



**Monday, February 24, 2025**

**Superintendent Report to the Board of Education**

**Lawrence Public Schools**

Hello Members of the Board, Staff and Community,

We are delighted to be wrapping up February in the Lawrence Public Schools, and I want to thank our students, teachers and school teams, our parents, families, and community for all their support during these first two months as we have opened calendar year 2025.

**All Are Welcome in Lawrence Public Schools**

We want to reach out today, especially to those who may be experiencing concern at this time in light of continuing state and national statements. These are challenging times, and we recognize that recent developments may cause increased fear among individuals, and may impact those who are the most vulnerable among us.

And so this is an excellent time to reiterate, and deepen, our core values and commitment in the Lawrence Public Schools. We want to reassure everyone that in the Lawrence Public Schools, our practice of support for ALL remains strong.

In Lawrence, we have long led in our work to ensure that we welcome, embrace, support and celebrate each of our students and staff, and *nothing about our firm commitment in policy or practice is diminished in any way by recent state or national statements or actions.*

In the Lawrence Public Schools, we respect and value each student, staff and family member for exactly who they are, and the gifts and uniquenesses they bring to our

schools and community each day. We are strengthened by the beautiful diversity within our community, and we remain deeply committed to ALL students, staff, and family members regardless of their national origin, race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Each individual is a gift, and we value each as a member of our Lawrence Public School community.

### **Student Highlights**

We could not be more proud of **Zana Kennedy, Lawrence High senior** and the **Kansas Student Journalist of the Year**. She is the third LHS student of Barbara Tholen's to earn this statewide recognition in four years. Zana earned \$1,250 and will now submit her portfolio to compete nationally for additional scholarship funds.

Congratulations also to our **girls wrestling team**. We have nine state qualifiers - six from Lawrence High and three from Free State. We wish the best of luck at state to these young women and coaches.

These **Free State High School student musicians** were honored to participate with the University of Kansas Bands in the 23rd annual Prairie Winds Festival at the Lied Center. Eric Bradshaw is their proud band director.

Lawrence High Orchestra members, under the direction of Mariah Barnett, performed Valentine's Day serenades across the district and throughout the city. We enjoyed having these musicians play some classical and pop selections while bringing joy and cheer to our staff in this building last week. Mariah shares that the groups participated in 50+ performances during that one concentrated Friday.

These Lawrence High students earned verbal commendations for their presentations at the **Model United Nations conference** at the University of Chicago. Students learned about diplomacy and international relations and enjoyed some of the sights of the Windy City.

### **Community Outreach**

This is an update about our community outreach efforts, including our digital newsletter and podcasts. As you can see, we are holding strong at almost 21,000 views with an average read time of five minutes.

Our next podcast -- coming soon --- features interviews with **Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year Arabella Gipp, a Lawrence High senior**, and **Junior Youth of the Year Aiden Kong, a fifth grader at Sunflower Elementary School**. I encourage you to give it a listen when it drops into your feed soon.

## **Announcements**

Adding talent to our USD 497 team is among the most important work we do. We are excited to share news of the appointments of **Tina Mitchell** as director of equity and family engagement, and **Sara Murray** as the incoming principal of Quail Run. These individuals bring impressive talent and proven commitment, as well as a student and community focus critical to success in their new roles. Both individuals will begin officially on July 1, 2025.

These individuals completed multiple rounds of interviews, including performance tasks, and engaged thoughtfully with stakeholders. I want to thank the many students, staff, parents and community members who participated in these selection processes, as well as a shout out to our Human Resources Team who guided everyone through process to outcome.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sincerely, Jeanice Kerr Swift  
Interim Superintendent  
Lawrence Public Schools.