



**Lawrence Public Schools
Superintendent Message
& Board Update**

Monday, March 10, 2025

Hello, Lawrence Public Schools Community,

As we begin this 4th quarter of the school year and prepare for spring break, we reach out to share updates in a few key areas, including necessary adjustments to our post-spring break daily schedule and calendar to make up instructional time following inclement weather days, a heads up on the 2025-26 school calendar to be published this week, and some reminders about district processes for maintaining safe learning environments.

Adjustments to Schedule/Calendar to Make up of Instructional Time

Many thanks to our entire school community for its flexibility in working together as we have navigated this historic winter, and prepare now to make up instructional time. I also appreciate our team, including employee group leaders and administrators. They worked collaboratively through the many technical details to refine a plan for making these adjustments.

We will prioritize precious time for teaching and learning with the following steps to ensure that instructional time is made whole for this year as we plan for a strong finish to our school year.

Following spring break, we will make the following adjustments:

- The addition of 15 minutes to the end of the school day every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, beginning March 24 through the end of the school year for all schools.
- The addition of 25 minutes to the end of the school day every Wednesday, starting March 26 through the end of the school year for all schools.
- Our designated inclement weather make-up day, Monday, April 21, will be a full day of school for all students.
- The addition of the equivalent of one day to the end of the school year by:

- Expanding our scheduled half-day of school Thursday, May 22, to a full day of school, and
- Adding an early-dismissal day on Friday, May 23, when all students will wrap up their school year at midday prior to the Memorial Day weekend.
- Please note: Class of 2025 seniors will be expected to attend school for these needed adjustments to the daily schedule beginning March 24; in addition, amended details of the final exam schedule for seniors (May 15-16) will be communicated by our high schools. **For our seniors, there are no adjusted end-of-year requirements.**

Families will receive from principals prior to Spring Break, school-specific schedules with new dismissal times.

2025-26 School Calendar

Significant progress has been achieved to better align our school calendar across elementary, middle and high school levels. Following Board review this evening, the 2025-26 school year calendar will be published this week.

Student Safety Practices

In Lawrence Public Schools, safety will always be our top priority; this commitment includes responding immediately when concerns arise. As part of our culture of safety, we continually update policies, programs, and training designed to promote child safety and protect students from threats present in our society.

Prompt Response When Concerns Arise

Our district has the highest standards for our employees, who are entrusted to care for, educate, and support our community's children. When a safety concern is reported, our administrative team immediately investigates, including involving local law enforcement, as appropriate. Based on investigation findings, we take immediate action in accordance with the law and Lawrence Board of Education Policy.

Continuous Review of Safety Practices in Schools

Our district continues its comprehensive review of safety protocols across all schools to enhance safety, security, and visibility. This includes ensuring clear sightlines into all physical spaces where children are served, so these spaces remain open and observable at all times. All student services are to be delivered in clearly visible areas.

Required Fingerprinting & Background Checks

Criminal background checks (Kansas Bureau of Investigations, Department of Children and Families) are required for every district team member, prior to beginning duty. Names are checked against the KBI Registered Offenders Registry. This checks for violent, drug, and sex offenders. Fingerprinting and an FBI background check are conducted for staff members who have not lived in the state of Kansas for the past ten consecutive years,

In addition, a Department for Children and Families background check is completed on the Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry for all new employees.

The Kansas Department of Education requires a background check and fingerprinting on all new teacher license applicants. Related-services state licensing agencies also require background checks and/or fingerprinting. License status is reviewed for all certified staff during the application and hiring process.

Mandatory Reporting

All members of our team are mandatory reporters. *Any district employee who has concerns that a child may have experienced harm due to physical, mental, or emotional abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse is required to promptly report the concern to the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) office or, if the DCF office is closed, to local law enforcement (Board Policy GAAD).* To support this responsibility, all school employees receive annual mandatory reporting training with documentation of the training maintained.

Information for Parents

Over the coming days, we will continue to share information and resources with families, including a website resource page to share updated information to support parents in talking with their children about safety.

The [Children's Advocacy Center](#) offers sound and trusted guidance for parents and caregivers across many areas of child safety.

Please continue to report any safety concerns you may have to your child's school and encourage your children to do the same. We have school mental health teams to support student and staff needs. If you think your child or family could benefit from visiting with a counselor, please reach out to your school.

We value our partnership with school families and maintaining open lines of communication between home and school as we continue to work together to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

News of a high-profile child sexual abuse case can open the door for parents and caregivers to talk with their students. The following tips have been adapted from [Darkness to Light](#), a leader in child sexual abuse prevention and advocacy for behavioral impact, education and training, and research.

1) Ask open-ended questions to discover student's knowledge about the event, and any opinions that may have already been formed. These questions will help you determine your child's depth of knowledge on the subject, as well as clear up any misinformation or gaps in understanding.

- What have you heard about this case?
- What do you know about child sexual abuse?

2) Let students lead the discussion. Listen more than you talk and let them know you value their beliefs and opinions. Ask follow-up questions ("And then?") to keep the conversation going.

- What would you do if anyone made you uncomfortable or asked you to keep a secret from me?
- What would you do if a friend tells you someone touched him or her in a way that felt uncomfortable?
- How can kids help other kids who are being bullied or abused?

3) Keep your tone light and conversational to ensure students feel safe to open up. A successful conversation promotes mutual learning and future conversation.

- Do you know of anything like this happening at your school, or anywhere else?
- Is there anything else you want to talk with me about?

Caring, high-quality public schools are the outgrowth of engaged and supportive communities. Thank you for all you do to support the educational experiences of our more than 10,500 students and the remarkable teachers, staff, and leaders who serve them each day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift".

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent
Lawrence Public Schools