



Superintendent Report to the Board

Monday, October 28, 2024

Hello, Members of the Board,

It's a busy time as we wrap up October this week in the Lawrence Public Schools.

I want to thank our students, teachers and staff, school and district leaders for such a strong start to this second quarter of the school year. I continue to see the work in progress as we are out and about in classrooms and schools across the district.

Blue Ribbon Advisory Group Launched

I am delighted to have informally welcomed a dozen community leaders for the first Blue Ribbon Community Leaders Advisory gathering on Friday morning.

We had a solid conversation about the organization of the group to ensure all sectors - non-profit, higher ed, business, and community organizations are appropriately represented. We plan to fill in the gaps in our membership and look forward to meeting again on Friday, November 22nd.

Part of our work was to highlight the Atlantic article from a few years back: [Eleven Signs a City Will Succeed](#) (from this source because the Atlantic article is behind a paywall).

Specifically, we pointed to item 2 in the article:

2. You can pick out the local patriots.

A standard question they'd ask soon after arrival was, "Who makes this town go?" The answers varied widely. Sometimes it was a mayor or a city-council member. Sometimes it was a local business titan or real-estate developer. Sometimes a

university president or professor, a civic activist, an artist, a saloon-keeper, a historian, or a radio personality. What mattered was that the question had an answer. And the more quickly it was provided, the better shape the town was in.

Other signs of note include a reference to schools, of course, and to the presence of a public research university.

We had a productive conversation, and I am grateful for the engagement of this stakeholder group.

Additional Community Engagement

We are looking forward to our next Community Conversation will be held tomorrow evening from 6:00-7:30 in the Liberty Memorial Central Middle School cafeteria.

Families needing childcare for children ages 3-7 may RSVP by tonight to Kelly.Welch@usd497.org. Dr. Welch teaches our high school students enrolled in the early childhood education pathway. These students are excited to provide childcare during our remaining evening community conversations. The fall engagement schedule and community survey are available on the district website at www.usd497.org/Superintendent.

Many thanks to all who have attended a conversation, either at your school or at one of your community gatherings. We are excited to continue this community conversation throughout November and look forward to sharing an update of what we are hearing at the second meeting of the Board in November.

It was my pleasure this week to read "I am We: A Book of Community" at Cordley Elementary's assembly wrapping up a month of learning about Responsibility.

The Boundary Advisory Committee met Wednesday to continue discussing options for balancing high school enrollment numbers and student population demographics and to prepare for public input sessions to be held on November 13 and 14.

Dr. Englebrick and the Board will be discussing more about the next steps in this work this evening.

Pedestrian Safety Need

The City of Lawrence notified us that starting this week, there will not be a crossing guard in place at the temporary pilot crossing guard location at 27th and Wildflower that serves Sunflower Elementary and Southwest Middle School students. The city is looking for a crossing guard replacement.

Interested individuals need to be available from about 7:30-8:00 a.m. and 3:30-4:00 p.m. daily, except on Wednesday afternoons, when crossing guards work from 1:30-2:00 p.m. due to early school dismissal.

If you know of anyone who would pitch in to support pedestrian safety by serving as a city crossing guard at this location, please contact krista.rakes@ExpressPros.com or call 785-749-7550.

We are working with the city to communicate about this need as Express Pros tries to recruit a crossing guard to fill this position.

Celebrations

Last week started with a wonderful surprise presentation to John McCrary, Southwest Middle School custodian, as he worked to clean the cafeteria during the eighth-grade lunch period. His colleagues say that in addition to keeping the building in tip-top shape, John builds strong relationships with students and staff and helps to make the Southwest school community a welcoming and positive place. We appreciate the Lawrence Schools Foundation for recognizing some of our outstanding educational support professionals with its A.C.E. Award and \$500.

Congratulations to students who participate in Cordley's after-school club. They danced their way to first place at the Boys and Girls Club's annual Lights On! competition held at Haskell Indian Nations University. Students in the Langston Hughes and Hillcrest after-school clubs finished second and third. We appreciate the dedicated Boys and Girls Club staff and the choreographers who worked with 150 students from 12 club sites on their dance performances. What great teamwork!

Thanks again to the Lied Center for providing to our high school students last week a special performance about hip-hop culture that demonstrated how Muslim artists Amirah Sackett and Mr. MiC use their performance art to encourage social change.

Events

The Free State and Lawrence High football teams and spirit squads, along with our middle school cheer teams, hosted a hygiene supply drive at Friday night's Free State vs. LHS football game. Dena Johnston, executive director of the Lawrence Schools Foundation and coach of the Firebird Spirit Squad, reports that thanks to this amazing partnership with our local high school Football & Spirit Squad teams and all four middle school cheer teams, we will have hygiene donations heading to all schools this week! We are proud of our student athletes' dedication and support to TACKLE barriers to basic needs for our community! And, thanks to fall of the football fans who donated!

Native American Student Services will again host its Trunk or Treat event on Wednesday, October 30th, from 5:00-6:30 p.m. in the parking lot at Broken Arrow.

Wednesday, the 30th, is also the final opportunity to see our Elementary Art Show on display at the Lawrence Public Library. We appreciate the library for showcasing our students' creativity and supporting the excellent work of our elementary art teachers.

Awards

During the Kansas School Public Relations Association Conference last week in Wichita, our communications team received six awards in the association's Publications Contest: three Awards of Excellence and three Awards of Merit. Congratulations to Julie Boyle and Andrew Beaven, our communications team!

Thank you for the opportunity to share this report this evening, and for the opportunity to serve the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift".

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Interim Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools