



Superintendent Report to Board of Education

Monday, January 13, 2025

School Board Recognition

January is School Board Recognition Month. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership and support of our schools and the dedicated public service of Board President Jones, Vice President Gordon-Ross, Past-President Kimball and Members Byers, Cadue-Blackwood, Costello, and Franklin.

We have a small token of appreciation to share with board members. It is an original artwork by Hillcrest kindergartner Louise in Beth Iversen's art class.

Andrew Beaven created this video that we would like to share.

The full text of the [Lawrence Public Schools Board Member appreciation](#) may be accessed here.

Superintendent Report

California Fires

While we have been focused here on winter weather, Californians have been affected by devastating fires. The loss and hardship these individuals and families are facing is unimaginable. I want to acknowledge the resilience of Californians and the heroic work of firefighters and other first responders battling the fires and supporting the people of Los Angeles. We continue to hold all those who are impacted close in our thoughts.

Classified Professional Development Day

Following winter break, we enjoyed spending Friday, January 3, with our classified staff in professional learning. We heard a humorous and important message from Florida teacher-turned-comedian Devin Siebold about the importance of laughter in creating safe and positive learning environments for our students. Staff spent time with their job-alike colleagues across the district and took part in sessions about leadership, wellness, and other topics tailored to supporting classified team members, teachers and students.

Thanks to all who worked hard to put together a great New Year's day of learning and many thanks to all our classified staff members who participated.

January 2025 Blizzard

Thanks to Facilities & Operations Team and LPS Custodians

Many thanks to all our students and staff, families and community for the efforts to navigate the foot of snow and ice, and the community 'dig out' necessary to resume school last week.

I want to highlight our Facilities and Operations crew who braved the foot of snow and frigid temperatures during inclement weather days last week. These valued team members worked around the clock to treat and clear sidewalks, drives, and parking areas on all of our campuses, as well as to attend to HVAC and many other weather-related needs.

We appreciate the hard work of our Facilities and Operations Team, which includes custodial, maintenance, and grounds staff.

Thanks to all on our team who are working today and throughout this week to welcome and support our students to reacclimate and reset back to school in January 2025 for a solid start to this spring semester.

Staff Honors

Just prior to winter break, the Lawrence Schools Foundation surprised Southwest Middle School band director Deborah Woodall-Routledge with its Dedication to Education Award and \$5,000. This honor was created by the sons and daughters of another group of anonymous Foundation donors who founded the Bobs Award for Teaching Excellence, a \$10,000 award, presented in May.

Congratulations to Mike Jones, Lawrence High Director of Bands and the recipient of the Northeast Kansas Music Educators Association Outstanding Band Director Award.

Student Honors

Congratulations to Free State's Regional Debate Champions and best wishes to the team and Coach Parker Hopkins at state.

Congratulations also to Lawrence College and Career Center Academy early graduates who celebrated prior to winter break: **Ryan Carlson, Audri Keeton, Dominic Johnson, Miles Berger, and Elliott Geisler**. We are excited to see what great milestones are next for them.

Donations

Our thanks to **Midco** for their generosity and support of the Lawrence Schools Foundation and our students and families. Midco awarded the Foundation with a grant for \$1,000 toward the Meal Support Program to assist district families in need with their negative meal account balances.

We also appreciate the **Lawrence Breakfast Optimist Club** for donating personalized dictionaries to every fourth grade student in our schools. The Optimist Club has supported this special program for many years.

Priority on Instruction and a Cell Phone-Free Instructional Environment

As we return to school today following the weather related disruption of last week, it's a great time to remind ourselves that we are working together to make a systemic shift, to prioritize the work of our teachers and students and the critical mission of learning across our classrooms by minimizing the distraction of cell phones. All of our staff and students continue to work together to focus on learning and keep personal electronic devices off and away during instructional time. You may read more about the many advantages of reducing cell phone time in classrooms at [Away for the Day](#).

Legislative Priorities

My thanks to board president Jones for representing our district at Friday's Chamber Legislative Priorities Breakfast. The 2025 Kansas legislative sessions started today. We will keep an eye on legislation affecting public education and appreciate the Douglas County delegation for its continued advocacy on behalf of our schools.

Community Engagement

I look forward to bringing the board and public on January 27th a report about our fall community engagement efforts, including a summary of input shared in the survey that our partners at KU are preparing for us. We look forward to our next steps to share this information and explore priority next steps we have heard from our students, staff, parents and community.

Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Monday, January 20th


We are sharing a couple of calendar reminders for everyone. First, there is no school on Monday, January 20 in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King day.

Lawrence Public Schools Dr. Martin Luther King Event

We are excited to invite students, the board, staff, and community to join us for our district's annual MLK celebration: **"ONE DREAM: Protecting Respect, Courage, and Responsibility in the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."** The gallery of student work and educational materials opens at 6 p.m. Thursday, January 23, at the Lied Center. The program follows at 6:30 p.m. and will include musical performances and a celebration of students and staff members who carry Dr. King's ideals forward in their daily lives. Special thanks to the Lied Center for its longstanding partnership and for providing its world-class performing arts space for this annual celebration at no cost to our district.

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