



Superintendent Report

Board of Education & Lawrence Public Schools Community

Monday, December 9, 2024

Hello Lawrence Public Schools Community,

We appreciate the diligent work of our students, teachers, school and district teams, as well as our parents and community members as we work to wrap up this first semester 2024-25 over the coming December days.

Community Engagement

My thanks to all of the staff, school families, and community members who joined me in conversations this fall, and especially value my time in conversation with our Free State, Lawrence High, and Lawrence Virtual School students. We learned a great deal from hearing about their school experiences, insights and priorities for the future of Lawrence Public Schools.

Community Survey

Our [LPS community survey](#) will remain open through December 19th, so I encourage anyone who hasn't already done so to visit our website and share their input by completing the survey. We appreciate KU for partnering with us for survey analysis. I look forward to sharing a full report with the board and community in January or February and using what we learned to plan some next steps for Lawrence Public Schools.

LMCMS Student Showcase

I was excited to see Liberty Memorial Central Middle School students sharing their STEAM project-based learning projects at a Student Showcase last week. One of their projects involved researching the Americans with Disabilities Act and using their findings to design and engineer their own model access ramps. We can't wait to see what they come up with in the spring!

Student Honors: Free State Lifesaving Award

The American Red Cross presented Free State senior Lucas Fearn with its Lifesaving Award. Earlier in the fall, Lucas successfully performed the Heimlich maneuver to assist Firebird

educator Jacob Lewis, who was choking. We are grateful for Mr. Lewis' safety and Lucas' quick actions, which he learned while serving as a lifeguard.

LHS Students YoungArts Awards

Two Lawrence High students, Lola Brown and Adele Erickson earned national awards in the YoungArts competition for photography and painting, respectively. They each will receive \$250, as well as mentorship opportunities and a lifetime of creative professional development as part of an intergenerational community of artists.

Adding more to Lawrence High's illustrious artists, the 28th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition received 640 entries this year and only 100 were accepted into the juried exhibition in Merriam, Kansas. Of those 100, 21 were from Lawrence High students! In 2D, Lola Brown placed second and Wren Jay, third. In 3D, Ru Yother won first place for her ceramic sculpture and Jayden Moore placed third for their jewelry. Congratulations to these students and their teachers - Emily Markoulatos, Angela Perkins, and Todd Poteet.

Staff Recognition

Mike Jones, Director of Lawrence High Bands, was named the Northeast Kansas Music Educators Association Outstanding Band Director. He also is that professional organization's nominee for the state Outstanding Music Educator Award.

It was my honor on last Friday morning to recognize **Jori Roberts, New York Montessori and Elementary's administrative assistant**, with our **fall Class Act Award**. Her colleagues describe her as hard-working, helpful, and joyful. They say she loves and cares for them, and is the happy heart at the center of their school. Our thanks to Jori Roberts and to LEAP Partner Truity Credit Union for presenting her with a check for \$500.

Appreciation to Farm-to-School Partners

As winter weather arrives, we thank our Farm-to-School partners for providing delicious fruits, vegetables, and protein to our kitchens and cafeterias during the fall growing season. All of our farm and ranch partners -- South Baldwin Farms, Jirak Family Produce, Juniper Hill Farms, Table View Farm, and 2 Trails Ranch -- are within 50 miles of Lawrence, ensuring fresh products. Nutrition and Wellness Director Julie Henry provides the by-the-numbers look that you see on this slide of some of our Farm-to-School purchases this fall.

Seasonal HVAC Concerns

As we begin the second full week of December and winter weather has arrived, this includes making sure the temperatures in our buildings are comfortable. I want to thank Dr. Englebrick and our Facilities and Operations staff, a small yet very hard working and dedicated team. When an indoor temperature issue is reported, they respond, and work diligently to address it.

During this past week, Dr. Englebrick has reviewed the processes - face to face with our principal team and shared reminders via email - for how to report right away when we need assistance with building temperatures. This is a seasonal issue for us, just as it is for

homeowners managing the comfort level of their homes by adjusting their thermostat when temperatures drop. We will continue to work to ensure our students and staff are comfortable and learning, and we appreciate folks reporting right away so we can address any issues.

Winter Break Calendar Reminder

All students will be out of school December 20-January 3 for winter break. All district buildings will be closed December 23-January 3.

Instructional Priority: Cell-Phone Free Classrooms

Am deeply grateful for the leadership and courage of the Board to develop a cell-phone free classroom; we have achieved congruence with our school teams and principals and we are ready to move forward together. It's a big effort that will yield significant benefits for the quality of learning and student well-being.

I have valued the opportunity to work alongside Directors Ervin and Roberson, Ms. Lockett, Ms. Boyle and other members of the team, also we've worked directly in meetings with each of the levelled principal teams. I have been impressed with the focus and energy to organize and prepare for a strategic implementation of cell phone free instruction across our Lawrence Public School classrooms.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and thank you for the opportunity to serve in the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift
Interim Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools