



USD 497 News Release

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Board Approves Certified Staff Agreement & Reviews Annual Needs Assessment

Recognition

The district recognized the 2025 recipients of the Outstanding Citizen and Service to Public Education Awards—honoring runLawrence with the **Outstanding Service to Public Education Award** and Doris Ricks with the **Outstanding Citizen Award**. Interim Principal of Prairie Park Denise Johnson spoke to the board about the generous support of runLawrence for their work with school marathon clubs throughout Lawrence Public Schools and Woodlawn Elementary School through their annual Thanksgiving Day Run. LPS Assistant Superintendent of HR Kristen Ryan celebrated Doris Ricks, highlighting Doris's service to the Equity Advisory Council, the Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee, administrator interview committees, and in many other support roles over the years.

Ratification of Certified Staff Agreement

After entering into a tentative agreement one month ago with the Lawrence Education Association (LEA), the Lawrence Board of Education approved the agreement during Monday's meeting. The tentative agreement included an increase to the certified salary pool of 3.162%, totaling \$1,613,951, which includes a \$800 increase to the base as well as horizontal and vertical movements. The teams approved an addition of \$800 "to the base" (i.e., all cells on the salary matrix for certified staff will increase by \$800). The teams also approved both vertical and horizontal movement for those who meet the criteria outlined in Article 8 of the Salary Schedule. Read the full agreement online.

Assistant Superintendent of HR Kristen Ryan introduced the LEA Negotiations Team co-chairs: Liberty Memorial Central Middle School teacher Josh Spradlin and Prairie Park Elementary teacher Sarah Rossillon—who each spoke about the proposed certified staff agreement. Spradlin discussed the changes to fringe benefits and stipends and highlighted the horizontal movement for staff members on the certified staff salary matrix. "We're still working on salary and that will be our priority over this next year," said Spradlin.

Sarah explained the increase in plan time for teachers at the middle and high school level, referring to the additional plan time for teachers as an effort that was, 'a decade in the making.' USD 497 classroom teachers will have both a professional and a personal plan time each day, allowing time to support their important work to serve students.

Superintendent's Report

In addition to highlighting district updates, Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift shared the following:

- Dr. Swift noted Kristen Ryan's meeting with the Classified Negotiations team to exchange notice letters outlining the topics for upcoming negotiations. Key topics include salary, benefits, and transitioning to the term "Education Support Professionals" (ESPs) instead of "Classified Staff," aligning with the language promoted by the National Education Association (NEA).

- According to the LPS Nutrition and Wellness Department (as of Thursday, July 24), at nine different sites across Lawrence, the 2025 Free Summer Meals for Kids meal service packed, delivered, and served an estimated:
 - **51,700 breakfasts;**
 - **1,755 snacks;**
 - **and 54,500 lunches.**

Overall, these numbers totaled approximately 105,000 meals.

- Dr. Swift previewed back-to-school dates, highlighting the upcoming 2nd annual **Kids Expo**, hosted by Lawrence Schools Foundation on Saturday, August 9th at the Educational Support Center (110 McDonald Drive).
- Back-to-school information, including the 2025-2026 School Hours and School Supply Lists, can be found on the district website: www.usd497.org/back-to-school.

[Read](#) and [watch](#) the full Superintendent's Report online.

New Communications Leadership and Team

Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift announced the hiring of Jake Potter, the district's new Executive Director of Communications, replacing Julie Boyle in the role following her retirement, and Summer Workman who will serve as Coordinator, Communications. Moving forward, valued team member Andrew Beaven will continue to serve on the team as Coordinator, Multimedia. Read the [full news release](#) online.

Annual Needs Assessment

The Lawrence Board of Education reviewed the district needs assessment and school improvement goals. LPS Director of Data and Assessment James Polk shared a presentation with the board, noting that 85% of the 40 Building Goals set by the district established in the summer of 2024 were rated by survey participants as "Operational or Fully Implemented." Polk spoke about the next steps of the district to align feedback from the district's 2024 Community Conversations survey with a plan of action.

Board member Shannon Kimball noted from the district needs assessment that an outline of steps will be necessary to overcome barriers to student success identified by our schools. Superintendent Dr. Swift specifically highlighted the need for full funding of special education as a priority need for the district.

Consent Agenda

The Board attended to policy updates, several business items listed on its consent agenda, including annual renewals, and other district business. Read the [full meeting agenda](#) online.

Executive Session

The board met in an executive session to discuss matters of non-elected personnel.