



## **Superintendent Report to Board of Education**

**Monday, August 11, 2025**

Hello, Members of the Board, Staff and Community,

Welcome to back-to-school season as our countdown clock ticks down to opening day for students, with transition day for Kindergarten, 6th and 9th graders tomorrow and school opening coming up on Wednesday, August 13th.

Many thanks to all on our staff who have worked so hard to have our classrooms and schools prepared - warm and inviting places to learn - so we are ready for students on August 13th.

We appreciate all on our team who have engaged with our 2025-26 theme, 'Dignity' - as we all strive to ensure belonging Through a Culture of Dignity.

### **Welcoming The Lawrence Public Schools Team Back-to-School in 2025-26**

Before we welcomed students, we welcomed our teams back to school buildings. Love the back-to-school week over this previous week to welcome school based staff.

### **New Certificated Staff**

The 2025 New Certified Staff Induction took place from August 1–5. New staff officially began on August 1, receiving a warm welcome in their school buildings and opening the day with their Principals. On Monday, August 4, all new certified staff gathered at LHS for a Welcome Breakfast followed by a half day of professional learning.

That afternoon, they returned to their classrooms to continue preparing for the school year. The induction concluded on August 5 at LHS with a variety of choice sessions, including sessions featuring veteran teachers modeling high-quality instruction. The day ended with new staff back in their classrooms, making final preparations for the year ahead.

Elementary staff participated in professional development at their buildings, engaging in professional development supporting the implementation of Handwriting without Tears as well as iOn.

## Staff Preparations

### Highlights: School Teacher and Principal Leaders Welcome All Staff Return, August 7th:

On August 7th, all school teams welcomed staff back-to-school; following are a few highlights from our school leaders to kick off the year by welcoming staff in fun and meaningful ways. Free State High School displayed baby pictures of each new employee to introduce them to staff, and they were posted throughout the building, sparking curiosity and connection. In addition, Colby Stutler, a Free State senior, conducted lighthearted interviews with each new staff member, asking random and humorous questions. This creative activity helped break the ice and set a strong tone of belonging, signaling to new staff that they are a valued part of the Free State culture from day one.

Southwest Middle School welcomed staff back with their theme: “Full Speed Ahead- Bulldog Brave in Action!” Their Admin Team, Dr. Carissa Miles and Jeremy Philipp, set up a track for teachers to walk down as they entered and highlighted how **Culture**, **Clarity**, and **Capacity** align with Southwest building goals for the year.

### Update: Preparing Staff for ParentSquare Implementation

In addition to administrators and coaches, Office Staff have also received training on the new messaging platform, [ParentSquare](#). The photo below is from July 29th at ESC, when administrative assistants and registrars participated in the training.



Since all staff returned from summer on Thursday, August 7th, training has occurred for all levels and staff are off and running with this new tool! Between August 7th and August 8th, more than 900 communications were shared between staff, families, and students.

POSTS  
**322**

DIRECT MESSAGES  
**588**

ALERTS  
**31**

## **Special Education**

The Special Education Team welcomed 32 new staff during induction last week. All certified Special Education staff joined together on Friday morning for Special Education procedural updates and a professional development on Specially Designed Instruction, provided by Greenbush.

Special education paraeducators participated in a full day of professional development today, alongside other Education Support Professionals.

Photos below are USD 497 Special Education Certified staff PK-12+ in August 8th PD on Special Education procedural updates and a representative from Greenbush presenting on the important topic of Specially Designed Instruction.



## **Educational Support Professionals**

So exciting to welcome ESP professionals today at the Doubletree - thanks to LHS Cheer who welcomed the group!

## **Facilities and Operations Update**

We aren't ready to go back to school until our buildings are prepared; we want to share a special shout out to ALL on the Facilities and Operations team who have worked so very hard to prepare our classrooms and schools for a great school year ahead. A detailed report follows.

## **Finance Update**

We have received our 2025-26 allocations for Title II, III and IV from KSDE, and we are pleased to share that the allocations are very similar to last year.

Next Steps with Budget: We look forward to a budget update this evening, ahead of upcoming Budget Hearings set for September 8th.

## **Student Safety and LPS Guidance on Immigration**

Safety remains our top priority in the Lawrence Public Schools, and we will consistently connect with our staff, parents and community when concerns arise.

In light of continuing concerns, this is a critical time to clarify our work regarding immigrant and refugee students in the Lawrence Public Schools.

It is important to note, despite recent announcements, that the law and our practice in Lawrence Public Schools have not changed. The [Kansas State Department of Education](#) guidance, "...We remind school personnel that their ultimate responsibility is the education and protection of all students. All students have a constitutionally protected right to receive an education."

The Lawrence Public Schools remain deeply committed to supporting ALL our students and their families, regardless of national origin, religion or immigration status; we stand in strong support of our students and their families. Our school and district teams work every day to ensure that ALL children are welcomed, embraced, and valued as important members of our USD497 learning community in each of our classrooms and schools; this fundamental core value and practice remains firm today.

In the Lawrence Public Schools, members of our teams will continue to follow the law and abide by board-approved policies regarding investigations and/or arrests on school grounds. Further, in keeping with the law, we will not share any student data without a warrant, subpoena, or other lawfully issued court order.

In the Lawrence Public Schools, we will continue to abide by all state and federal laws protecting student information and ensuring student safety.

Valuing our diversity as a strength is a core value in the Lawrence community, as is evidenced by the input and feedback we have consistently received from our students, staff, parents and community.

In the Lawrence Public Schools, we view diversity as our strength, and we respect and value each of our students and their families. We are honored to work and live in a diverse, international school environment and we appreciate this as a gift that enriches our community.

We understand that many of our children and families are experiencing concern as a result of recent national developments, and we will continue to reassure all within our community of our ongoing engagement and support. As is true every day, our school teams, teachers and principals remain ready to support our children and families who are experiencing concerns.

#### **Reminder for ALL: District Cell Phone Guidance**

Cell phones should not be seen, heard, or interfere during the instructional class period (i.e., bell to bell - no cell). As part of the daily bell-ringer activity, students should be instructed to store their phones in either a backpack or a teacher-designated area.

### **“The Why” Behind the Cell Phone Policy**

1. To prioritize a focus on teaching and learning within our classrooms.
2. Cell phones represent a significant educational distraction not just for the students using them in class but also for teachers and others in the classroom.
3. We want to achieve a quality, focused school day experience by supporting student engagement in learning, focusing on academics, and building healthy relationships with peers and school staff.

Lawrence Public Schools will maintain a Cell Phone-Free Instructional Day to prioritize and enhance focus on teaching and learning.

Student Cell Phone Expectations: Cell phones and personal electronic devices must be off and stored out of sight during instructional hours; devices should not be seen, heard, or interfere with instruction.

#### **Elementary Students, PK-5th Grades**

Personal technology devices (cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, etc.) must be kept in backpacks. Cell phone use or personal electronic devices are not allowed during the scheduled school day for early childhood through fifth-grade students.

#### **Middle Schools Students, Grades 6-8**

Student use of cell phones and personal electronic devices at the middle school level is prohibited during class time and passing periods. Principals may use their discretion when deciding on device use during lunch periods.

#### **High School Students, Grades 9-12**

Student use of cell phones and personal electronic devices at the high school level is prohibited during class time unless utilized for a specific instructional purpose, as directed by the teacher. However, high school students can use personal electronic devices during non-instructional activities, i.e., lunch and passing periods.

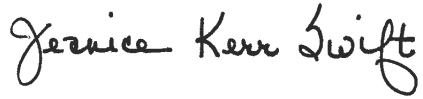
#### **KIDS EXPO 2025**

We were privileged to join with so many individuals, groups and agencies from across the Lawrence community last Saturday for the 2nd Annual KIDS EXPO choreographed by our own Lawrence Schools Foundation. Bike helmets, back-packs, school supplies, and haircuts were shared with students - so many community groups were present with one shared purpose and goal: to offer support for students and families in feeling well-prepared for school!

Thanks to Dena Johnston and the Foundation Team, Board and hundreds of volunteers who come together as a community for this amazing event!

Thank you for the opportunity to share this report, and for the honor of serving the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lawrence Public Schools

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## **Facilities and Operations Updates**

### **Asphalt and Concrete**

- The contractor will complete site clean up this week and finalize punch list items at Kennedy and Sunflower.

### **HVAC**

- ESC - Status remains the same. Units are working, thermostats set to be replaced, control installation is progressing well.
- LMCMS - The shutdown relay issue is being resolved and is the last remaining item before completion. The unit is currently running.
- F&O Mechanic Shop - Estimated completion 8/11/25, currently 95% complete. The exhaust fan installation is the last item to be completed. The units are currently running.
- Status of SWMS - The contractor is making repairs to chiller #2 to provide an additional backup to our system. Repairs have been made. There is backup ability to support SWMS/Sunflower HVAC needs.
- Sunset Hill RTU replacement is scheduled for Monday August 11th. Building and parking lot will be clear to allow for the crane to be on site from 7am-11am. School staff were previously scheduled to be out of the building Monday for PD.

### **Building Exteriors**

Billy Mills Middle School, New York Elementary and Montessori, and Kennedy Early Childhood Center

**Sunflower Solar Installation**

Current installation at Sunflower is complete. The system will be energized in the near future.

**Playground Equipment Installation**

Deerfield and Sunflower