



## USD 497 News Release

Julie Boyle, Executive Director of Communications  
110 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044  
785-330-1662 / [jboyle@usd497.org](mailto:jboyle@usd497.org)

January 13, 2025

### **Board Purchases Additional AEDs; Reviews Instructional Hours/Inclement Weather**

#### **Purchase of Additional Safety Equipment**

Meeting for the first time in 2025, the Lawrence Board of Education Monday approved the purchase of 17 additional Automated External Defibrillators (AED) for schools and support sites as part of its consent agenda. The board will use \$27,863 from Safe and Secure Schools grant funds to buy the life-saving devices. These state grant funds have helped the board purchase a variety of supports for maintaining safe learning environments. Past purchases include wearable emergency alert badges for staff, a digital content screening safety management tool, security cameras and software, and ALICE violent critical incident training for staff.

#### **Inclement Weather/Instructional Hours Update**

Interim Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift updated the board about instructional hours and inclement weather after a wintry start to our second semester. An historic blizzard brought freezing rain, significant snowfall, strong wind gusts, and a drop in temperatures to the area, causing travel hazards ahead of the scheduled return to school last week. Schools were open for only one day, on Thursday, before a second snowfall compounded travel concerns, leading to a fourth day of school closings.

Dr. Swift noted that additional instructional time was included in the development of the school calendar. It also includes April 21 as an inclement weather make-up day. If the make-up day is used, the state forgives our district an equivalent day. With severe weather affecting districts across Kansas, Swift said that it's possible state school officials may discuss additional support for schools.

"The district is much better positioned this year to navigate the impact of inclement weather on our instructional hours. Our current challenge is that January is early in the winter. It is particularly early to already have taken four inclement weather days," she said. "We should all plan for April 21 – as we always should – as an inclement weather make-up day."

She added that in addition to monthly updates, any needed adjustments to the calendar will be shared publicly no later than March 14.

#### **School Board Recognition Month**

As part of January's School Board Recognition Month, Dr. Swift thanked board members for their public service, leadership, support, and advocacy. She presented each member with a framed piece of student snowflake artwork made by Hillcrest Elementary kindergartner Louise Gleeson in Beth Iversen's art class.

**Board Service:** President Kelly Jones, 2018 to present; Vice President GR Gordon-Ross, 2018 to present; Past President Shannon Kimball, 2011 to present; and members Bob Byers, 2009-2015 and 2024 to present; Carole Cadue-Blackwood, 2019 to present; and Anne Costello and Yolanda Franklin, 2024 to present.

**MORE**

## **Page 2 – January 13, 2025, Board of Education Meeting**

“Members of the board of education give their time and energy, many hours each week to accomplish the work involved in serving at the local level. As members of an elected body, they take on the responsibility for governance through their service on the board. First and foremost, school boards look out for students. Education and children are more than a line or agenda item – students are the critical mission of the daily work of the board,” said Dr. Swift.

### **Special Board Meeting**

President Jones called a Special Meeting at 6 :00 p.m. January 21 to discuss the superintendent search with the Kansas Association of School Boards. Staff, parents, and community members will participate in focus groups this week. A [community survey](#) to collect additional input is open through January 17. The board plans to name a long-term superintendent in March. It has invited Dr. Swift to apply for the position.

###