



**Superintendent Report
Board of Education
Monday, November 17, 2025**

Hello Members of the Board and Community,

We continue to embrace two themes guiding our work this month: the practice of gratitude and a celebration of community partnership. Our schools are engaging to ensure the habits of gratitude, choosing to appreciate people, experiences, and community while demonstrating the powerful impact gratitude has on well-being, connection, and resilience. At the same time, our districtwide [Let's LIFT Lawrence](#) initiative continues to showcase the extraordinary ways our community partners come together to support one another to ensure no family goes without essential support. We are profoundly grateful to everyone contributing to this unified effort.

Let's LIFT Lawrence: A Team Effort

Our buildings continue to model what it means to **Lift Lawrence**. This week, principals and team members have coordinated pantry replenishment across sites as shelves continue needing daily restock. Schools have swapped ingredients, assembled meal kits together, and communicated emerging needs to ensure families receive consistent support.

Last week, requests for additional meal kits and pantry items came from four school sites, and through the coordinated efforts of our Communications Team and the [Lawrence Schools Foundation](#), business partners quickly stepped forward to adopt and to stock up in those locations of additional need. In addition, with the help of our ESC team members, **we were able to move dozens of meal kits from Deerfield Elementary to New York Montessori**, illustrating just one of the many ways our schools have collaborated to ensure each site has what it needs.

We are deeply grateful for the Lawrence School Foundation, and their continued leadership of the **Adopt-A-School Pantry Initiative**, which connects local businesses and organizations with school pantries across the district. Their message to Foundation partners this week expressed appreciation for the community's outpouring of support and outlined coordinated donation pick-ups and deliveries taking place November 17–20, ensuring all pantries are fully stocked before Fall Break. This shared effort reflects the compassion and teamwork that define our community.

We remain grateful for the partnership and responsiveness of our schools, families, businesses, and organizations as we work together to meet the continuing needs of our students.

Ruby Bridges Gratitude Event

Last week, schools across Lawrence honored the legacy of Ruby Bridges, marking 65 years since her courageous walk into William Frantz Elementary. Students participated in reflective activities, classroom

learning, and schoolwide events centered on bravery, justice, and the ongoing work of equity in education.

At Quail Run Elementary School, students learned about Ruby Bridges and the profound impact of her actions. Students also decorated their own Ruby Bridges shoe to honor the steps that she, and so many others, have taken to ensure school is a place for everyone. Several students wrote messages on their shoes, sharing what Ruby's story means to them and the steps they will now take thanks to her including "kindness," "bravery," and "hope." One student wrote, "Because of Ruby's footsteps, I will take a step toward courage."

Our communications team [highlighted this important event on our district website](#) on Friday.

LHS Culinary Arts: Real-World Sauce Competition

[Lawrence High School culinary students](#) recently participated in a district flavor challenge, partnering with Kansas State University dietetic interns Madison Lowen and Kate Ralston.

Under the leadership of Culinary Teacher Rose Berry, students explored the nutritional standards governing school meals before competing to create original sauces that were flavorful, compliant with federal guidelines, and appealing to student tastes.

The schoolwide tasting event drew enthusiastic participation, and the winning sauce, "Chesty's Chicken Sauce," developed by Jory, Kemper, and Saylor, will be added to the spring lunch menu.

We are delighted that this hands-on experience strengthened culinary skills, nutrition knowledge, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving for students is an exceptional example of applied learning.

Communications Update

The Communications team continued providing essential support across district initiatives this week, updated and maintained content for www.usd497.org/lift, facilitated school pantry support requests, and promoted the AI & Evolving Technologies Advisory as the application window closed on November 14.

The team also advanced layout and production of the district's quarterly newsletter mailer, scheduled for delivery through the Lawrence Journal-World in the coming weeks.

In addition, the team participated in the monthly Douglas County Public Information Officer meeting, receiving professional development from [KU Professor Matt Tidwell, Ph.D.](#), on effective crisis communications, and coordinated district participation in a countywide emergency management exercise planned for the spring.

The team is gathering nominations for the Rick Doll Teamwork Award, preparing for the Friends of Education event on November 19, and finalizing plans to coordinate upcoming Community Conversations Strategic Plan Update booth at the Lawrence Farmer's Market on November 22.

Since the beginning of the school year, we have seen sustained and meaningful engagement on our district's Facebook page. Over the past month alone, our team has worked intentionally to share content that is both engaging and informative for our community.

In October, posts reached more than 4.4 million people and generated 5.7 million views, marking significant increases in audience interaction. We also welcomed 4,700 new followers in the last 90 days, bringing us close to a new milestone of 16,000 total followers. These metrics reflect our community's strong interest and investment in staying connected to the work happening across our schools.

Early Childhood Education Learning

Recently, a team of leaders who are participating in a year-long AASA National Early Learning Cohort participated in the November meeting as well as a Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools site visit. We appreciate Woodlawn Elementary Principal Brandon Daley, Sunflower Elementary Principal Amanda Green, and Director of Elementary Schools Jayci Roberson for their work to tour early childhood sites, observe district demonstrations, and engage in collaborative learning, alongside early learning leaders from across the country. The visit reinforced what is possible when early childhood, K–12, and community support function as one system.

Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Conference

I am grateful to have President Gordon-Ross, Members Cadue-Blackwood, Franklin, and Kimball, participate in days of professional learning hosted by the Kansas Association of School Boards over this past weekend in Wichita. The conference theme was Ad Astra – Aim Beyond, and board members were the key audience, regardless of years of experience within their key civic service to their respective districts. Topics ranged from school finance, legal and regulatory issues in education, boardmanship, Artificial Intelligence, and communication. Member Kimball led several sessions, respective to her important advocacy role and work for KASB. I can confidently share that we all learned new things, perspectives, and made new connections with our counterparts throughout the state of Kansas.

We also heard keynotes from Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, and former NASA astronaut and Air Force fighter pilot, Ron Garan. Both provided impassioned speeches in support of public education, and honoring the commitment and perseverance required to overcome challenges and exceed expectations in support of our students and staff.

Upcoming Events

In the week ahead, we look forward to several meaningful opportunities to connect and engage with the community. This Wednesday, we will host the Friends of Education event here at the Education Support Center, where we will honor the many exceptional volunteers whose partnership strengthens our schools and makes a deep impact in the lives of our students and staff members. We are grateful for their dedication and look forward to recognizing their contributions.

As a reminder, all schools will be closed next week for Fall Break, and our district buildings, including the Education Support Center, will also be closed to the public during this time. We hope this break offers rest and renewal for our students, families, and staff, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back the following week.

The strength of our public schools is rooted in a community that cares deeply for its children and their learning. Your partnership continues to make a meaningful difference for our students, our staff, and our schools.

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

Wishing everyone a safe and peaceful fall break,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial 'J'.

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools