



USD 497 News Release

Jake Potter, Executive Director of Communications
110 McDonald Dr. Lawrence, KS 66044
(785) 832-5000x1662 / jake.potter@usd497.org

November 10, 2025

Lawrence Board of Education Votes to Appoint the 4-Place Finisher from November 4 Election to Fill Board Vacancy

Superintendent's Report

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

- **Let's LIFT Lawrence!** has effectively launched at all district locations, focused on keeping school pantries stocked. Meal kits and donated shelf-stable items are being sent home with students. Building principals report that donations are received throughout the day, and that shelves are empty by the end of each day. Food and financial contributions are being accepted, in partnership with the Lawrence Schools Foundation, and used to help keep families fed. A district web page has been created (www.usd497.org/lift), which includes 12 recipes tested and developed by the district's Wellness and Nutrition team (see: "[Pantry Cookbook.](#)")
- Lawrence Public Schools are actively implementing the **CharacterStrong Word for the Month: Gratitude**. Over the past four weeks, elementary classrooms across the district have engaged in this CharacterStrong unit. Usage data shows over 329,000 seconds of instruction, which equates to approximately **91.5 hours** of direct social-emotional learning focused on recognizing and expressing gratitude in daily life.
- **Lawrence Parents as Teachers** was recently recognized as a **Blue Ribbon** affiliate status – the organization's highest recognition of quality and fidelity standards for sites administering Parents as Teachers. Earning Blue Ribbon Affiliate status recognizes the hard work and dedication of our incredible staff and reflects our deep commitment to support children, family engagement, and strong community.
- Applications for an **Ad Hoc Generative AI & Evolving Technologies Advisory** are being accepted through November 14, with hopes of an initial meeting scheduled for early December. We have already received **over 50 applicants**, with a wide range of perspectives and experiences related to generative AI and Evolving Technologies. We are looking forward to important conversations on this dynamic topic, and the opportunity to bring recommendations to this board for consideration in early 2026.
- **AVID** College Readiness and Family Night activities were highlighted at multiple school locations during the last several weeks. West Middle School hosted a **Financial Literacy and College Savings Night**, where three scholarships were awarded and students and their parents received valuable insight into the importance of financial planning for postsecondary

education.

- The **National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)** named **Officer Lindsay Bishop as a NASRO Practitioner**. [The National SRO Practitioner program](#) was established as a way for NASRO, police agencies, and school districts to recognize officers who have excelled in the area of school-based policing. The program seeks to distinguish those officers who are committed to serving our nation's youth, along with the communities and schools they serve. To obtain the status of National SRO Practitioner, officers must meet certain requirements including completion of over 220 hours of specialized training, and have a minimum of three years of service as a School Resource Officer.
- **Community Conversations are being scheduled for Late Fall/Winter**. These community engagement opportunities will serve as opportunities for feedback to be received and assist with the district's update of the strategic plan. The next scheduled session is on Saturday, November 22 (7:30 - 10:30 a.m.), at the Lawrence Farmers' Market.

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

Reports & Board Commentary

Board President Gordon-Ross acknowledged results from last week's Election Day, and shared appreciation in service to the city and school board.

The Equity Advisory Council met on November 4 and welcomed several new committee members, and also discussed several areas of focus for future meetings.

Board Vacancy

Following a member resignation received on October 27, the board discussed statutory requirements and best practice for addressing a board vacancy. The proximity to a recent board election on November 4, 2025, was discussed and the option of appointing the 4th place finisher as a way to honor community support. Election results have not yet been certified as of November 10.

Motion: *"I move the USD 497 Board of Education appoint the fourth-place finisher in the November 2025 school board election to fill the current board vacancy. The appointee's term shall begin on January 12, 2026, and continue until the next regularly scheduled election for that seat, in accordance with applicable Kansas law and board policy,"* (motion approved with a 4-0 vote, Member Byers recused himself for this action item discussion and consideration).

KU Jayhawk Blueprint

Annual update of Jayhawk Blueprint was provided by Dr. Cole Amaya, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning. Jayhawk Blueprint is a concurrent college program, hosted in partnership with the University of Kansas. Eight course offerings are taught at Lawrence High School and Free State High School, allowing students the opportunity to earn college credit at a reduced rate, while finishing high school diploma requirements.

The University of Kansas provides free tutoring and academic support to students. 445 students took advantage of Blueprint dual enrollment during the 2024-25 school year, earning a total of 2,633 credits. Tuition is just over \$100 per credit hour, and no costs are required for course materials. Lawrence

Public Schools provides scholarships and need-based assistance for economically impacted students. Since 2018, the Lawrence Schools Foundation has provided over \$150,000 for students to participate and enroll in courses, and since 2020, Truity Credit Union has contributed nearly \$140,000.

Future growth opportunities for this program include enhancing scholarship assistance with a goal of 100% tuition assistance for all interested students; implementing individual plans of study beginning in 6th grade; alignment of post-secondary assets; and offering differentiated diploma pathways as a value-add for all students involved.

A video testimonial for the program was provided by Margann Bennett (parent) and LPS graduate, Evan White (daughter). Dr. Millinda Fowles, director of academic programs from the University of Kansas, represented K.U. to speak to the strategic initiative of building vibrant communities and sharing student success and a commitment to continuing the partnership with Lawrence Public Schools.

Consent Agenda

The board approved a consent agenda of architectural services; civil engineering and planning services; engineering and MEP services; and structural engineering and construction administration services (Langston Hughes Elementary School Expansion); increase to administrative salary pool for 25-26; October 27 meeting minutes; personnel report; monthly vouchers; donation report; and financial report (consent agenda was approved with a 5-0 vote).

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

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