



**Superintendent Report**  
**Tuesday, October 15, 2024**

As we approach mid-October, we wrap up the first quarter of the school year this week. We are thankful for the hard work of our teachers, school and district teams, parents and community partners, working together to support the learning and growth of our students.

**It's Conference Week!**

It's an exciting time in Lawrence Public Schools as we welcome families to conferences this week. Fifty years of research reveals the striking benefits of school teams actively partnering with families to improve their children's learning. We welcome families to conferences this week, and our teachers and staff look forward to meeting with families to share more about student progress.

Please remember that due to conference schedules there is no school Thursday, Oct. 17 for early childhood-grade 8 students. High schools are in session! All students will be out of school, and all district buildings will be closed Friday, Oct. 18.

Quality public schools are a hallmark of engaged, caring communities that value our children and their education. We are grateful for your partnership in support of students, staff, schools, and our shared community.

**Secondary Teacher Professional Learning Last Friday**

I appreciated the large turnout among our secondary teachers at professional learning last Friday, and especially valued the opportunity to greet and thank our teachers for their important work.

Kim Campbell, a middle school educator and dean from Minnesota cracked some smiles Friday morning during her keynote session with our middle and high school teachers. She emphasized the importance of building relationships, laughing, and having a little fun in our classrooms.

Kim said not only are these three components keys to teacher survival, they also have mental health and wellness benefits, as well as motivate and engage our students in their learning.

Our attendance data for fall professional development shows High School team attendance improved by 30% this year; elementary teachers achieved 87% attendance for their September 15th day of learning.

## **Lawrence Public Schools Celebrations**

### **Free State High Earns 2024 AP Honor Roll Bronze Recognition**

Congratulations to Free State High for earning Bronze recognition on the 2024 AP School Honor Roll.

The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while also broadening access. Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness.

The AP School Honor Roll offers four levels of distinction: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.

For a school to be recognized on the [AP School Honor Roll](#) in a given year, it must:

- Meet each of the following criteria for their students in the most recent graduating class; these criteria are anchored in research-based relationships between AP and college outcomes:
  - **College Culture:** 40% or more of the graduating cohort took at least 1 AP Exam during high school.
  - **College Credit:** 25% or more of the graduating cohort scored a 3 or higher on at least 1 AP Exam during high school.
  - **College Optimization:** 2% or more of the graduating cohort took 5 or more AP Exams during high school. At least 1 of those exams was taken in 9th or 10th grade, so that students are spreading their AP experience across grades rather than feeling disproportionate pressure in any single year.
  - Have full-time grade-12 enrollments. AP coordinators can update this information online in AP Registration and Ordering. [Learn how.](#)

## **Team STEAM Robotics Club**

The Kansas Association of School Boards chose our Team STEAM Robotics Club among student groups to showcase their programs during its convention in November. My thanks to Lawrence High educator Jeannie Merritt for organizing this trip for students.

## **Hannah Hurst, Deerfield Art Teacher**

Congratulations to Deerfield art teacher **Hannah Hurst** for earning a California Casualty Arts and Music in Education Grant.

## More Celebrations

Our longtime Lawrence Education Achievement Partner the Lied Center of Kansas recently hosted all of our third through fifth graders for a school-only performance by **Jazzy Ash and the Leaping Lizards out of New Orleans**. They shared the history of jazz with our students in what turned into quite the dance party!

The Lied Center will provide another school-only performance by **Amirah Sackett and Mr. MiC** October 24th and 25th. This duo of Muslim heritage will share hip-hop culture and demonstrate using art for social change for our high school students.

We are also enjoying the outstanding art display on our south wall of the Board room here by students of Lawrence High School under the direction of their extraordinary teachers, Todd Poteet, Angela Perkins, Emily Markoulatos, and Jen Dixon-Perkins.

If you have not had the chance yet, please stop by the **Lawrence Public Library** this month to see our **Elementary Art Show** featuring the beautiful, creative works of students across all of our elementary schools.

## STAFF HONOR: QUAIL RUN



What a fantastic way to start off the week, surprising and celebrating one of our staff members with a Lawrence Schools Foundation's fall A.C.E Award and a check for \$500! Congratulations, Dionne Chavez, Quail Run instructional

support assistant!

"Dionne is the epitome of a lifelong learner. She has gone above and beyond what is expected or asked of her to increase her knowledge and application of best practices in small group reading instruction. Dionne has attended conferences, watched webinars, participated in online learning communities, and listened to podcasts to learn as much as she can about how to provide effective reading instruction to our neediest students. Last year, she attended a conference about the science of reading, which prompted her to change her instruction around comprehension, said Cynthia Emery, Quail Run interim principal.

"Relating to students is another strength of Dionne's. Even students who are reluctant to work in class are excited to go to intervention group time with Dionne. She has high expectations for all of her students, and it's obvious they feel safe and loved in her care," she added.

The A.C.E Award recognizes and applauds classified employees whose efforts benefit students, faculty and staff, and families. Congratulations, Dionne!

Shared by Dena Johnston, Executive Director, Lawrence Public Schools Foundation

### **BE ACTIVE SAFE ROUTES GETS A BOOST**



Kansas Governor Laura Kelly announced Monday nearly \$31.5 million will be awarded for 31 projects in communities across Kansas to create safer, more walkable and bike-friendly routes through the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program. “This investment is more than just improving infrastructure – it’s about strengthening the safety, accessibility, and mobility of our communities,” said Governor

Kelly. “I’m pleased the state can offer the support needed to help advance these projects.”

The competitive grant program, administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and provided by the Federal Highway Administration, is currently the primary source of KDOT funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects statewide, including Safe Routes to School. The program also funds transportation projects of a historical nature and scenic and environmental projects, including Main Street beautification projects.

The city of Lawrence received more than \$1 million for the Safe Routes to School program, also called Be Active Safe Routes. The program, a city partnership with Lawrence Public Schools, Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, and the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, is a comprehensive approach to making neighborhoods safe and accessible. The efforts of Be Active Safe Routes, including the recent Walk & Roll to School Day, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, increase the opportunity to be physically active, and build community cohesion.

### **SCHOOL PIX: CORDLEY**



Cordley celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day in many ways. In addition to a special morning message with a reading of the Native American Tribes and Nations of all of our staff and students, we focused our attention on our responsibility to challenge incorrect stories and celebrate opportunities to get it right! Some students and staff wore their regalia and shared more details about their culture with us as well! Pictured is Jonah Wesley from Ms. Spurlock's class. A special “thank you” to first grade parents, Marlon Wesley and Jennifer Bonilla, who shared their own stories to support our learning!

~Rebecca Reaver, Cordley principal

## **Boundary Advisory Committee Work**

The board's Boundary Advisory Committee is hard at work on its charge to study and recommend a proposal to better balance high school enrollments. Members have identified two options for examination and sharing with our community at **upcoming public input sessions scheduled from 6:00-7:30 p.m. November 13 and 14 at LHS and Free State, respectively.**

One option expands Lawrence High's attendance area by moving its 15th Street boundary line east of Massachusetts St. to the north to include East and North Lawrence. A second option would create feeder middle schools. Southwest and Billy Mills Middle School students would attend LHS, and West and Liberty Memorial Central Middle Schools would advance to Free State. Follow the work of the BAC on our website and mark the public input sessions on your calendar and share your feedback.

## **Study in Progress: Viability of Twice Monthly Pay Cycle for Certificated Staff**

We have heard from our engagement conversations the request for a twice monthly pay cycle, and I want to update the Board and community that we are currently conducting a study of the topic: including a review of the level of interest among staff, the adjustments that would be required in the department to consider such a change, the associated costs, and potential benefits.

I will report back on the steps required, viability, and perceived sustainability of a potential change, and look forward to a discussion of risks and benefits once we have more confirmed organizational information.

## **Donations**

We have several donations to celebrate!

The Lawrence Schools Foundation announced last week \$21,122 in innovative teacher, staff development, school assistance, and MusicWorks! grants. These grants will fund programs that enable our teachers to participate in professional development and enrich their students' educational experiences.

All three Lawrence Rotary Clubs sponsored a snack drive to provide student snacks to all of our elementary schools this semester. The Clubs also donated more than eight-thousand dollars to the Lawrence Schools Foundation to purchase additional student snacks as part of a spring snack drive.

The LHS Class of 1971 made a \$3,000 donation to support negative student lunch account balances at LHS.

Many thanks to these generous donors!

## **Fall Community Engagement**

I also want to thank the 30 students, staff, parents, board members, and community members who came out last week to our first Community Conversation at Billy Mills Middle School. Several families were encouraged to attend by the co-chairs of the Lawrence Special Education Advisory Committee, so we appreciate Carrie Poe and Kristi Heintzeman for that outreach.

We met new people and had great conversations about how to plan for a bright future for our Lawrence Public Schools.

Here is our schedule for the next three evening conversations. We are excited to announce that Dr. Kelly Welch's early childhood education pathway students will provide childcare for children ages 3-6. Families must RSVP to Dr. Welch so we know that we will need that childcare. My thanks to Dr. Welch and her high school students!

## **Community Engagement**

We also will host a Brown Bag lunch at the public library November 8, so please take advantage of that opportunity if you can get away for conversation at lunchtime.

We are hopeful that everyone in our community will take a few minutes of their time to provide us their valuable input via our community survey.

The survey is on our website and open for input until November 22. We have partnered with friends in KU's School of Education for survey analysis.

## **Engagement Data from Superintendent Communication**

Our September 27 newsletter sent via email to staff, school families, and some community partners received **16,769 total views**.

There were 420 views of the embedded video message Chief Lockhart and I shared about school safety, and 287 views of linked content.

The majority of views, 66%, were from a mobile phone, and 7 minutes was the average time spent reading the newsletter.

The October 11th newsletter sent via email received **18,684 total views** and 6 minutes was the average time reading.

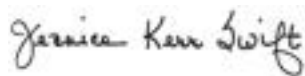
## **Additional Highlights of Superintendent Fall Community Engagement Activities**

- [Lawrence Schools Foundation Kids Expo](#)
- [All Lawrence Public Schools](#)
- [Lawrence Community Safety Fair](#)
- [Lawrence Special Education Advisory Council](#)
- [Lawrence Education Association Trivia Night](#)

- **Rainbow Kids & Families Board of Directors**
- **Schools Foundation Board of Trustees**
- **Foundation Meet & Greet with Jaunelle White**
- **Foundation Community Education Breakfast**
- **USD 497 Principals Meetings**
- **Lawrence High vs Free State Soccer**
- **USD 497, LEA, PAL, Foundation, & Truity All-Staff Mixer**
- **Chamber Taste of Lawrence Mixer**
- **Haskell Indian Art Show**
- **Lawrence Art in the Park**
- **The Chamber Board of Directors**
- **USD 497 Administrators**
- **East Lawrence Neighborhood Assoc. Block Party**
- **Haskell Welcome Powwow**
- **Free State and LHS Homecoming Parades**
- **Candidate Meet and Greet Events**
- **Oct. 8 Community Conversation, BMMS/L-SEAC**
- **Lawrence High School Orchestras Concert**

Thank you, Board Members, for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report; it is an honor to serve the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift  
Interim Superintendent  
Lawrence Public Schools