



Superintendent Statement

Special Education Services

Monday, June 9, 2025

**Lawrence Public Schools takes seriously our responsibility to serve students and meet their individual needs.** We want to continue to engage directly with parents to problem-solve any concerns they may have regarding our schools meeting the needs of their children.

Our 1,550 professional educators, support staff, and building and district leaders provide **high-quality special education services**, including gifted education services, to approximately 2,430 students.

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) ensures a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities, ensures special education and related services to children, and supports early intervention services for infants and toddlers and their families. Lawrence Public Schools meets these **federal requirements** in ensuring services are provided in the district.

There may be times when parents disagree about the details of a student's special education services. **Our staff takes seriously any concerns shared by parents** about a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and uses the IEP process, which, by law, includes parents, to resolve them.

**The IEP** is the written plan for the child's special education and related services. The team that decides what to include in the IEP is made of school staff and parents, and in the case of children ages 14 and above, students. The IEP Team, of which parents are an active part, makes decisions about special education services based on the unique needs of each child. Schools must give parents written notice of an IEP meeting at least 10 days before the meeting, and IEP meetings are set for a time and place agreed to by both the school and parents. Staff reports progress toward IEP goals to parents at least four times a year.

Additionally, the **state of Kansas requires** school districts to get written consent from a parent before making any change of 25% or more of a special education service or a change to a more restrictive or less restrictive educational environment for more than 25% of the school day.

A parent must be given a **Prior Written Notice** when the school offers to start or change their child's identification as a child with an exceptionality, evaluation for special education and related services, educational placement, or provision of special education and related services. When parental consent is required for special education actions, the parent's consent must be in writing and received by the school before the special education action can start.

**Educational placement** is the educational environment where special education and related services will be provided. It is not a specific physical place or location, such as a specific classroom or school. The IEP team, which includes the parent, determines educational placement. The school decides the physical location for those services.

**When concerns arise with special education staffing** there is clear communication with parents of impacted students. Each situation is worked through individually with each IEP team, including the parent, and compensatory services are offered as individually appropriate. Staff uses a data-based and collaborative process to determine the amount of compensatory services for each student.

There are both **informal and formal methods parents may use to resolve IEP concerns**. **The dispute resolution process, [formal complaints](#), and due process requests** are all part of an important process afforded to parents through IDEA. Every complaint and due process request, even those that are not substantiated, are used by district special education administrators as information to assist with systemic improvements.

In response to a formal complaint filed this spring that IEPs were not being met, the special education investigator with the Kansas State Department of Education determined there were **no findings**, indicating students' needs were being met and IEPs were being implemented in Lawrence Public Schools. The state complaint procedures also include **the right of a parent to appeal** the written decision of the state complaint investigator.

**With regard to truancy**, Kansas law requires school districts to report truancy when students have unexcused absences for either three consecutive school days, five school days in a semester, or seven school days in a school year. Before reporting the student as truant, the school district personally delivers, or mails, to the parent a written notice that if the student does not return to school within the school day after the notice is personally delivered, or three school days after the notice is mailed, then the district has to report the student as truant.

In addition to encouraging scheduling appointments outside of instructional/school hours, the consistent practice in Lawrence Public Schools is to support families in helping their children attend **private therapy service appointments off-site**, if they occur within school hours. There

are potential concerns related to liability, coordination and communication of services, and conflicts with school-based services when school districts host family appointments with private therapists within the school setting, and in Lawrence Public Schools, the district has consistently held that private therapy appointments must be held off campus and, if possible, outside of instructional time.

During the initial rollout of our student information management database tool, PowerSchool, we shared concerns with the provider that general education teachers were unable to **access IEPs**. The district directed special education case managers to provide general education teachers with a copy of student IEPs as staff worked with PowerSchool to resolve this issue.

As a community of learners, Lawrence Public Schools strives to continuously improve. Our doors are open. **The school district welcomes the opportunity to discuss with parents their children's educational experiences.**

In addition, our special education team works collaboratively with the parent-led **Lawrence Special Education Advisory Committee**. L-SEAC's meetings function as a forum for open communication, parent support and student advocacy. Its role is to encourage and facilitate communication and mutual support among families, schools, and the community.

Sincerely,

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

Jeanice Kerr Swift  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lawrence Public Schools