



Board of Education

Interim Superintendent Report

Monday, September 9, 2024

Jeanice Kerr Swift

I am so grateful to have arrived and settled into Lawrence over this past week, and have really enjoyed starting to get acquainted with Lawrence, including attending Haskell Indian Nations University's Indian Art Market this weekend.

School Tours & Community Events Video

I can't say enough about the highly successful first annual Lawrence Schools Foundation Kids Expo on August 10. I met hundreds of students and families, as well as community partners providing backpacks, school supplies, haircuts, lunch, and other services and resources.

This event spoke volumes to me of our community's generous support of students and families and making sure they had what they needed for a successful start to the school year.

During the first week of school, I loved visiting all of our schools. I saw caring staff and happy children getting to know one another, practicing school routines, and engaging in learning. Our buildings are extraordinary and proof of our community's investment in its public schools.

I finished the first week of school by visiting with more students and families, as well as first responders, emergency management organizations, and social service agencies during the annual Community Back-to-School Safety Fair at South Park. I appreciate that our community's focus during back-to-school time prioritized safety!

Students were fitted with free bike helmets and lots of support from our Lawrence community organizations.

Our multimedia communications specialist, Andrew Beaven, put together this video sharing a few of the photos taken from our welcome tour of schools during the first week of back-to-school in Lawrence Public Schools.

Highlights of this past week included visiting Kennedy Early Childhood Center to meet some of our youngest learners. I was interviewed by talented student journalists with the *Lawrence High Budget* and the *Free State Free Press* and had a great time participating in LEA's Staff Trivia Night.

I also appreciated the opportunity to meet with the co-chairs of the Lawrence Special Education Advisory Council, L-SEAC. My thanks to Carrie Poe and Kristi Heintzelman for their work to connect and support families of students with special needs.

New Student Art Gallery

Members, you'll notice on the south wall here a new student art gallery. Catherine Meihaus, New York and lead elementary art teacher, is spearheading this collaboration among our excellent fine art teachers.

This month, the gallery features the work of Hillcrest and Sunset Hill students, under the direction of their art teachers Michelle Salmans and Bethany Iversen. I appreciate Catherine for leading this project and our F&O staff for ordering and hanging the frames.

Our elementary art teachers asked that I invite the board and community to the **Annual Lawrence Public Schools Elementary Art Showcase** at the Lawrence Public Library October 3rd through the 30th.

Cans for the Community Donation

Our friends with Cans for the Community presented a \$1,000 check to Dena Johnston, Lawrence Schools Foundation executive director, and Julie Henry, nutrition and wellness director, for the School Nutrition Meal Support Fund.

Community volunteers Linda Klinker and Will Lunn shared that a local business plans to match this donation, so my thanks to all of them for thinking of us and supporting school families with negative lunch account balances.

Please keep in mind that our district provides full meals to all students regardless of any lunch account balance.

USDA/KDA \$100,000 Grant

Speaking of school meals, we were thrilled to receive from USDA and the Kansas Department of Agriculture a nearly \$100,000 Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Grant. Nutrition and Wellness Director Julie Henry said that we will use these funds to create a district-supporting bakery at Community Connections at Pinckney.

The bakery will engage with the local food system by prioritizing the use of local grains through expanded Farm-to-School partnerships. It will enhance the recipes and meals we provide in our child nutrition programs, and it will offer job training for students with disabilities attending our transition programs at Pinckney.

Foundation Community Education Breakfast

I'm excited to attend my first Lawrence Schools Foundation Community Education Breakfast Friday morning at the DoubleTree hotel. This event is sold out. Many thanks to the businesses, organizations, and individuals sponsoring and buying tickets to support this fundraiser.

The breakfast will feature student performances and recognition as well as remarks from Lawrence High alumna Jaunelle White, of the Class of 1996. She is the first female athletic director and vice president of intercollegiate athletics at Point University in Georgia.

Lawrence Lions Alumni Association Hall of Honor Induction

It's always great to hear the success stories of our alumni. The Lawrence Lions Alumni Association invites the board and community to save the date and join them for the induction of five distinguished individuals into its Hall of Honor at 2 p.m. October 6, at LHS. The Hall of Honor recognizes graduates of Liberty Memorial and Lawrence High Schools, as well as individuals who contributed significantly to the success of both schools.

This year's inductees are Dirk Wedd of the Class of 1970 and a former Lawrence High football coach; Gwen (Junior) Harwood Wedd, also of the Class of 1970 and longtime LHS Spirit Squad director; the late Mike Browning of the Class of 1964, a dedicated educator, LHS administrator, and community leader; Paul Carttar of the Class of 1971, a social impact strategist and innovator; and Lance Hill of the Class of 1968, an anti-racist activist and educator.

We look forward to this event coming up in October.

In Memory

of the victims at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia

We want to take a moment this evening in this public meeting of the Lawrence Board of Education to remember the two students and two teachers who were killed in the tragic school shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia, last Wednesday.

The students who died were Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14; the educators were Richard Aspinwall and Cristina Irimie.

Mason was described by friends of his family as a lighthearted teen who liked reading, telling jokes and playing video games; Christian was described as 'a very good kid' who was 'sweet and so caring.'

Ms. Irimie was a math teacher who came to the United States from Romania as a member of a dance troupe nearly three decades ago, according to her friends and family members, and was devoted to her students at Apalachee.

Mr. Aspinwall was a math teacher, also, and he served as the football team's defensive coordinator. The players called him 'Coach A' and described him as supportive and uplifting. He had two young daughters.

We recognize that the recurrence of school shootings and gun violence continues as a scourge across our country, and we continue to dedicate ourselves to taking action here in Lawrence, across Kansas and the nation to reverse this horrible reality and ensure the safety of our students at school.

I am grateful to have connected with members engaged in the Be SMART campaign here within our own Lawrence community; Be SMART is a campaign to promote responsible gun ownership in order to reduce child gun deaths.

Secure firearm storage is an important part of keeping your family safe and we can all take the step of ensuring the proper storage of firearms.

Firearms are now the leading cause of death among children in the United States. That's why it's more important than ever for parents and caregivers to know how

secure firearm storage works. It's simple. To help keep your family safe and prevent tragedies, it's crucial to secure your firearm.

Anyone interested may learn more at besmartforkids.org
<https://besmartforkids.org/>

Preview: Fall Community Engagement

Over the coming days of September, we will be sharing more detailed information about our Fall Community Engagement in Lawrence Public Schools, and I am excited to share preliminary information this evening as a *preview of coming attractions*.



~DRAFT~

Fall Engagement Lawrence Public Schools: *A Community Conversation*

“Everything good in life
- a cool business, a great romance, a powerful social movement -
begins with a conversation.

Talking with each other, one to one, is human beings' most powerful form of attunement.
Conversations help us understand and connect with others in ways no other species can.”

- Daniel Pink, *To Sell Is Human*

Engage. Connect. Inspire.

The premise of our engagement this Fall is straightforward:

No one knows better the strengths and celebrations, the challenges and areas for improvement, dreams and hopes for the future than those individuals who live, work and bring their children to

learn and grow in Lawrence Public Schools each day, and those who live and contribute across our Lawrence community.

As we focus the work to enhance equity, inclusion and opportunity for all our students, and prepare to move forward in planning for our future in the Lawrence Public Schools, we want to hear from everyone in the school community.

We will use what we hear and learn in our conversations to inform and align our work with the thoughts and direction, experience, needs and aspirations of our students and staff, parents, families, and greater community.

This Fall, we will also be working with representatives across all sectors in the community: community groups and agencies, nonprofit, higher education, business, and community leaders.

We invite you to participate in this Lawrence Public Schools Community Conversation over the coming weeks. We hope you will join in one of the public meetings, participate in a parent group or school-based conversation and/or access the online survey to share your thoughts.


We want to hear all voices in our community and especially from those who may find it challenging to come out to a meeting. In addition, we will work to extend our reach into the community, connecting to engage at public community events where individuals are already gathering.

Quality public schools are an outcome of caring communities. Successful schools, districts, and communities are those who engage together, and are responsive to the voices, needs, and direction of their stakeholders.

Additional Information and Dates of Community Meetings will be posted here:

Please check back regularly for additional meeting times and locations.

We hope to see and connect with you at an event this fall!



Jeanice Kerr Swift
Interim Superintendent
Lawrence Public Schools

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**Fall Engagement**  
**Lawrence Public Schools: A Community Conversation**

**Questions**

Launching a community conversation to uncover as a community what we need and want most for our students as we move forward in these Lawrence Public Schools. What are our best hopes and dreams for the future of our children, our schools, and our Lawrence Public Schools community.

1) From your personal/family experience, in what areas are we doing well - - what should we continue to strengthen and ensure in our schools?

2) From your personal/family experience, in what areas do we have opportunities for improvement?

3) What do you see as the top priorities as we move forward together this year?

~ What else do you want us to know?

**Timeline**

- Community Conversations: September, October, and November

Ways to Engage:

- Face-to-face meetings with groups: students, staff, parents and families, and community groups
- Engagement and connection at district and community events
- Online survey
- Regular updates on progress shared in Fall Superintendent's Reports
- **Fall Engagement Lawrence Public Schools: A Community Conversation Report to the Board of Education and Community**

December 9 (2nd Monday) 6:00 p.m. Board Business Meeting

January 13 (2nd Monday) 6:00 p.m. Board Business Meeting

This completes my superintendent's report for this evening. Thank you, Members, for the opportunity to share this report this evening.