



## Superintendent Report to Board of Education

Monday, November 25, 2024

On this Monday of fall break, I hope that everyone has enjoyed this past weekend, and we are wishing our students and staff, families and community a safe and peaceful Fall break this week.

### Reflecting on Recent Student, Staff and Community Engagement and Activities

I have appreciated **meeting in conversation** with many groups this fall, most recently with **student groups at Lawrence High, Free State, and Lawrence Virtual School**; as well as parents and community members gathered at **Southwest and West Middle Schools**. Conversations have been thoughtful and insightful, and I am impressed by the level of authentic engagement we see among so many who really care about their schools.

I also valued conversations with Quail Run staff, and with **parents at Quail Run** last Monday evening. Thanks to Kristen Ryan and the HR team for their support to preview the process, explore needs and preferences, and consider next steps in their upcoming **principal search**.

I appreciated having time with our **ESC Team** members in an **'all teams' meeting** last Tuesday. It was great to see everyone gathered together; I especially offered my thanks for so many on the team who have offered extra time this fall to push out to support our schools on busy days. We plan for regular monthly meetings to ensure the ESC team is fully updated, and has an opportunity to ask questions. I appreciated the participation of Facilities and Operations members, also; it is especially helpful to get a few minutes together with folks who are so often working and running in different directions.

We hosted our second **Blue Ribbon Community Leaders** meeting on Friday morning, and I am delighted that this group is really beginning to take form. They offered additional thinking and contributions on next steps with the Community Conversation, as well as on upcoming work in prioritizing instruction and limiting cell phone use in our classrooms.

The opportunity to connect during the **KU School of Education Faculty Assembly** on Friday afternoon was particularly meaningful, as Dean Rick Ginsberg kindly hosted me in conversation with KU faculty. There is tremendous opportunity for strengthening, increasing and enhancing our university partnerships, and I look forward to next steps. I appreciate Julie Boyle and Jana Craig-Hare supporting me in this meeting.

### **Lawrence Public Schools Podcast**

I appreciate Andrew Beaven hosting the **first [Lawrence Public Schools Podcast](#)**, available where you find your podcasts. In this inaugural episode, we discussed our community engagement efforts and community survey, which will remain open through December 19. We will continue to publish regular podcasts episodes, as one more way to share information, and engage with our community.

### **Friends of Education**

It was my honor to help celebrate 24 outstanding school volunteers during our **American Education Week Friends of Education Recognition Reception** last week. What an inspiring event! We are truly indebted to these parents and community partners for the many ways they support our students and staff. In addition to each of our schools honoring a volunteer, the Lawrence Public Schools chose to recognize Ms. Jan Hurst, who for 35 years has supported the safety of our community by serving as a crossing guard in front of Cordley school on 19th Street.

Many thanks to Members Cadue-Blackwood, President Jones, and Vice President Gordon-Ross for their beautiful contributions to this special event.

### **Awards, Recognitions, and Activities**

Several **Free State High student journalists earned awards** at the fall National High School Journalism Convention in Philadelphia. Jared Shuff is their journalism adviser.

The **Free State Unified Bowling team placed fourth at Regionals** to move on to the state tournament. Congratulations to these students and Coach Erin Campbell.

We were pleased for several of our students to have the opportunity to travel to Washburn University to hear Ruby Bridges' firsthand account of integrating an all-white elementary school at the age of six in New Orleans on November 14, 1960. Many of our schools also participated in **Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day**.

Billy Mills Middle School enjoyed welcoming back **Indigenous rapper and fancy dancer** Christian Parrish Takes the Gun, known professionally as Supaman, and fellow artist Logan Howard, also known as DJ Element. We appreciate the support of the Kickapoo Nation School and Haskell Indian Nations University in making this assembly possible.

Congratulations to our district's **Nutrition and Wellness Team**, which was named a **2024 Culture of Health Champion** by Live Well Douglas County. This honor recognizes the team's work this past summer to provide meals to children in Douglas County. This team served 74,288 breakfasts, 1,932 snacks, and 88,689 lunches to children in the community last summer. Our thanks to the team and Julie Henry, director of nutrition and wellness.

I also want to congratulate **Dr. Kelly Welch's Early Childhood Education Child Development Associate candidates**. These LHS, Free State, and College and Career Academy students completed rigorous assessments to earn their **Career and Technical Education certificates of mastery!**

### **Thanks to Tech Team and Integration and Data Services Team**

We want to thank our **Technology Team** for finishing the **fiber project at the athletic facilities** on both of our high school campuses. The baseball, softball, soccer, and track facilities on both campuses are complete, new security cameras have been mounted, and Wi-Fi is up and running, including to the concession stands and ticket booths.

We appreciate our **Integration and Data Services Team** for spending time last week building **data walls and dashboards in Ion**, our new data warehousing and analytic platform. This will help our schools access and monitor student-level data more easily!

This team is led by James Polk, director of data and assessment.

### **Communications Update**

We value the opportunity to share district news with students and staff, parents and families, ensure clarity and want to update the engagement data from recent communications, featuring more than 40,000 views of our content during November so far:

- November 15 "Take a Listen to our New Podcast," 19,392 views, 182 views of linked content, 6 min. average read time
- November 1 "November News & Gatherings," 21,006 views, 138 views of linked content, 6 min. average read time
- October 24 "Engagement Beyond Conferences," 16,287 views, 303 views of linked content, 8 min. average read time
- October 11 "First Quarter Wrap-Up," 21,898 views, 559 views of linked content, 5 min. average read time
- September 27 "Timely Topics for Fall," 17,458 views, 291 views linked content, 8 min. average read time

### **Newsletters**

- November 22 "Happy Fall Break," 14,961 views, (no links included), 1 min. average read time

**Safety Video:** "Dr. Swift and Chief Lockhart," 633 views

**Podcast:** 167 total views (155 YouTube, 4 Apple, 3 Listen Notes, 3 Web Browser, 1 Amazon Echo, & 1 Pocket Casts)

### **Next Steps with Cell phone Free Instruction in the Lawrence Public Schools**


We experienced a productive session with our **school administrators on Thursday morning**, exploring the **draft cell phone guidance** for discussion and feedback, including the areas of **'rationale,'** steps to ensure **'readiness,'** lifting our vision to see the **'reward'** of working through a systemic change, and confirming the **timeline for next steps**. Our goal is to achieve **clarity and focus to support this systemic change**. This journey will not be easy, yet we are committed to this task for the good of our students and successfully prioritizing out the critical mission of teaching and learning across all our classrooms.

Ms. Kiley Luckett has been serving as a lead, alongside Directors Dr. Waymond Ervin and Ms. Jayci Roberson in this cell phone transition, and I have asked her to join the Superintendent's update at this time to highlight some of the preparation work she has been busy with in our schools.

I appreciate the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and thank you for your tremendous partnership, collegiality and support.

During this season of reflection and gratitude, I am especially grateful for each of our 10,600 students, their families, and the talented teachers and staff who serve so beautifully.

Wishing all a safe and peaceful fall break,



Jeanice Kerr Swift  
Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Lawrence Public Schools