



Superintendent Report

Board of Education

Monday, October 27, 2025

Hello Members of the Board and Community,

As we near the end of October, we are so grateful to our students, teachers, support staff, and leaders, as well as our families and Lawrence community who are working together to ensure a strong second quarter of this school year.

Parent/Teacher Conferences – Fall 2025

District highlights of October include a robust Parent/Teacher Conference attendance. We are grateful for the time and attention invested by our staff in preparing meaningful updates to share, as well as for the great number of parents and families who made time in busy schedules to connect with their child's teachers in a collaborative effort to support the success of our students and schools.

- **Elementary schools reported an average attendance rate of 95.10% for Fall 2025 conferences, a 0.39% increase from last fall.**
- This continues a strong trend of family engagement and partnership across all elementary campuses in Lawrence Public Schools.

A few highlights, as shared by our elementary leaders:

- **Deerfield (96%)** – Hosted an exceptional PTO-sponsored “tailgate” event with family-favorite grilled meals that drew large crowds.
- **Langston Hughes (98%)** – Langston Hughes held an impressive 568 general education and 83 special education conferences, totaling 651 successful family meetings in just two days.
- **New York (96%)** – Multiple classrooms achieving 100% participation, showing nearly a full percentage point increase overall.
- **Prairie Park (95%)** – The book fair and specialist-led family engagement nights were well-attended with a 1.25% increase in overall participation.
- **Quail Run (99%)** – Up 3% in attendance; a shout out to Quail Run art teacher, Mr. Von Holten, who personally met with 46 families, offering a creative, inclusive value add to fall conferences.

- **Woodlawn (97%)** – A 4% increase from last fall, reflecting growing family engagement and strong communication between home and school.

College and Career Night

Last week, Lawrence Public Schools hosted a successful **Fall 2025 College and Career Night** on Thursday, October 23, in partnership with the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

The event was held at the Lied Center of Kansas from 6:30–8 p.m., with representatives from more than 50 universities, community colleges, and trade schools available to share educational and scholarship opportunities.

Nearly 150 students and their families attended this event, and alongside our own students from Lawrence High School, Free State High School, College and Career, and Lawrence Virtual School, the fair gained regional interest with students participating from Veritas Christian School, Overland Christian School, Piper High School, and Seaman High School. We even had five middle schoolers in attendance from West and Billy Mills!

We are proud of the collaborative effort, and are confident that this annual event will continue to build momentum and grow as an excellent connection between our students and post-secondary opportunities.

Human Resources - Recruitment and Retention

Our Human Resources team has been busy this Fall as we continue our work to attract talent into the Lawrence Public Schools, continuing work to fill some vacancies that remain for our current school year, as well as planning ahead for 26-27.

On Thursday, October 23, this board room space was transformed into a relaxing Recruitment Cafe for an [Educator Recruitment Fair](#). I am so proud of our entire HR team for planning and hosting a warm, welcoming and productive event for nearly 15 applicants to become more familiar with Lawrence Public Schools. I also want to recognize the support received from our Teaching & Learning Department and a number of our building principals, who also attended and conducted on-site interviews for opportunities across the district, and resulted in a number of job offers for the attendees.

I especially loved the individual, handwritten notes from staff members sharing ***Why choose LPS?*** you can see examples here.

We hope to continue to host these types of recruitment events moving forward to offer a more personalized approach in connecting with individuals interested in joining our team.

Facilities Update: Centennial Choice Campus

Last week, members of the team and I visited the site that will reopen as the Centennial Choice Campus. I felt inspired walking through the building and seeing the layers of history reflected in its walls. This building has supported many eras, programs, and people over the previous decades. The program it will support now addresses the need to provide the option of a flexible, non-traditional, personalized learning environment for high school students. As we continue our work to reopen and

reimagine this historic building, we are committed to using existing materials responsibly and honoring the building's legacy while creating a space that meets the needs of today's learners.

Communications Web Data

We routinely report on our social media engagement, but I wanted to shift gears a bit and focus on the primary digital presence of Lawrence Public Schools, which is our organization's web site – www.usd497.org.

Since August 1 of this year, our web site enjoys a total of 85,000 active users, with over 250,000 page views. Those represent clicks to any portion of our web page, which may be clicking for information from news from our main page, individual school sites, or internal links of importance and regular reference by our staff members.

GoogleAnalytics provides our team with a number of different ways in which we can analyze traffic to our site, over a specified duration of days/weeks/months, or a real-time check-in. For example, one of the images on the slide taken from this morning was from a period of 30 minutes just before Noon, indicating that 127 users had been on our site, and 18 users within the past five minutes when the report was reviewed.

Ad Hoc Generative AI and Evolving Technologies Advisory Group

This week, we will be sharing a community-wide invitation for applications to participate in an important advisory group. The **Ad Hoc Generative AI and Evolving Technologies Advisory** was called for by the board and identified as a priority need for our district.

We anticipate that the work of this committee will mirror several priorities and themes shared with us by our community last year in the areas of student achievement and support, safety and well-being, and ensuring a quality staff. [A link to this committee application](#) will be sent tomorrow via ParentSquare to our staff, families, high school students, and also made available on our web site. Applications will be accepted between October 28 and November 14, with hopes of an initial meeting scheduled for early December.

At a minimum, the committee shall include two board of education members; staff representatives from classified, certified, and administrative employee groups; two community members with content knowledge in education, technology, policy, and/or other relevant areas; one representative from both district unions (LEA and ESC); and student representation from high school levels. This effort will be facilitated by James Polk and Jake Potter.

AVID Financial Literacy Night

Kansas State Treasurer Steve Johnson will visit Lawrence Public Schools to present a Financial Literacy and College Savings session for USD 497 middle school AVID students and their parents/guardians. **The event will be held Tuesday, November 4, from 6:00–7:00 p.m. in the West Middle School Library (2700 Harvard Road).** The presentation will highlight practical strategies for saving for college and building financial literacy at an early age. As part of the evening, there will be a \$100 scholarship drawing for one student from each middle school in attendance. This collaborative learning opportunity reinforces the district's commitment to removing opportunity barriers and college and career readiness through the AVID program.

High School Fall Productions

We are proud of the creativity and dedication that define our performing arts programs across Lawrence, and both of our high schools have exciting productions coming up.

Lawrence High: Our gifted Chesty Lion performers invite the community to experience the production of *Trap*. **The show runs October 29-30 and November 1 at 7 p.m. in the Lawrence High School auditorium.**

Free State: Our talented Firebird performers invite the community to enjoy their fall musical, *The Addams Family: School Edition*. **The show runs Nov. 6 - 8 at 7 p.m. in the Free State High School auditorium.** Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students.

Dignity in Action – Crosstown Showdown Middle School Visits

Last Friday, [our middle schools were treated to displays of school spirit](#) welcoming their arrival from both Lawrence High School and Free State High School of the members of the bands, spirit squads, and football teams who shared high fives. It's a great day anytime our high school students are able to visit younger students throughout the district, as they are excellent role models and offer a glimpse into what future years might look like as they continue to advance throughout Lawrence Public Schools.

Fall Sports Results and Preview

We have now moved into the post-season of the 6A Kansas State High School Athletics and Activities Fall Sports calendar. Some sports have already completed their seasons, while others will still be competing into early November. I have included a detailed update on Girls Golf, Girls Tennis, Gymnastics, Girls Volleyball, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys Soccer, Football, and Unified Bowling.

Congratulations to all our Fall Sports Athletes; we are proud of your hard work and accomplishments this season!

Girls Golf – Lawrence Free State High School qualified an impressive team of six golfers for this year's 6A Girls State Tournament, held in Hesston, Kansas, October 20-21. Congratulations to those student athletes for making the cut: Laurel Stancil, Claire Heinritz, Tola Jankowski, Mallory White, Haylee Graham, and Avery Longberg.

Girls Tennis – The Lawrence Free State High School girls tennis team scored enough points combined to secure a 2nd place finish at this year's Championship, held October 17 and 18th in Olathe. In Doubles competition, the team of Taryn Jones and Annie Pilakowski took 9th place. In Singles, Cami Lee finished in 7th place, and Eli Ward capped off an undefeated 24-0 season, is the 6A State Champion! And even sweeter is the fact that Eli is only a freshman, with 3 more years of eligibility!

Gymnastics - Last Saturday at Olathe East High School, Girls Gymnastics held their State Competition. This year, the top eight teams qualified for the state meet, based on the average of their top three meet scores from throughout the season. The top five gymnasts in each event who did not qualify as a

member of a team also competed at the state meet, based on the average of their top three event scores from the season.

Competing on this year's teams were: Naomi Klopfenstein, Becca Liljestrom, and Jensen Wallace for Lawrence High School; and Harper Huston, Lucy Koch, Emi Stone, and Cleo Trigg for Free State. Both teams were led by Coach Alexis Gonzalez.

Free State High School finished in 5th place at the State Competition, led by Harper Huston's all-around 3rd place finish. And Lawrence High school finished in 8th place.

Girls Volleyball – The Girls Volleyball 6A State Championship begins this Friday in Salina. The Free State Firebirds are one of eight teams that qualified for the tournament, and they are locked-in as the 8th seed, with a regular season record of 20-12. Their first match of pool play is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. this Friday against Mill Valley High School.

Boys & Girls Cross Country – 6A State Cross Country, for both boys and girls, takes place right here in Lawrence this Saturday, November 1, at Rim Rock Farm.

Regionals results from last Saturday:

The Free State Girls Cross-Country team finished in 3rd place, with finishes by Taylor Hulcher (4th place); Eloise Frye (11th place); Nadia Karapuda (12th place); and Beau Hulcher (13th place). The Free State Boys team also finished in 3rd place, with finishes by Nicholas Johnson (3rd place); Jonah Frye (8th place); Jasper Hansen Terry (13th place) and Anderson Bateman (16th place).

The Lawrence High Girls team finished in 8th place, with finishes by Andie Garrett (14th); Chloe Griffith (29th); Juliet Outka (38th); Hayley Swart (59th); Tessa Sanders (61st); Annabella Ackerman (62nd) and Emily Unekis (63rd). The Lawrence High Boys team also finished in 8th place, with finishes by Oliver Schwartz (6th); Garrett Rhea (35th); Logan Druen (36th); Riley Swart (44th); Conner Popp (49th); River Cunningham (53rd).

Boys Soccer – 6A Boys Soccer playoffs: Boys soccer is in regional play, with the state tournament scheduled for next week. The Firebirds finished the regular season 6-8-2. They are the 12th seed in the West Regional and head to Liberal (12-4). Their next game is scheduled for Tuesday, October 28 at 6 p.m. The Chesty Lions finished the regular season 11-4-1, and on Tuesday at 6 p.m. they will host Blue Valley North (8-7-1) in the East Regional.

Football – We are now in Week 9 of the high school football season in Kansas, which is also the first round of the post-season. This Thursday, October 30, Lawrence High School travels to Shawnee Mission Northwest, and on Friday, October 31, Lawrence Free State High School will host Olathe East. The winners of those two games would play each other next week, meaning we could be treated to a second Crosstown Showdown.

Unified Bowling is still technically in their regular season, with regionals scheduled for November 11, and the State Competition scheduled for November 18.

Taste of Lawrence Community Event

Highlighting a special community event coming up next week: the Chamber of Commerce's annual Taste of Lawrence event where we will have an exhibitor presence for this special evening. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Douglas County Fairgrounds from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 6. We will be using this event as a 'soft launch' of our next wave of Community Conversations that will result in an update of our Strategic Plan. We will soon have other times, dates, and locations scheduled, but wanted to share that our team will be present and accessible at next Thursday's community event. I'd also like to publicly thank the Chamber for offering a friendly discount for our employees wishing to attend this community social event. Tickets can be purchased online by visiting the website: lawrencechamber.com

Food Security Across Our Lawrence Community

As we enter into November, we are especially mindful of all those who may be in need across our community as the federal government shutdown continues. This includes our 1,149 students whose families may have delay or miss their SNAP/Food Assistance this month, as well as many others who are impacted more widely.

Tomorrow, members of our team will join in a community meeting at the Lawrence Public Library to discuss the overall response of our community food pantry system in the face of this potential delay or non-funding of SNAP benefits in November.

As a preview of coming opportunities, we will be working to launch a **Days of Gratitude** community food mobilization event during November through our schools, in coordination with our student groups, schools and community partners and agencies. Together we will meet this moment of concern in our Lawrence Public Schools and across the wider Lawrence community.

Quality public schools are a hallmark of engaged, caring communities who value children, their quality education, and our collective future. We are grateful for your partnership in support of students, staff, schools, and our Lawrence community.

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

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools