



USD 497 News Release

Julie Boyle, Executive Director of Communications
110 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044
785-330-1662 / jboyle@usd497.org

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Administrative Announcement



Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift announces the selection of Christine Caffey as principal of Hillcrest Elementary School, effective July 1, 2025. Caffey succeeds Sarah Kruse, who served Hillcrest for five years and has accepted a building leadership position in Topeka.

“We are delighted with the selection of Christine Caffey as she rejoins the Hillcrest team as principal. Her leadership in instruction, in nurturing relationships, supporting positive student behaviors, and ensuring equity and opportunity, as well as her prior experience and history in Lawrence Public Schools, make this selection a wise and strong match,” said Dr. Swift. “We are grateful to the Hillcrest staff, parents, and community members who served faithfully on this

selection team. We are excited for great days ahead at Hillcrest.”

This will be a second homecoming for Caffey, who attended Hillcrest as a student, and then returned there to teach second grade for eight years. This year Caffey has served our district as a behavior support specialist, collaborating with school teams to create behavior support plans and coaching teachers in classroom management strategies to increase student engagement. She also has led for educators and support staff professional development in behavior science, educational neuroscience, and C3T, our multi-tiered student support system.

Prior to joining our staff, Caffey taught second grade for a year in Leavenworth. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Baker University and a master’s at Emporia State University.

“It is with immense pride and gratitude that I step into the role of principal at Hillcrest, a school community that holds a special place in my heart. As both a former student and teacher, Hillcrest helped shape who I am, personally and professionally. To return now as its principal is both an honor and a privilege,” said Caffey.

“As a woman of color, I am deeply honored to serve a school community that reflects the diversity of our city. At Hillcrest – ‘Where the World Goes to School’ – we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to embrace every student’s identity while preparing them to thrive in a global society,” she said. “I am committed to fostering an inclusive, joyful, and academically excellent learning environment, where every child feels seen, heard, and valued. Together, we will write the next great chapter of Hillcrest’s story, and I couldn’t be more excited to begin.”

One of four elementary school sites in our district providing English as a Second Language services to English Language Learners, Hillcrest serves approximately 400 students in grades K-5.

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