Superintendent Report to the Board of Education

Monday, July 14, 2025

Hello, Members of the Board, Staff and Community,

We hope that everyone enjoyed a good Independence Day holiday; here in USD 497, we continue in a full court press to be well-prepared for the new school year.

In all of our areas of focus: adding talent to our team to ensure quality, committed teachers, staff and leaders in every building; safe, functional and beautiful buildings; fiscal responsibility to ensure a balanced budget, building capacity and development for the members of our team in serving students well, we are pressing forward to ensure the very best school district for our Lawrence students. My thanks to all of our team members who continue to support and move important work forward during these intense July days of preparation.

We are grateful to many team members from schools and across the district who continue to serve on many rounds of interviews to achieve the selections of candidates, and thanks to members of the Human Resources team who work so very hard to onboard and orient many incoming staff.

Introductions of New Team Members

We are delighted to welcome two incoming leaders, one new to Team LPS and the other a familiar face in an exciting new role.

Dr. Cole Amaya

We are delighted to have recently announced the selection of Dr. Cole Amaya as assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, and we are thrilled tonight to welcome him in person this evening for introduction to the members of the board and community. Cole joins us, alongside wife Lindsey Amaya, and their sons, Brecken, a rising 5th grader and Camden, a rising 2nd grader.

Dr. Amaya has a proven history as a successful education leader, having worked most recently as a district leader in Kansas City, Kansas schools where he also served as a high school principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach for seven years. Dr. Amaya demonstrates a commitment to quality learning and opportunities for all students, and he has lived that commitment through his record of service in schools over time. His experience in inspiring a culture of teaching and learning, collaborating to improve practice by working alongside gifted teacher leaders and principals in schools, as well as his skills in the adept use of data and strengthening of systems to inform instruction have prepared him for leadership and our next steps in Lawrence Public Schools.

Amaya will work with classroom teacher and school leaders in overseeing the curriculum, instruction, and assessment functions that support our critical mission of teaching and learning in Lawrence Public Schools.

Tina Mitchell

Tina Mitchell is an esteemed educational leader who this fall will mark twenty-five years of exemplary service in Lawrence Public Schools. We are delighted to welcome her this evening as she transitions into a new role, serving as the director of equity and student and family engagement in Lawrence Public Schools.

Ms. Mitchell most recently served as the Assistant Principal at Free State HIgh School, working there three years as assistant principal and eleven as a school counselor. Over this past year, our district leadership team worked with school board officers and the Equity Advisory Committee to redesign this leadership position to meet district goals around culturally responsive systems and to support the current needs of students and families.

Mitchell will help define, evaluate, and analyze the effectiveness of family engagement initiatives on student learning, academic success, attendance, and family participation. Working in collaboration with parents and guardians, she will lead efforts to develop meaningful engagement to support education, social services, health, disabilities, and volunteer activities.

Our many thanks to the many individuals on our team who gave their time to serve during robust interview processes in these selection processes.

Special Education

The Special Education Extended School Year (ESY) program successfully concluded on July 10th after five weeks of instruction, running Monday through Thursday in half-day sessions. This year's program provided critical services to **173 students** whose IEP teams determined ESY was necessary to ensure student progress on goals and skills was not jeopardized by the summer break. We were proud to staff the program with 46 certified professionals and 109 classified staff members, ensuring individualized support across all sites. The program was well-executed, with strong collaboration, consistent attendance, and positive feedback from

families. This reflects our district's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, student-centered support throughout the year.

We have made tremendous strides in the hiring of Special Education team members, and we have more work to accomplish in this area of need over these upcoming July weeks.

Disability Pride Month

July is Disability Pride Month. July marks the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law 35 years ago on July 26, 1990. Disability Pride Month reminds us that diversity strengthens us, however every month of the year is a time to celebrate the identities, contributions, and resilience of individuals with disabilities.

It is also an opportunity to reflect on the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and equity in our schools and communities. As a district, we are proud to serve and support students of all abilities, and we remain committed to fostering environments where every learner is valued, empowered, and given the tools to thrive.

Disability rights are civil rights, and in the Lawrence Public Schools, we take very seriously our responsibilities to ensure equity work to support strong opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and for all students

You may access resources and learn more information for disability, family member, and ally resources at cdc.gov

Quality Staff

We are on our summer mission to achieve the goal of a quality staff member in front of every child in Lawrence Public Schools as we open this 2025-26 school year.

In that effort, our Human Resources team is working hard in recruitment, confirming hires, and onboarding activities, i.e. 40 new certified staff recently on July 9th, and new administrators received onboarding just today.

You can see our progress over recent weeks as we continue to add talent to our team, and to reduce the number of open positions, week by week; we will keep working toward our goal of full staffing, the foundation for a strong opening for this school year.

We invite quality and individuals committed to serving students to consider joining our LPS team!

	6/17/2025	6/26/2025	7/2/2025	7/11/2025
CE - Classroom	**34**	**24**	**24**	**19**
Elementary	19	14	12	11
Middle	11	7	7	5
High	4	3	5	3
CE - SPED	**29**	**27**	**24**	**21**
TOTAL	**63**	**51**	**48**	**40**

How the Federal Freeze Impacts Lawrence Public Schools

View USD 497 Federal Funding Freeze Flyer

We have prepared a graphic to illustrate and share the impact of the Federal freeze on funding; the following numbers, prepared by Cynde Frick, Executive Director, Finance, are helpful for our understanding:

Title II - $309,310 - Supports recruitment, preparation, training and retention of effective teachers and principals

Title III - $63,185 - Supports language instruction for English language learners

Title IV - $95,656 - Supports programs and activities aimed at enhancing student success and well-being.

Total $468,151

We are relieved to share that the NASS Title VI funding *has* been awarded.

When we consider the pause, or freeze of these federal funds, we know the importance these funds carry in providing real-time support for our students, specifically in the areas of ensuring quality staff (Title II), supporting English learners (Title III), and supporting student well-being (Title IV).

We know that while federal funds for programming may be on ‘pause,’ our children do not have time to wait. Our students are counting on us; student needs continue, and their growth this year is our mission. Our students will arrive in our classrooms ready-to-learn for their next grade level in just a few days, and we hold the serious responsibility to ensure appropriate plans and supports are in place for every child to experience their best year ever: to learn, grow and achieve this year.

We will continue to monitor this federal funding situation and appreciate the advocacy and outreach of so many who care about our students.

Facilities and Operations

Our facilities and operations team is working literally around the clock to ensure we are ready for the opening of school. From roofs to sidewalks, classroom and school deep cleaning and rehab, we are on the goal of ensuring beautiful and safe classrooms and campuses for the return of school.

Below a few highlights of the summer work in progress across the district:

Summer Maintenance Projects:

- **Asphalt and Concrete: Base Bid - Cordley, Kennedy, Sunflower, LHS, Sunset Hill**
  - **Alternative Work - Kennedy, Sunflower, LHS**
  - **Completed: LCCC, LHS South Parking Lot and ESC**
- **Roofing: ESC - Areas A & B, Schwegler - Areas F, G & I, Woodlawn - Areas B & D, New York - Area G, Hillcrest - Area F, Pinckney - Area B, LHS - Areas B, C &**
- **Building Exteriors: - Kennedy, New York, Billy Mills**
- **HVAC: F&O Maintenance Building, Sunset Hill,LMCMS, ESC**
- **Solar Installation: Sunflower**
- **Hybrid Lighting: Kennedy, Woodlawn, Hillcrest, LCCC, Sunset, ESC, Broken Arrow, Cordley, Pinckney**
- **Casework: Schwegler Phase II and III (13 Classrooms)**
- **Preschool Classrooms:**
  - **Woodlawn Proposed Preschool Room & Restroom**
  - **Sunflower Proposed Preschool Room**
- **Floors: Woodlawn Gym (Partial Replacement and Refinish) and Cordley Gym (Refinish)**
- **Montessori Classrooms: - New York 159**
- **TV Installs: Sunset, Deerfield (Half) and Langston Hughes (Half), New York (6)**
- **Internet Fiber: - FSHS run from Penthouse to the OAF**
- **AP Upgrade: - BMMS, LMCMS, SWMS, WMS**

In addition, for me the clean up and upgrade in landscaping at the **Free State entrance** - definitely a more welcoming entrance for students, staff and community!

IT Preps Devices for Students

Our Lawrence Public Schools IT team has been hard at work the past week - tagging hundreds of laptops, chargers, and power bricks in preparation for our students' return this August.

A big thank you to our amazing IT team for their behind-the-scenes efforts!

Free Summer Meals for Kids

Continue to sign up for **free summer meal kits for children**. Our Nutrition and Wellness and Facilities and Operations staff are doing a great job of distributing breakfast and lunch meal kits to families and organizations that serve children.

Come to our drive-through at the Youth Sports Complex for the last two days of our summer meal kit pickup - taking place tomorrow, Tuesday July 14, and next week on Tuesday July 22 at 6:45-8:45 am (pre-registration required).

Additionally, on-site lunch at Woodlawn Elementary School will continue to be served Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through July 25 at 11:30 am-12:30 pm.

To pre-register for summer-meal kits and to learn more about our Free Summer Meals for Kids, please visit our website at: *www.usd497.org/summer-meals*.

MacBook Community Buyback

Synetic Technologies is offering our district families the opportunity to purchase a refurbished MacBook Air for $375 during their Community Buyback. Sale ends this Thursday, July 18. Apple OS installation, charging adapter, and 90-day warranty are included. Purchased devices will be available for pick-up at Lawrence High School on Thursday, July 31 at 10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Go to synetictech.myshopify.com to purchase a MacBook.

LPS Program Highlights: Lawrence Virtual School
We continue to showcase our programming across the district, and we are delighted to share this brief video to highlight the Lawrence Virtual School program.

For folks who may be considering virtual education, our program is the highest quality in Kansas, and we invite you to reach out to our LVS Team for more information.

Back-to-School Time
We are beyond excited and look forward to welcoming our students to the 2025-26 school year in a very short time.

Back-to-School dates are approaching and we are especially excited about the 2nd annual Lawrence Foundation KIDS EXPO coming up on August 9th.

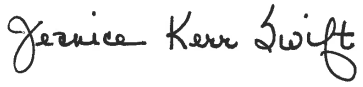
As we review the back-to-school countdown clock, today it shows:

29 days, 13 hours and 39 minutes until opening day on August 13th.

Students, parents and staff, we are excited to post up-to-date Back-To-School information; we anticipate sharing a message with our families this week and also post on a featured back-to-school location on the district website that includes helpful information, including the important school supply list to support our families as you are preparing for the launch of school year 2025-26.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and thank you for the honor to serve the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools

~ Upcoming Highlights / Calendar Dates ~

July

- **Tuesday, July 8th Equity Advisory Committee meeting at ESC at 5:30 pm.**
- **Wednesday, July 9th Certified New Hire Orientation**
- **Monday, July 14th Human Resources New administrator training**
- **Monday, July 14th Student Support meeting with Justice Matters at 1:00**
- **Monday, July 14th Organizational Meeting of the Board**
- **Tuesday, July 15th Meeting with Myron Melton, KSDE, on KESA 2.0 Action Plan**
- **Thursday, July 24th Title IX Training - Required for all administrators/leadership team**
- **July 28-31, Monday - Thursday - School Leadership Team Welcome & Professional Development**
- **Monday, July 28th Business Meeting of the Board**

August

- **August 7th Welcome Back for All Staff**
- **August 8th All-Day District Professional Development**
- **August 9th 2nd Annual Kids Expo - Lawrence Schools Foundation**
- **August 13th First Day of School 2025-26 - Early Dismissal Schedule**