement of the entire community for schools to ensure that all students achieve, succeed, and graduate future-ready. "We are a better school system because of your efforts," he said. Read more about our outstanding volunteers at [usd497.org/Volunteers](http://usd497.org/Volunteers).

A father of six, including two school-age children, Dr. Lewis volunteers as a "Big" with Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters (KSBBBS) of Douglas County's One Initiative. He has a goal of identifying a caring, adult mentor – someone outside of a child's

family and school – for every student through the district's partnership with KSBBBS and the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence.

The One Initiative matches students and adult volunteers for mentorship at school during lunchtime or the Boys and Girls Club's before - and after - school program. Volunteer "Bigs" visit their student matches for 30 minutes weekly, reading together for half of that time to support student literacy. Learn more about becoming a One Initiative mentor by visiting [kansasbigs.org/be-a-big](http://kansasbigs.org/be-a-big) or contacting Andi Rosser, [arosser@kansasbigs.org](mailto:arosser@kansasbigs.org) or 785-422-9498.



## Make a BIG DIFFERENCE

The One Initiative is a partnership between Lawrence schools and KSBBBS that focuses on helping each participating youth **increase their interest in reading and grow 1 step in their self-confidence over 1 school year** via the support of a no-cost, adult 1:1 KSBBBS mentor.

### HOW DOES THE ONE INITIATIVE WORK?

- 1 student is matched with 1 best-fit volunteer mentor (Big) from KSBBBS
- 1:1 mentorship occurs at student's school during before/after school care or lunch time
- 1 visit a week for 30 minutes over 1 school year, where 50% of time is spent reading together

### WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE A BIG?

- Must be over 18
- Complete a background check, interview, and references
- Commit to visiting your Little for 1 school year



BECOME A BIG



[KANSASBIGS.ORG/BE-A-BIG](http://KANSASBIGS.ORG/BE-A-BIG)

Questions? Contact Andi Rosser | 785.422.9498 | [arosser@kansasbigs.org](mailto:arosser@kansasbigs.org)



# Points of Pride: Student and Staff Success Stories



Billy Mills MS started a Unified Bocce Team, led by school counselor Sunny Pippert and school resource officer James Browning. In this Italian bowling game, unified athletes and partners try to throw their Bocce balls closer to the Palatino, or Jack, than their opponents. Special Olympics Kansas recognized Kendel Gill, a unified partner, and Connor Lee, a unified athlete, in its March newsletter as the "Unified Pair of the Month." Gill said that inclusion is "making everyone feel welcome, no matter what background they come from." Lee shared, "Unified was the first time I have ever been on a sports team, which made me feel included. I also met new people and made more friends." (Photo: Kenneth Wilson, Special Olympics Kansas, soks.org)

KU's Center on Developmental Disabilities presented its Whelan Leadership Award for Learning to USD 497's special education leadership team: Kevin Harrell, executive



director; Laura Basham and Lori Stithem, directors; and Shelia Smith, assistant director. Dr. Karrie Shogren, director, said it was her pleasure to join Special Education Department Chair Jenny Kurth in nominating the district's team.

"The Special Education Leadership Team at Lawrence Public Schools has consistently demonstrated a steadfast commitment to advocating for equitable and inclusive education for all students, including students with and without disabilities," said Shogren. Harrell thanked KU for its partnership and gave credit to the team effort of all special education staff working with families to meet students' needs.



For the first time in the East Kansas National Speech and Debate Association National Qualifier Tournament's history, one team - Free State HS's Speech and Debate team - won all four sweepstakes awards in the same season. The Firebirds earned the first place Overall, Debate, Congress, and Speech Team Sweepstakes! Kelly Thompson directs speech and debate activities.



Eight West MS students won first or second place in Kansas History Day Jr. Group Website, Performance, Documentary, and Individual Documentary categories to qualify for national competition in Washington, D.C. this summer. Congratulations, Zacha Zaverse and Stella Dorssom, winners of the Robert J. Dole Congressional History Prize, and all of these state competitors: Penelope All, Autumn Fike, Bella Blakemore, Dorssom, Zaverse, Kyla Meikle, Charlotte Lamb, Layla Hafoka, and Carlise Sanchez. Jessica Miescher-Lerner is their teacher.

Author Kate Klise visited fifth graders across the district. She offered to students her expert insight about how to be better writers. After the writing crash course, students used the author's advice to create their own short stories and demonstrate their storytelling prowess. US Bank funds author visits.

With the mentorship and support of community partners J&S Coffee and Chick-Fil-A, Sunflower first graders ran their own businesses by creating menus, assigning roles, and carrying out their plan for a large audience of parents, teachers, and guests. Teachers Jessica Brown, Myranda Bruening, and Tabitha Pestock led this AVID project tied to history, government, and social studies standards.



Laughter echoed throughout the Hillcrest neighborhood as students and teachers took a stroll outside for their annual walkathon. Along the journey, they enjoyed music, bubbles, an appearance by mascot Howie the hawk, and snow cones.

Five FSHS students won writing awards in the Missouri Writing Region of this year's Scholastic Writing Contest. Gillan Sellet won Gold Key (1st place) awards for her poem *Lingua Franca* and for her science fiction/fantasy story *All That Remains*. Honorable Mention Awards were received by Yejun Yun and Cooper Stone in the Short Story category and Anwen Williams and Juliana Wamelink in the Poetry category.



LHS science teacher Lisa Ball will go to Germany with a Transatlantic Outreach Program, a partnership between the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Goethe-Institut, Deutsche Bank, and Siemens. Among previous travel-learning adventures: a Fulbright global exchange to Ghana and ship-to-shore teaching as an Ocean Exploration Trust Fellow.

With Greener Grass, an all-electrical lawn tool rental service, Liberty Memorial Central MS student Felix Kirkland won first place in the Douglas County Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge and \$1,250. His teacher, Devin Heath, received a \$250 award.



Middle and high school students completing the Lawrence Public Library's Summer Reading Program will be wearing an Abby McDonald original artwork. The Lawrence Virtual School sophomore won the T-shirt design contest. Congratulations, Abby!



Some think they're slimy and gross, but worms play an integral part in helping plants grow and keeping soil healthy. Cordley students learned about this on Earth Day, releasing worms into the school garden.

As part of its Student Expression Campaign, the Kansas Chapter of the National Education Association (KNEA) awarded LHS



junior Adele Erickson top honors for her social justice artwork "Babydoll." This Campaign encouraged young creators to speak their truth through visual art, music, spoken word, and video or photography. Honored at the KNEA delegate assembly, Erickson talked about her work representing "the infantilization and over-sexualization of young women in the media." Her art will now be reproduced on a grand scale for display on the side of the KNEA headquarters building in Topeka. Todd Poteet is Erickson's art teacher.



## WOODLAWN 100<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATION

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Cordley's Black Lives Matter at School Week featured author Dr. Giselle Anatol and a visit by LHS senior January Jackson. Dr. Anatol wrote "Small-Girl Toni and the Quest for Gold," inspired by the life and writing of Toni Morrison and Jackson sang "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke. During the week, students studied, "How does celebrating and appreciating Black and African-American art create collective joy and inspire activism?" through poetry and literature, dance, visual arts, music, television, and movies.

The LHS Environmental Club Leadership Team and FSHS Environmental Science students spent WEALTH Day (Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation, and Health) at the Kansas Statehouse learning about environmental advocacy. Their teachers are Lisa Ball, LHS, and Julie Schwarting, FSHS.



Hillcrest students looked at different artists who use hearts as symbols in their work. They used Kwik Stix to design a heart soft sculpture, stuffed it, and added yarn fringe. Bethany Iversen is their art teacher.



Susie Micka's IPS class encouraged 147 LHS students and staff to participate in the Polar Plunge, raising \$14,715 for Kansas Special Olympics. FSHS's first plunge raised \$4,500 by leading students and staff, like volleyball coach Jayme Savage seen here, to brave the cold for a good cause.

The number of high school students getting a jump on their futures and saving themselves, or their families, hundreds of dollars in college tuition continues to grow. This year, 456 students, up from 350 last year, enrolled in at least one Jayhawk Blueprint course for dual credit. Through this partnership with KU, 2,117 students have taken at least one concurrent course. The Lawrence Schools Foundation and Truity Credit Union ensure these courses are accessible through scholarship assistance.



Middle and high schoolers took field trips to the Lawrence Public Library to learn professional illustration techniques from a local comic artist and the publisher of Sun Hero Magazine, Dané Shobe. He walked them through his process of drawing superheroes, challenging them to design heroic versions of themselves.



LHS senior Maya Smith, typically found behind a camera, found all eyes and lenses on her as Kansas Press Association Executive Director Eric Thomas presented her with the Kansas Student Journalist of the Year award and a \$1,250 scholarship. Barb Tholen is the LHS journalism adviser.

A tasty partnership! The Lawrence Schools Foundation and Lawrence Rotary Club provided snack donations to all schools to support students who come to school hungry or need a snack during the day.



West MS's Junior Players presented "Disney's High School Musical Jr." with a cast and crew of 120, under the direction of Brian Williams.



The National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts accepted Oliver Elwell's ceramic sculpture, "My Greenhouse," for display at its conference in Virginia. Emily Markoulatos teaches Ceramics at LHS.



Art on the door that reads "One Four Three" greets all who enter Jessica Brown's first grade classroom at Sunflower. Instead of indicating the room number, 143 stands for the number of letters in each word of "I love you." It's a number, Brown says, that embodies her teaching practice and classroom culture. She sees her students as "forever classroom family." Emporia State University's Teachers College named Brown among this year's class of seven Kansas Master Teachers and honored her with a \$1,000 award on Kansas Master Teacher Day. "My classroom is a reflection of life itself. It is where life is shared, life is viewed, life is gained, life is changed, and life is handled together. This will continue to be the truth I strive to uphold, practice, and embody as long as I am given the opportunity," Brown said.





Let's make a splash rooting for FSHS's Ellis Crisci as he prepares to swim at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials this summer in Indianapolis. Crisci earned an Olympic Trials qualifying time in the 1500 freestyle at a regional spring sectional meet in Columbia, Missouri. Achieved by only a handful of male swimmers his age, this accomplishment requires a difficult training regimen of strength, endurance, and technique coaching, as well as personal dedication and sacrifice. Crisci wakes up at 4 a.m. to train in Liberty, Mo., before attending school, and then returns to Liberty each evening for training. He swims with the Tsunami Swim Team of KC, coached by Tom Kleiboecker. (Photo: Meredith Gutshall Photography, @atwhitefarm)



Deerfield second graders in Hannah Hurst's art class created abstract wall sculptures inspired by the work of sculptor Louise Nevelson. Students diligently sifted through bins filled with toys, caps, lids, keychains, and various things to pick out some items to glue to a cardboard base. After drying, they will spray paint their final piece to give it a monochromatic color scheme.

FSHS journalism students won several awards regionally and nationally for their writing, design, and photography skills, including recognition from the Kansas Scholastic Press Association, the Association of Texas Photography Instructors, and the JEA National Student Media Contests. Junior Chloe Cook earned numerous photography achievements, including a superior rating in Sports Action Photography, first place in Sports Photography, First Honorable Mention and Second Place (Sports Action), and Honorable Mention (Landscape). Jared Shuff is their journalism adviser.

A National Winner of the 2024 YoungArts competition, Henry Farthing earned a four-day trip to Los Angeles for an interdisciplinary, artistic experience for emerging young artists. Angelia Perkins teaches photography at LHS.



FSHS future entrepreneurs put their costing and marketing skills to work. Students created a new spin on the idea of a neighborhood lemonade stand by selecting its purpose and designing a creative flyer. Building materials included different sizes and colors of Lego-style bricks, as well as baseplates, toothpicks, and a notecard. They had to itemize their building materials, even down to the color and size. It's good practice for these future business leaders taught by Kimberly Hawks.

Selma Burton, FSHS junior, won third place and an honorable mention for her photography at the Tim Murphy Art Gallery's 27th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition. She's working on a large community project challenging societal beauty standards. Her visual arts instructor is Sarah Podrasky.



Students, staff, and families gathered in Sunflower's gym for International Night. This coming together to celebrate diverse backgrounds gives students the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of different cultures. Equipped with "passports," students "traveled the world" by visiting tables themed after different countries, learning about culture, customs, history, geography, and society while sampling food and drinks from those countries. The ESL Team planned this "world tour."

Schwegler kindergartners celebrated Read Across America by inviting special guests to visit and read books.



FSHS's Student Equity Council, Can We Talk Affinity Group, and African American History classes visited the 18th & Vine Historic District of Kansas City, a point of origin of jazz music and a hub of African American businesses. They visited the American Jazz Museum, Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, and the Black Archives of Mid-America, led by Brianna Jackson, Christina Craig, Dee Kemp, and Julia Johnson

The Kansas State Department of Education announced USDE School Improvement Grants of \$140,000 and \$150,000, respectively for LHS and LVS. LHS will hire a learning coach to increase co-teaching implementation and an academic interventionist to support the implementation of evidence-based interventions, especially for students who receive special education services and are at risk of not graduating. LVS will hire a dean of student engagement and an academic interventionist to assist with student engagement, interventions, attendance, and professional development. The academic interventionist will ensure appropriate support for students, design interventions, and assist in identifying students who may need special education services.

Congratulations to La'Ron Williams, runner-up in the Kansas Youth of the Year program. The FSHS senior earned Youth of the Year honor from the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence. A gifted writer, Williams hopes to study writing at KU. His brother Ja'Corey, a New York school fifth grader, earned Junior Youth of the Year honors from the Club.



Dr. Chris Orlando's and Lindsey Proctor's classes at Southwest MS took a trip back in time to the 1870s, as students donned their finest cowboy hats and took on the role of cowhands traveling a western cattle drive. After forming their cattle companies, students began in Texas by rounding up their "livestock" (wads of newspaper) and attempting to safely "drive" them (sweep them with brooms) to Dodge City. The groups faced numerous obstacles along their journey, such as crossing the Rio Grande, weathering natural disasters (a Frisbee), and even needing to trade some of their cattle at a toll to pass through Oklahoma. Once they arrived at their destination, the teams tallied their surviving cows to prepare for the selling process.



Our youngest scholars at Kennedy Early Childhood Center spent time in centers playing with friends, learning with teachers, and doing all kinds of interactive activities. Learners rotated between a variety of instructed and self-directed stations with their classmates, so there was always something new to find. Students chose to read books, color, paint, play in the kitchen, make necklaces, solve puzzles, play with cars, pretend to go on safari, and practice their writing.



A second FSHS Speech and Debate Team member, junior Anwen Williams, earned Premier Distinction, the highest degree in the National Speech and Debate Association's Honor Society. Fewer than 3% of NSDA members earn Premier Distinction prior to graduation. This milestone is a celebration of the hundreds of hours Williams has spent preparing, practicing, competing, and honing communication and leadership skills. FSHS senior Sophie Racy earned Premier Distinction in December. Kelly Thompson is their coach.



Maci Perrins, a Langston Hughes Elementary fifth grader, finished as runner-up in the Kansas Sunflower State Spelling Bee after winning both her school's and Douglas County's spelling bees.





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## **ENVISTA CHAMPIONS EDUCATION IN LAWRENCE: THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE KU PARTNERSHIP**

Envista has cultivated a pivotal partnership with Kansas Athletics and the Lawrence Schools Foundation to channel the excitement of KU sports into support for local education. By donating **\$125 for every KU win**, no matter the sport, Envista has transformed game day triumphs into a broader victory for the Lawrence community. This synergy between athletics and education has mobilized the community, fostering a spirit of participation and investment in the future success of its students and teachers.

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**LAWRENCE  
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Community Transition or C-Tran Program students came home to Community Connections at Pinckney as champions after winning the post-secondary division of the Job Olympics at Johnson County Community College. Students and staff worked hard all year preparing, and their hard work paid off! Students earned eight gold, eight silver, and three bronze medals. Job Olympics, a competition developed to promote transition and employability skills for a broad spectrum of high school students and young adults, brings together more than 500 students from 40 different area schools in competitions that test their job and employability skills. Congratulations, Job Olympic Champions!



These FSHS students competed in the regional Junior Achievement Stock Market Challenge. Given a fictitious portfolio of money to invest with the goal of maximizing their earnings, eight students qualified for nationals! Congratulations, Ari Mattes, Somjai Sengchan, Connor MacFarland, and Nathan Peltier, first place; Grey Heiman, Parker Bentley, Logan Dinges, and Nolan Slankard, second place; Neel Sabarwal, Nikolai Smith, Asher Dee, and Ji Zheng. Kimberly Hawks is their teacher.

More than 200 Lawrence Public Schools' educators participated in the first cohort of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, or LETRS, training. This research-based professional learning supports the district's literacy goal.



The LVS Theater Club presented its show, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," via Zoom. Middle and high school students worked hard double-casted and serving multiple crew roles. Jennifer Pugsley is their teacher.



LHS video students earned three first place awards from the Kansas Association of Broadcasters: Connor Austin, Best General News Story; Naomi Sui Pang, Complete Sports Feature; and Angela Braden-Egoavil, On-Air Personality. Check out their work on LHS's weekly broadcast, The Lion's Roar, at [bit.ly/LHSLionsRoar](https://bit.ly/LHSLionsRoar). Zach Saltz is their teacher.

Both teachers and students represented Lawrence Public Schools during the Kansas Teacher of the Year Region 2 Awards Banquet. Lawrence Teachers of the Year Kristin Oswald, Schwegler third grade teacher, and Lori Byers, Billy Mills MS gifted education teacher, were among 120 educators nominated by school districts across Kansas for the recognition program. Lawrence High orchestra members, under the direction of Mariah Barnett, performed for the event.



LHS celebrates international recognition for Isabel Klish, a top winner in the International PKX Art Exhibition. This event showcases young artists' creativity from around the globe. The PKX Art Festival chose three of her works for exhibit in New York. Her painting, "The Balance," won second place. The Festival also chose for exhibit Selah Wolfe's photograph, "The Echo of Muffled Sobs." Their teachers are Todd Poteet and Angelia Perkins.



Quail Run students take in the sight of the solar eclipse safely while enjoying an opportunity to sit or lie in the grass and spend time with their friends. Thanks to Midco for donating safety glasses!

Not all superheroes wear capes. Special thanks to Langston Hughes Elementary paraeducator and lunch monitor Stephanie Moore. Her quick actions in responding to an emergency and successfully performing the Heimlich maneuver on a choking student in the lunchroom make her a hero!



More than 50 FSHS students displayed artwork at La Prima Tazza for Youth Art Month.

LVS's eCybermission Team of Lawrence and Daniel Dao and Eian Pracht shared with the school board their research about the use of AI in education.

An LHS team of Owen Ackley, Monte Asisian, Myles Gragg, Rose Kennedy, Jooseok Oh, Brandon Pamell, Marcus Souders, Ben Willems, Aedan FitzGerald, Davian Copeland, and Dwight Souders performed well at the Pittsburg State Math Relays. They placed in the top spots individually and as groups with their geometry, logic and set theory, trigonometry, algebraic equations, functions, analysis, and number theory knowledge and skills. Math teacher Matt Ellis and Emily Beecham, gifted education teacher, work with these students.

Amanda Torbett's Construction 1 and 2 students at FSHS attended the Build My Future Expo in Topeka. Vendors offered students hands-on demos to try, including scissor and bucket lifts, excavators, loaders, welding, virtual welding, shingling, drywall, laying flooring, electrical wiring, engine/transmission rebuilds, and the crowd favorite: BELT SANDER RACES. Students also walked away with awesome swag bags, T-shirts, and free lunches!



The Lawrence Schools Foundation knows it takes a village of special people to help ensure the school day flows well for all students and staff. Its A.C.E. Award Acknowledges Classified Employees, often working behind the scenes to keep schools functioning safely and effectively. The Foundation presented the award and \$500 to Noah Baker, Facilities & Operations electrical technician, this spring.

"Noah contributes to a positive school culture by being willing to do anything asked of him, even outside his job description. His positive attitude is uplifting to his colleagues and other staff and students in the district. He is dedicated to his role and is committed to the school district," said Dr. Larry Englebrick, chief operations officer.



The Kansas Art Education Association honored FSHS's Oliver Paget as a Youth Art Month Featured Artist. Rachel Downs-Doubra is Oliver's visual arts teacher.





More than 100 middle school students gathered at the district's Educational Support Center for All-City Model United Nations Day. A collaborative effort between West, Southwest, Liberty Memorial Central, and Billy Mills Middle Schools, the immersive experience promoted debate, diplomacy, and civic awareness for students, who represented member countries within the United Nations. The "visiting diplomats" listened to their peers speak and voted on proposed resolutions, just as U.N. members do.



LHS won the K-12 division, while Langston Hughes school placed third in K-5 at the Prairie Park Chess Tournament. Owen Reynolds of Langston Hughes finished as the individual champion in K-5, winning all six of his matches! In K-5: Tiana Johnson, Prairie Park, placed second. In K-12, Braedon Soderstrom, LHS, placed fourth; and Felipe Reina-Salas, FHS, fifth.

Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis concentrates on the beat while playing the bass drum with the Liberty Memorial Central MS 7th grade band, under the direction of Sam Parrilla.



The LVS Griffins Esports Team for Rocket League placed second in the state tournament during the High School Esports League's Winter Blitz. Kieran Potmesil, Zach Wilson, and Travis Matthews outmaneuvered opponents while playing soccer with flying race cars in this fantasy sport-based video game. Their coach is Jennifer Pugsley.



LHS's Neva Livingston earned the Kansas Art Educators Association's Harry Hart Scholarship with her artwork featured at the Youth Art Month awards ceremony. Livingston's classmate, Emmie Hurd, received an Honorable Mention for her piece, "Teenagers Addicted to Online Chat Rooms Can Not Spell." Hurd's work will represent Kansas at the National Education Association conference. Todd Poteet is their teacher.



Southwest Middle School Theater took its show on the road to feeder elementary schools and the district's Educational Support Center. The cast and crew wowed audiences with "No TV," a play about a girl whose mom takes away her television until she cleans her room. As she taddes the chore, her imagination brings her room to life. Drama director Trish Averill-Neuteboom has a special connection to this performance. Her dad, Ric Averill, wrote it.



Families and students gathered in the New York school cafeteria as Mandy Shockley's second and third graders performed a readers theater. Students created backdrops and props and read their stories, demonstrating their ability to speak fluently.



In her role as the KU School of Social Welfare's Practicum Education Director, Kelly Jones presented Carissa Welsh, an LHS social worker, with the School's Margo Award for Excellence in Practicum Instruction and \$500. Welsh also will be recognized during graduation ceremonies. Her KU practicum student, Abigail Okesanya, nominated Welsh and participated in the surprise presentation. The award recognizes and promotes excellence in social work education.

Jones said that there are more than 400 practicum instructors across 25 states, so this award is a major honor. Other Lawrence nominees included Robin Cooper-Cornejo, Woodlawn and Prairie Park social worker; Liz Crickard, FHS transition specialist; Julie Heatwole, Sunflower mental health professional; and Cami Torres, New York, Quail Run, Sunset Hill social worker.



Months of hard work and preparation went into the performance of "The Giver" at Liberty Memorial Central MS. Student performers and theater technicians were diligently prepping for show time until the last minute, rereading their lines, putting on makeup, touching up the set, testing their audio, and getting into character. Before the show, drama teacher Blair Waite gathered the students into a circle to give them a final pep talk, reassuring them that their efforts would pay off.

Southwest MS's Future City Team won the Outstanding Project Plan Award presented by the Educational Foundation Project Management Institute during national competition in Washington, D.C. Congratulations to the Bulldogs, coached by teacher Danielle Lotton-Barker and professional mentor Chris Storm.

"A champion for all students!" Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis honored Greg Farley, LHS assistant principal, as the Administrator of the Month for April. A teacher nominator wrote that Farley exhibits professionalism every day, putting students first, and modeling open communication and positive relationships.



Meeting sheep, goats, and rabbits, and watching Tempe the dairy cow get milked, highlighted this year's Day on the Farm at the Douglas County Fairgrounds for all fourth graders. They also learned about conservation, grain, fruit, and vegetable production, health and nutrition, and pollinators.





The LHS Visual Arts Department Roars! The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Midwest Region received nearly 4,000 works and presented 418 awards. LHS students won 50 awards, including 4 of the 5 Gold Key Portfolio Awards, representing the top 1% of work submitted. Congratulations to Maya Amen and Oliver Elwell, painting, and Jean-Luc Esperance and Allie White, photography. In addition, LHS students won 3 of the 10 Silver Portfolio Awards, representing the top 5% of submissions. These students, Bethany Davis, Isabel Klish, and Jerwin Rapada, won for their paintings.



Individual Gold Key winners are: Aiden Anderson, Adele Erickson (2), Henry Farthing (2), Sophia Graves, Emily Hurd (2), Opal Morris, Celeste Stinson, and White (3). Individual Silver Key winners: Anderson, Erickson (2), Farthing (3), Hurd, Klish, Neva Livingston, Morris, Rapada (2), and White. Honorable Mention winners: Erickson (5), Graves, Ruby Hull, Isabel Johnson, Klish, Livingston, Morris, Rapada (2), and White. Farthing, an American Visions Nominee, won Best in Show for their photo, "Arizona." Student artists whose works are pictured here clockwise from top left: Anderson, Stinson, and Morris. Their teachers are Todd Poteet, drawing and painting, and Angela Perkins, photography.



The Lawrence Schools Foundation thanks Envista Credit Union for its support, including a \$25,000 "KUI Wins, Envista Gives" donation. Envista joined the Foundation, school board, and district in recognizing 13 CharacterStrong student leaders for demonstrating positive character traits, such as kindness, perseverance, empathy, and cooperation. Congratulations, Trey Wilson, Billy Mills MS; Haven Littlehead, Cordley; Skylar Payne, Deerfield; Levi Collins, Hillcrest; Henry Kaufman, Langston Hughes; Lola Martin, FSHS; Mya Worley, Liberty Memorial Central MS; Ellie Osborn, New York; Jackson Raney, Southwest MS; Kaydence Daniels, Sunflower; Baylin Garcia, Sunset Hill; Tia Canaday, West MS; and Jamir Tanner, Woodlawn.



The Mid-America Performing Arts Alliance's Inspiring Strings Program, designed to musically enrich underserved communities and remove barriers to high quality music instruction, introduced a pilot program at Woodlawn. Students applied and received a free violin rental from Beautiful Music Violin Shop and two Suzuki violin lessons per week with Lavenna Boyer.

Demonstrating their STEAM skills, Quail Run's Esther and Sarah Song won a Core Values Award at the FIRST LEGO League Challenge. Monarch conservation inspired their project.

## Congratulations, USD 497 Graduates!

Please join us to celebrate.

### Project SEARCH

May 16, 10 a.m.

Community Connections at Pinckney  
810 W. 6th St.

### C-Tran, Community Transition Program

May 17, 10 a.m.

Community Connections at Pinckney  
810 W. 6th St.

### Lawrence Virtual School

May 18, 1:00 p.m.

Free State High Auditorium  
4700 Overland Dr.

### Free State High School

May 21, 7 p.m.

Free State High Stadium  
4700 Overland Dr.

### Lawrence High School

May 22, 7 p.m.

Lawrence High Stadium  
1901 Louisiana St.

### Adult Education Services

May 30, 7 p.m.

Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence  
Teen Center Gymnasium  
2910 Haskell Ave.