



**Board of Education
Superintendent Report
Monday, April 27, 2026**

Hello Members of the Board and Community,

As we focus on a strong finish to this 2025-26 school year, we continue to feel gratitude for our students, teachers, support staff, and leaders, our families, partners and community, for the inspiring work that occurs in our classrooms and schools each day. It is the result of everyone working together to support our students to ensure they learn, grow and thrive in Lawrence Public Schools each day.

I am delighted to share the following highlights:

Annual District Arts Show

[The annual District Arts Show was held Friday evening at the Lawrence Arts Center](#), bringing together students, families, staff, and community members to celebrate student artists across Lawrence Public Schools.

The event highlighted the strength of our arts programs and their role in supporting student voice, creativity, and belonging. We are grateful to our art educators and the Lawrence Arts Center for creating meaningful opportunities for students to share their work with the broader community.

Kansas Teacher of the Year Regional Recognition

Lawrence Public Schools was proud to be represented at the 2027 Kansas Region 2 Teacher of the Year banquet in Topeka, where [Cordley Elementary's Amanda Carlson was honored as a district finalist](#).

Congratulations, Amanda Carlson on this well-deserved recognition and for the meaningful impact you make in the lives of Lawrence students each day over many years.

Lawrence Schools Foundation Earns Legacy Award

[The Lawrence Schools Foundation was recently honored with the 2026 Jayhawk Performance Legacy Member Award](#) from the University of Kansas Department of Health, Sport, and Exercise Sciences.

This recognition reflects the strength of the partnership between the Foundation and Jayhawk Performance, and the shared commitment to expanding opportunities for Lawrence Public Schools students. We are grateful for the Foundation's continued leadership and investment in student success.

Lawrence High School Educator Honored with Lied Center IMPACT Award

We are proud to celebrate **Mike Jones**, Lawrence High School band director as this year's recipient of the Lied Center IMPACT Award.

Selected by the Lied Center, Friends of the Lied board members, USD 497 ambassadors, and past recipients, the IMPACT Award recognizes educators who demonstrate leadership in their field, artistic integrity, a deep commitment to arts education, and innovation in their work with students.

Mike's impact is evident not only in the strength and long-term excellence of the LHS band program, but in the relationships he builds and the opportunities he creates for students to grow, perform, and find their voice.

Mike Jones will be formally recognized on stage at an upcoming Lied Center performance.

Bloom n' Zoom

Lawrence Public Schools [first annual Bloom 'n Zoom Fun Run](#) brought more than 130 staff members together for a morning focused on wellness, connection, and community.

Held at the Lawrence Sports Pavilion, the event created space for staff to engage in a fun, non-competitive activity while connecting with colleagues and local partners. We are grateful to the many sponsors, volunteers, and participants who helped make this inaugural event a success and a celebration of staff well-being.

Thank you to all the participants, volunteers, and sponsors for a fun and festive celebration of the health and well-being of USD 497 staff.

Kindergarten Orientation Success

We welcomed incoming Kindergarten students and their families during [Kindergarten Orientation events held across the district](#).

Each of our elementary schools created engaging and welcoming experiences to help rising kinders begin building connections, comfort and confidence. From themed activities to classroom visits and student-led welcomes, our teams ensured families felt supported and excited for the transition to school.

We look forward to officially welcoming this outstanding group of learners for their first day of school coming in August.

Prairie Park Culture Day

Students at Prairie Park Elementary engaged in a meaningful day of learning centered on Native American culture through hands-on experiences and community partnerships.

[Students connected with guests from Haskell Indian Nations University](#), participated in culturally grounded activities, and learned directly from student leaders representing Native youth in Lawrence. These experiences provided opportunities for students to deepen understanding, build connections, and engage with culture in authentic and memorable ways.

Prairie Park's youngest learners gathered to meet NaFehna Farve (Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence and Lawrence High School student) and Riley Alva (Jr. Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence and Southwest Middle School student), who both spoke to the kindergarten and first grade classes about their cultural traditions and what it means to them to represent their community.

LHS CTE Innovation

[Lawrence High School's annual Career and Technical Education Innovation Expo](#) highlighted the depth and diversity of student learning across CTE pathways.

From engineering and health sciences to the arts and culinary programs, students demonstrated real-world skills through hands-on projects and interactive experiences. The event reflected the breadth of our CTE programming and the meaningful ways students are preparing for future careers and continued learning.

From woodworking and health science to film and fine art, Lawrence High's Career and Technical Education pathways showcased the depth and range of a robust CTE experience. Students demonstrated their learning through hands-on, real-world applications—from robotics and advanced woodworking projects to culinary production, and award-winning visual art displays.

Communications Data

Over the past 30 days, Lawrence Public Schools' Facebook presence has demonstrated the strong sustained growth and increase in engagement we have experienced with our community throughout the school year.

In the past month, the district's content generated more than 158,000 views and nearly 15,000 total interactions. That's a 59% and 69% increase respectively. This compares to the start of the school year when content generated approximately 96,000 views and only 5,700 interactions, reflecting significant and sustained growth.

Our social media channels are an effective tool for sharing district stories, celebrating student and staff success, and reaching both our core audience and broader community. The community can follow us on Facebook at 'Lawrence Public Schools' and visit our website for news and updates throughout the school year at: www.usd497.org.

Looking Ahead: Graduation 2026

As we focus on a strong finish to this 2025-26 school year, we are excited in only three weeks to celebrate the Class of 2026, our graduates across Lawrence Public Schools. Each of these ceremonies represents the culmination of hard work, growth, and perseverance. We look forward to honoring students from across our programs as they wrap up a strong school year, and take their next steps.

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

As you all are aware, we have been exploring how best to address rising costs of healthcare, and as a part of that analysis, we have researched self-funding. Invite Ms. Frick to share background on this next step in the district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift".

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools