



USD 497 News Release

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Lawrence Board of Education Meeting Summary

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Swift shared a wide range of updates and highlights from throughout Lawrence Public Schools, including:

- **Indigenous Peoples Day** was celebrated in a variety of ways throughout the school district on Monday, October 13. One example was a spirited ceremony that visitors from New Zealand and Alaska performed for students and staff at both Hillcrest and Cordley elementary schools to teach students about their tribes' native cultures through language, music, and dance.
- The district is inviting the school community to provide survey feedback to the **Safe Routes to School** program. A link to the survey was sent last week via ParentSquare, and can also be accessed on the district website at:

<https://www.usd497.org/parents-and-students/transportation>

This initiative focuses on encouragement, education, enforcement, evaluation, and engineering solutions to improve walking and bicycling to schools. The survey window closes on November 10, and will provide planners with recommended changes and adjustments to better meet community needs.

- The **LPS Learning Exchange** debuted a new philosophical approach to district professional development – 'For teachers. By teachers. With teachers. In service of students.' On Friday, October 10, staff members attended teacher-led sessions focused on maximizing internal talents and strengthening from within. The morning PD session yielded some of our most positive feedback in recent years, with requests that we continue in this direction. Similar Learning Exchanges are scheduled for January 5 and April 17.
- Our Communications team has been working to support the implementation of the ParentSquare messaging platform, and conducted a **Safety Alert Test** of the system on Thursday, October 9.

They have also been working to share events, happenings, and announcements district-wide, and in the last four weeks, report that our district Facebook page has amassed over **4.3 million views**, representing a **41% increase over the last four weeks**. In addition, we have gained an additional **+1,215 followers** over the last 4 weeks, an **8.4% increase**. This brings us to a grand total of **15,873 followers**.

- **Lawrence Schools Foundation** hosted their annual community education breakfast on Friday, September 26. The event was held at Burge Union at the University of Kansas, and featured **Jerod Nieder** as a keynote speaker (FSHS 2001), and honored four LPS high school seniors as this year's Foundation Student Champions: **Carlos Gomez Cordova** and **Joshua (Josh) Galbreath** from Lawrence High School, and **Sara Kumar** and **Aiden Murray** from Free State High School. The sold-out event raised \$142,000, in addition to a new \$10,000 endowment fund and scholarship in Mr. Nieder's name as a gift from his classmates, friends, and family and in support of his 'Positively Paralyzed' advocacy platform.

Last week the Lawrence Schools Foundation selected **Sunflower Elementary school custodian, Katie Logan**, as their A.C.E. Award winner. The **A.C.E. (Award for Commitment & Excellence)** Award honors educational professionals whose work positively impacts students, colleagues, and the broader LPS community.

- Preview of **College and Career Night** at the Lied Center (6:30 - 8:00 p.m., Thursday, October 23). A partnership between LPS and the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers has worked to host more than 50 universities, community colleges, and trade schools to share educational and scholarship opportunities with high school juniors.
- As an update to preliminary planning of classroom additions at **Langston Hughes Elementary** to address ongoing overcrowding at this location, we have had the opportunity to hear from members of the Langston Hughes community, meet with members of the City of Lawrence team, and receive additional input from LPS team facilities professionals. In order to allow additional time to engage more fully with staff, students, parents, neighbors, city representatives, and to plan for integrated updates to the building to address infrastructure and related needs, the project timeline has been extended to Summer 2027.
- **Late Fall/Winter Community Engagement Opportunities** are being scheduled. We look forward to engaging with students and staff, families and community, in-person and online, to hear feedback on our progress and next steps for our schools.

During these upcoming sessions, tentatively scheduled for November 2025 thru February 2026, we will build on the themes shared from last fall's conversation; include updates of our progress in the priority areas our community shared; highlight a draft of an updated USD 497 Strategic Plan; and hear from our stakeholders as to strengths and areas for growth, how their school experience is going this year.

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

Reports & Board Commentary

A brief Facilities Committee report was provided from a meeting held on October 8, and board commentary was provided from each of the six members present.

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda of architectural services approval for planning and development of Choice Centennial Campus; change order for building exterior maintenance and improvements at

Billy Mills Middle School; HVAC service work at Liberty Memorial Central Middle School; purchase of Atlas Curriculum Management System of pre-K-12 curriculum; 25-26 student handbook framework; board policy GAACB - employee whistleblower; board policy JH - student activities; board policy JBCD - enrollment of military students; board policy IB - school site councils; board policy JBC - enrollment; personnel report; financial reports; donation report; monthly vouchers; and September 24 meeting minutes (consent agenda was approved with a 6-0 vote).

Access a link to the [full meeting agenda](#) online.

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