

NEW YEAR NEW MEMORIES!



February 2024
NEWSLETTER



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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Neighbors,

If you, like me, find so many current news headlines concerning, you may also be wondering how we could change the outcome of the current trajectory of what happens around us?

Through a book study of "Deep Kindness" by Houston Kraft, many of our staff continue to read, discuss, and reflect on kindness. We talk about how badly we need more of it in this world. We ask ourselves whether we truly practice it, like we expect our children to practice their spelling words, math facts, or playing an instrument or sport.

A premise of Kraft's book is that acts of kindness are not so simple and should not be random.

"Kindness is a behavioral byproduct of competencies that can be nurtured in the classroom. We know from research in the fields of education, psychology, and child development that the number one way to create a more kind world is to teach it," Kraft said.

While our teachers expertly guide our scholars to improve their skills in reading, math, social studies, and science, they also pour their hearts into teaching them how to be kind people and become their best selves.

We have adopted CharacterStrong, a curriculum that Kraft cofounded, as a districtwide tool for supporting our scholars in feeling a sense of belonging, improving their well-being, and increasing their engagement. From social



skills to emotion regulation to effective goal setting, CharacterStrong helps us teach what research identifies as key abilities all students need to be successful in academics, their school community, and their lives beyond school.

If you have a child in our schools, ask them what character traits they are learning at school and ways they think they could practice these skills at home.

"Deep Kindness" suggests we must develop kindness as a habit through intentional, daily practice. Like keeping a New Year's resolution, it's difficult and requires commitment, effort, determination, and perseverance.

Just imagine how we might change future news headlines by teaching our children to develop the habit of kindness and practicing kindness ourselves every day, until it becomes our "new normal" way of life.

Sincerely,
Anthony S. Lewis, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Board Meeting
Calendar

The Lawrence Board of Education meets at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, unless otherwise announced, at 110 McDonald Drive.

Upcoming Meetings:

March 25
April 8 & 22
May 13 & 28
June 10 & 24

- Review agendas at usd497.org/SchoolBoard.
- Write to the board at SchoolBoard@usd497.org.
- Sign up to speak at PublicComment@usd497.org before 6 p.m. on the date of the meeting.
- Watch meetings/archives at usd497.org/Webstream or on Midco channel 26.



- Job Openings
- 2024-2025 School Calendar
- School Menus
- Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Application
- News Releases
- Board Committee Updates



Lawrence Public Schools
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Anthony Lewis, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

This newsletter produced by USD 497 Executive Director of Communications Julie Boyle and Multimedia Communications Specialist Andrew Beaven in partnership with the *Lawrence Journal-World*.

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Our COMMUNITY'S PLAN for School Progress

OUR PROCESS



LISTENING & LEARNING TOUR



STRATEGIC PLAN



- 1 COHESIVE CURRICULUM
- 2 STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING
- 3 SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS
- 4 EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEES
- 5 DATA-INFORMED DECISIONS

OUR PROMISE



Lawrence Public Schools will ensure that **students of all races, backgrounds, and abilities** achieve at high levels, **demonstrate proficiency** in reading by third grade and in math by eighth grade, and **graduate on time prepared for success** in college and careers.

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TRUITY
CREDIT UNION

Working Together to Provide a Strong Foundation for Reading

During some of the days and Wednesday afternoons when students are not in school, early childhood and elementary teachers use that time to improve reading instruction. Lawrence Public Schools has shifted the focus of most of its elementary professional learning time to teacher training in the science of reading.

Relatively flat reading scores across school districts in Kansas, including Lawrence, led to the Kansas Legislature's passage of the Every Child Can Read Act. Mirroring the Lawrence school district's strategic plan, the act aims to ensure that all students move toward grade-level proficiency in literacy, especially by third grade. The state requirements include teacher training to identify students with dyslexia, a neurological condition that affects reading and spelling, and provide interventions to support their reading progress.

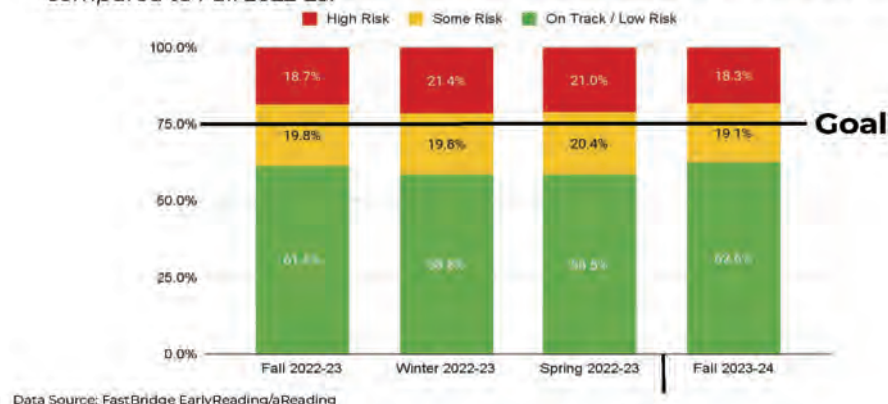
The Kansas State Board and Department of Education has invested \$15 million to provide Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling or LETRS training. USD 497 earmarked \$300,000 of its federal Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief funds to pay early childhood and elementary educators to participate in the training.

LETRS teaches teachers the structured literacy approach. It emphasizes highly explicit and systematic teaching of all important components of literacy. These include foundational skills, such as decoding and spelling, and higher-level skills like reading comprehension and written expression. Structured literacy also emphasizes oral language abilities, including phonemic awareness, and is considered an evidence-based practice for teaching students with dyslexia.

All district principals serving early

Reading (Grades Kdg-10)

Fall 2023-24 shows an increase of 4.1% of students on track/low risk compared to Spring 2023, and an increase of 1% of students on track/low risk compared to Fall 2022-23.



% of Students On Track/Low Risk by Race

All six race subgroup populations indicate an increase in % of students scoring on track/low risk since Spring 2023.



childhood and elementary students are taking LETRS training for administrators, and 100% of the district's early childhood educators and 78% of elementary teachers are participating.

At Sunset Hill Elementary, 100% of educators are involved. "Our teachers are phenomenal, and they bring a skill and an art to what they do. LETRS training adds more tools to their toolbelt," said Principal Jeremy Philipp. "Investing in teachers' professional development is one of the biggest investments we can make, because we want to build them up as

professionals."

Kendra Luna, a veteran educator teaching in the first grade at Sunset Hill, encourages colleagues, no matter their teaching tenure, to jump in. "This is really great training for all teachers, from first-year teachers up to teachers with 30 years of experience. It also gives us a scope and sequence for how we need to be explicit in teaching reading," Luna said.

Luna assists her elementary colleagues in ways to share with school families their students' reading progress and

interventions, and simple ways that families can continue to help build their children's reading skills at home.

The Lawrence Board of Education purchased a new primary reading resource, Benchmark Advance, in the spring of 2022. It provides guided lessons on phonics, phonological awareness, comprehension, fluency, and writing aligned to the science of reading.

The district uses a student support system called a Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention or Ci3T to guide decision-making and determine needs at the district, building, classroom, and individual student levels. The framework outlines responsibilities, expectations, methods of assessment, and monitoring of student academics, behavior, and social skills. The use of this districtwide model helps our schools ensure equity and access in engaging all students.

A part of this framework is universal screening, a systematic process for identifying students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes or schools that need more support due to large numbers of struggling students.

The district began using FastBridge, a norm-referenced national assessment, during the 2021-22 school year to track student progress in learning reading skills. These skills increase in difficulty across the screening windows from fall to winter and spring.

FastBridge is a formative assessment, meaning educators use its data to inform their instruction and make necessary adjustments to meet the individual needs of students.

"This data helps our educators answer

the questions, 'What do my kids not know yet?' and 'What do they already know?'" said Chief Operations Officer Patrick Kelly.

The screening process for reading includes students completing the FastTrack reading assessments. They consist of four subtests in earlyReading for students in kindergarten and first grade and a combination of AUTOreading, aReading, and CBMreading for students in grades 2-10.

reading for all of our scholars," he added.

Dr. Lewis set a goal to identify a caring, adult mentor for every student – someone outside of the student's family and school community - to help them increase their interest and self-confidence in reading. The district has partnered with Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters (KSBBBS) on the One Initiative.

KSBBBS matches adult volunteers (Bigs) with students (Littles) referred to



District Reading Goal: By the end of the 2025-26 school year, 75% of students in grades K-10 will score as low-risk or on-track on the Spring FastBridge aReading or earlyReading assessment.



The district's reading goal is that by the end of the 2025-26 school year, 75% of K-10 students will score as low-risk or on-track on the spring FastBridge "aReading" or "earlyReading" assessments.

Fall 2023 "earlyReading" scores for students in Grades K-1 showed an increase of 8.8% of students on track or at low risk compared to Spring 2023. Fall 2023 "aReading" scores for students in Grades 2-10 showed an increase of 2.5% of students on track/low risk compared to Spring 2023. When disaggregated by racial subgroups, the data shows disparities in the reading progress of African Americans and Native American students.

"When we think about equity, literacy is equity," said Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis, noting the district's continued focus on high expectations for all students, understanding the students being served, and culturally responsive teaching. "It's going to take teachers, parents, and our community working together to support improvement in

the program by school student services staff in consultation with students' families. One-on-one mentorship occurs at school, either before-or-after school in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence or during lunch. The commitment: one 30-minute visit a week for one school year, during which 50% of the time is spent reading together.

Research shows that children who spend time reading aloud have higher self-esteem and better grades. Children who are able to read to an adult have a stronger vocabulary and increased attention span. KSBBBS reports that 80% of participating youth maintain or improve their academic performance.

Become a One Initiative mentor by visiting kansasbigs.org/be-a-big or contacting Andi Rosser at arosser@kansasbigs.org or 785-422-9498. Mentors must complete an informational session, background check, and interview, and provide references.



Make a BIG DIFFERENCE

The One Initiative is a partnership between Lawrence schools and KSBBBS that focuses on helping each participating youth **increase their interest in reading and grow 1 step in their self-confidence over 1 school year via the support of a no-cost, adult 1:1 KSBBBS mentor.**



HOW DOES THE ONE INITIATIVE WORK?

- 1 student is matched with 1 best-fit volunteer mentor (Big) from KSBBBS
- 1:1 mentorship occurs at student's school during before/after school care or lunch time
- 1 visit a week for 30 minutes over 1 school year, where 50% of time is spent reading together

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE A BIG?

- Must be over 18
- Complete a background check, interview, and references
- Commit to visiting your Little for 1 school year

BECOME A BIG



[KANSASBIGS.ORG/BE-A-BIG](https://kansasbigs.org/be-a-big)

Questions? Contact Andi Rosser | 785.422.9498 | arosser@kansasbigs.org

New High School Graduation Requirements

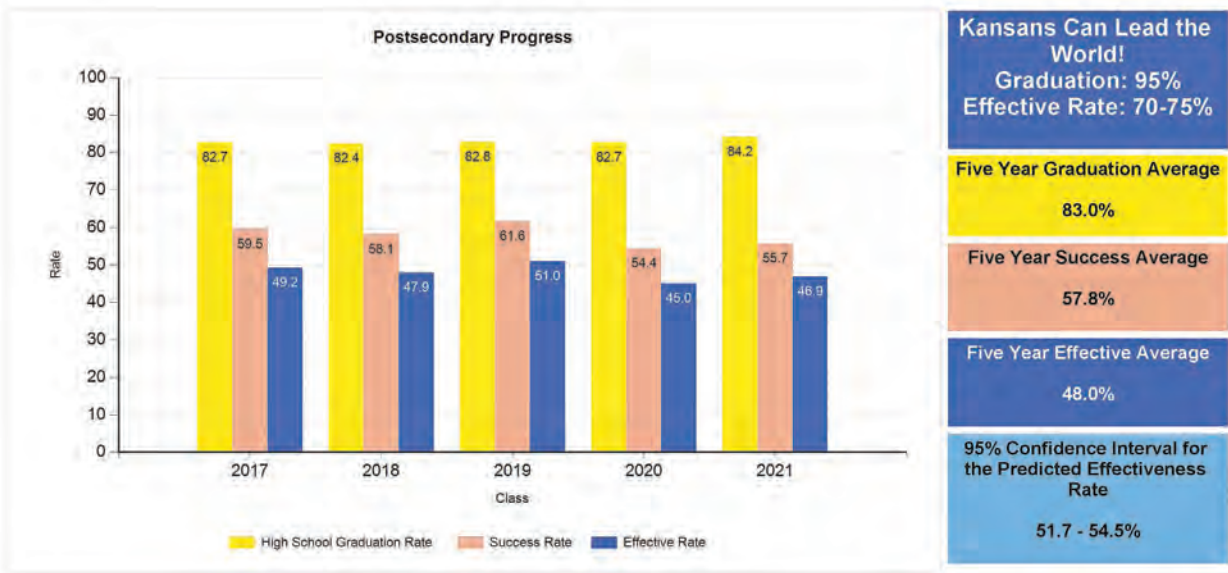
The Kansas State Board of Education approved new high school graduation requirements for the first time in nearly 20 years. The changes were based on the recommendations of the Kansas Graduation Requirements Task Force, on which Lawrence Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis served. While state minimum requirements remain at 21 units of credit, changes to how those credits are earned take effect with the Class of 2028, current eighth graders. Each local school board must adopt policy requiring its students meet the state's new minimum requirements; however, boards may choose to exceed them.

Lawrence Public Schools has exceeded the state's minimum requirements, expecting students to earn 23 units of credits for graduation prior to the emergence of COVID-19 and for the Classes of 2025-2027. The Lawrence Board of Education approved a waiver during the global pandemic, reducing to 21 credits the graduation requirements for the Classes of 2020-2024.

Looking toward the future, the school board has raised the bar. It approved a recommendation developed with input from district administration, high school building leadership teams, and site councils and informed by community members participating in "Portrait of a Graduate" public input sessions. Beginning with the Class of 2028, students must complete 24 units of credit to earn a Lawrence high school diploma.

New USD 497 graduation requirements, beginning with the Class of 2028, include:

- ◆ 4 Units of Communications
 - 3.5 credits of English language arts & .5 credits of communications
- ◆ 4 Units of Society and Humanities
 - 3.0 credits of social studies & 1.0 credit of fine arts
- ◆ 7 Units of STEM
 - 3.0 credits of science, 3.0 credits of math, & 1.0 credit of STEM elective
- ◆ 9 Units of Employability and Life Skills
 - .5 credit of physical education, .5 credit of health, .5 credit of financial planning, .5 credit of career and postsecondary planning, & 7.0 elective credits



Postsecondary Effectiveness

While a major milestone, high school graduation is not the finish line. To help districts determine if students are continuing the road to success two years after graduation, the Kansas State Department of Education looks at three different measures and uses a five-year average.

- Graduation Rate: The 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school as ninth graders four years earlier (adjusting for transfers in and out).
- Success Rate: A student must meet one of the four following outcomes within two years of high school graduation: earned an industry-recognized certification while in high school, a postsecondary certificate, or a postsecondary degree, or enrolled in postsecondary in both the first and second year following high school graduation.
- Effective Rate: The calculated Graduation Rate multiplied by the calculated Success Rate.

The postsecondary predicted effectiveness rate recognizes that Kansas communities are different. This measure attempts to level the comparison by recognizing certain risk factors (cumulative

poverty, chronic absenteeism and student mobility) as influences on success. Accounting for the degree to which risks factors are present, this measure predicts a district's expected effective rate.

District Postsecondary Effectiveness Goal: By the end of the 2025-2026 school year, Lawrence Public Schools will increase its Postsecondary Effectiveness to 54%.

Postsecondary Assets

The state's new graduation requirements also include students completing before graduation two or more postsecondary assets aligned with their Individual Plan of Study (IPS), and unless opting out, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). According to the National College Attainment Network, "FAFSA completion is strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment: 92% of seniors who completed the FAFSA enrolled by the November following graduation vs. 51% who did not complete a FAFSA."

Postsecondary assets generally fall into two categories: academic and community/work-based assets:

- ACT composite score of 21 or higher
- WorkKeys level silver or higher
- 9+ college hours
- State Assessment scores of 3 or 4 for math, ELA, science
- ASVAB per requirements of military branch selected
- SAT score of 1200 or higher
- Completing Board of Regents curriculum
- International Baccalaureate exam (4+)
- Advanced Placement exam (3+)
- CTE Scholar
- Seal of Biliteracy
- 90% attendance in high school
- Two or more high school athletics/activities
- Senior exit interview/senior projects
- Youth apprenticeships
- 40 or more community service hours
- Client-centered projects
- Workplace learning experience directly related to a student IPS
- Industry-recognized certifications
- Eagle Scout or Gold Scout
- 4-H Kansas Key Award
- JROTC

District Math Goal: By the end of the 2025-26 school year, 75% of students in grades K-2 will score as low-risk or on-track on the Spring FastBridge aMath or earlyMath assessment. By the end of the 2025-26 school year, the number of students in grades 3-8 and entry-level high school math courses (2023-2024: Introductory Algebra, Algebra I, and Geometry/Advanced Geometry) scoring at Levels 3 and 4 on the KAP Math Assessment will increase by 10% each school year.

New Secondary Courses

The school board also approved new course additions for the 2024-2025 school year.

- Algebra 1 in Manufacturing Processes, Entrepreneurship, and Design (Grades 10-11) - Students will learn all Kansas Algebra 1 standards through relevant, interactive, and fun career and technical education projects.
- Geometry in Construction (Grades 10-12)
- Integrated Algebra/Geometry 1 (9-11)
- Integrated Algebra/Geometry 2 (9-12)
- Production Methods (9-11) - Students will learn knowledge and skills required for fabricating products using a variety of materials.
- Project Lead the Way App Creators (Grades 7-8) - This course introduces students to the field of computer science and the concepts of computational thinking, through the creation of mobile apps. Students are challenged to be creative

and innovative, as they collaboratively design and develop mobile solutions to engaging, authentic problems.

Director of Secondary Curriculum Shaun Hanson said that since not all students leaving middle school are ready for Algebra 1, the district wants

to help fill the gap in pre-algebra knowledge and skills for some students entering high school.

"These course additions are data-driven decisions based on student needs," said Hanson. "We are looking at our postsecondary effectiveness and math goals when making these decisions."

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STEAM @ LMCMS Next Fall

As Liberty Memorial Central Middle School (LMCMS) prepares to launch a new focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) in the fall, its staff wants the school community to know that the redesign won't change the things they have loved about the

school for 100 years, it will just make it better.

"The STEAM program is going to be a way that we can teach our standards, but in a slightly different way. Students aren't just being fed the material from the teacher. They are getting a

problem, learning how to solve that problem, and learning information through their own activities in order to gain a better understanding of that concept," said Josh Spradlin, LMCMS science teacher.

Among redesign goals: improving

student achievement, success, and well-being, as well as growing school enrollment by building a community of innovators and problem-solvers. LMCMS students can expect more inquiry-based instruction. Staff will encourage students to ask questions and explore creative ways to solve



STEAM@LMCMS OPEN HOUSE



4:00 P.M. MARCH 6 & 6:30 P.M. MARCH 7

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challenges through teamwork, community partnerships, and cool projects that expand what they know and can do and get them ready for bigger adventures in high school and beyond.

"A lot of these open projects don't really have a teacher directly controlling everything, so we put a lot more personality or effort into it, because it's a passion project at that point. That's something I really enjoy about these, and you can take your time on them and really put all the effort you can into them passion project at that point," said MJ Kuhn, LMCMS eighth grader, of STEAM.

The redesign won't happen overnight. LMCMS staff will be involved in professional development around STEAM and project-based learning and will ease into these changes. They will build on a solid foundation of effective instruction toward innovative teaching and learning that sparks students' curiosity, encourages discovery, and motivates them.

Like all public schools in the state, LMCMS will still be responsible for the Kansas standards. LMCMS staff will work to connect English, math, science, and social studies concepts through STEAM learning projects. These connections will empower students to learn by doing as they solve practical challenges through collaborative, hands-on experimentation.

"It was really exciting. It made it worth going to school. I just felt like

I invested more time into it than other classes, because I felt like I was accomplishing something and learning something at the same time," said Graham Hall, LMCMS eighth grader of participating in a STEAM learning project.

LMCMS also will emphasize the benefits of participating in fine arts. Staff will guide all sixth graders to explore band, choir, orchestra, art, and theater, and then select for further study an area of interest. Students will continue to grow in their chosen areas of interest in the fine arts during seventh and eighth grades.

All Lawrence middle schools offer Project Lead the Way. It serves as the foundation for exploration of careers, including careers middle schoolers may have someday that do not yet exist. As community partnerships develop, business and industry partners can provide students professional mentorship.

Future STEAM courses based on student interest may include 3D Design, Coding, Energy and the Environment, Science of Technology, Magic of Electrons, Green Architecture, and Medical Detectives, and Flight and Space.

STEAM @ LMCMS is open to any students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in the fall. Families interested in learning more about STEAM @ LMCMS may attend an Open House at 4 p.m. March 6 or 6:30 p.m. March 7 at LMCMS.

Beyond the Boardroom

Meet with your elected school leaders.



We look forward to visiting with you from 6:30-7:30 p.m. April 9 at Hillcrest Elementary, 1045 Hilltop Drive.

Find our schedule at usd497.org/SchoolBoard



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Honoring Classified Staff



Rick Doll Teamwork Award

When former superintendent Dr. Rick Doll retired in 2016, Truity Credit Union joined the Lawrence Public Schools in naming the Teamwork Award he created in his honor. Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis presented the award in December to the Free State High School custodial team, made up of David "D.J." Davis Jr., Joshua Thurman, Amanda Kreutzer-Lloyd, Chandler McDuffie, Dale Cowart, Roger England, Ana Alder, and David Lester.

Principal Amy McAnarney said that this year, under the leadership of D. J. Davis and several new team members, the building shines. "The most important change is that the team has pride in its work and the school and wants the building to look great for anyone who enters Free State," she said.

The team was lauded for planning ahead and its quick response to staff needs, dependability, and high standard of cleanliness. "This team is always sweeping the walkways. It is nice to be able to walk down the hall without seeing dust bunnies or bugs," said McAnarney. "This team cares about students. They do their best to establish relationships with students."

Dr. Lewis acknowledged the magnitude of the custodial team's responsibilities at Free State, a large building that houses

2,000 people five days per week. The school also is in use extensively in the evenings and on the weekends by the school and the Lawrence community.

"When we say, 'All Students, One Team' and this year's theme, 'Stronger Together,' yours is the kind of teamwork we have in mind. It is the kind of teamwork essential to Free State meeting its goals and serving and supporting the success of all students. Thank you for your outstanding work. It's appreciated!" said Dr. Lewis.

District LEAP partner Truity Credit Union presented the team with \$1,000.



Class Act Award

"The most dedicated person I have ever worked with when it comes to owning their responsibilities." That's how a nomination letter described IT Engineer Ron Fowler, the district's Fall Class Act Award winner.

Fowler looked stunned when Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis announced his name. He received a standing ovation from the IT staff, and when handed a \$500 check from Truity Credit Union's Audra Fussell, Fowler promptly handed it to his wife, Sherri, who also works for the district as an application support specialist.

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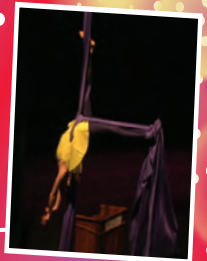
2024

Community Education Breakfast

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featuring guest speaker **Jaunelle White**, '96 LHS graduate, vice president of intercollegiate athletics for Point University



Ovation!

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"Our network is complex and difficult to maintain, but Ron is always working and looking at the network, making sure that it is operational for our staff and students. Upgrading and maintaining the network requires work to take place when others are not on the network.

"Ron works evenings and weekends, and at no time have I ever heard or seen him frustrated about working extra hours. His leadership and knowledge have proven to be a great asset for our team," read Dr. Lewis from the nomination letter.

Fowler said that he has worked for the district for about 29 years and has never thought about working anywhere else. The district thanks Fowler for his loyalty to our team and his outstanding dedication to maintaining the district's technology network for staff and students.



LSF Dedication to Education Award

"Caleb is an exceptional educator and very much deserving to be recognized for his strong, positive influence on students. He works with students of varying abilities and needs and does so with humor, strong connections, and a truly caring spirit," wrote a peer about Caleb Rahmeier, a West Middle School paraeducator.

The Lawrence Schools Foundation

presented Rahmeier with its 2023 Dedication to Education Award and a \$5,000 check during a school assembly on the school's Pajama Day in December.

The Foundation presents this award annually to a certified teacher or paraeducator who goes the extra mile to help kids who need it most. The award honors someone who supports "learning for all, whatever it takes" by ensuring that challenged and/or disadvantaged students learn. The sons and daughters of another group of anonymous Foundation donors, "The Bobs," created and fund this award.

"There is something that Caleb has brought to his job these past couple of years, a gift for one of our students, that no paraprofessional has given this student before. He has made them feel independent,

seen as a middle school student first, empowered, light in spirit during the heaviest of circumstances, and most importantly, in charge of their own life and decisions," wrote a colleague.

Lawrence Public Schools joins the Foundation in recognizing the positive difference Rahmeier makes in the lives of students, families, and colleagues and thanking him for his outstanding service to West Middle School, our district, and the community.

"Mr. Rahmeier does lots of things to help me at West. He meets me at the front door and asks how I am doing. This is important because it helps me feel welcomed. It helps my parents feel good because they know that with my health concerns, I've got someone checking on me all day that they can trust," wrote one of Rahmeier's students.




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Points of Pride: Student & Staff Success Stories



Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson visited the Juvenile Detention Center Day School for a tour with teachers Micaela Barnes and Robin Lindley.



A Free State High (FSHS) team won second place and a \$25,000 grant in the Burns and McDonnell Battle of the Brains Competition. Coached by gifted education teacher Jeff Morrison, they designed an entry for a Science City exhibit called "Nature's Blueprint: A World of Animal Architecture." Congratulations to Adele Buren, Niko Eidemiller, Harper Finck, Isla Gnojek, Chloe Hannings, Zach Hansen Terry, Ethan Hart, Emmett Henry, Brendan Hethcoat, Ben Jackson, Connor MacFarland, Hope Northrop, Gillian Sellet, and Sejun Yun.



A Southwest Middle School (SWMS) eighth grade team won the regional Future City competition, earning the school's ninth appearance at nationals. Congratulations, Team Karachi, Pakistan -

Max Bolick, Chloe Carnagey, Penny Coleman, Aila Glendening, Ainslee Graham, Logan Harned, Ryan Hethcoat, Celeste Jenkins, Juliet Johnson, Hailey Kim, Isaac Perrins, and Nina Wilson. Joining them at nationals are members of Team Kano, Nigeria - Caroline Davis, Winry Eymard, Ruby Fritz, Aiden Gonzalez, Tola Jankowski, Savannah Lynch, Kate Neilson, Henry Roberts, Cooper Salmans, Allen Shao, Laurel Stancil, Nate Willems, and Ruth Yang.



Lawrence Public Schools honored students, staff, and community partners who embody the theme "Together, We are the Dream United as One Voice" during the annual ONE DREAM Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. Congratulations to Keeper of the Dream Award recipients **Erika Rivera and Jennifer Bonilla**, BMMS; **Anthony Watts and Tatyana Younger**, Community Connections at Pinckney; **Robert Lamont Parker and Sarah Spray**, Cordley; **Katie Moyle and Kristin Fisher**, Deerfield; **Yael Gillath and Bryce Jones**, FSHS; **Luiza Gonzalez-Mendoza and Shelby Tosee**, Hillcrest; **Stacie Daniels**, Kennedy Early Childhood Center; **Jayton Stuckey and Jennifer Boyle**, Langston Hughes; **Bella Waggoner and Becky O'Keefe**, College & Career Academy; **Danny Phalen and Heidi Woods**, LHS; **Sidney Stump and Kelly Speight**, LMCMS; **Mary Pope and Amy Lekey**, New York; **Lashawn Mandell Kelley Jr. and Amber Sidwell**, Prairie Park; **Charlotte Spreer and Alexandra Smith**, Quail Run; **Emma Anderson and Brandi Flisram**, Schwegler; **Hope Turner and Trish Neuteboom**, SWMS; **Macklin Dulan and Elvira Chavira**, Sunflower; **Cailee Cochran and Michelle Salmans**, Sunset Hill; **Darby N. Bates and Eve Loos**, WMS; and **Zeddy Mumford and Rachel Thompson**, Woodlawn; **Lawrence Kansas Police Department's School Resource Officer program**, and **Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center**. In

addition, LMH Health presented ONE DREAM Awards and \$100 scholarships to seniors from each high school: **Yael Gillath, FSHS, and January Jackson, LHS.**



FSHS Theatre earned Gold Honor Troupe status at the Kansas Thespian Festival in January in Wichita. Students earned Excellent and Superior ratings in their categories, including Competitive Improv Champions **Kiefer Bullock, Liz Wyle, Natalie Riley, Sean Ruddy, and Owen Bork**. **Morgan Sponholtz** will represent the Firebirds as a state thespian officer. **Bryce Jones**, theater and language arts teacher, sponsors the troupe.



The FSHS Debate team of **Connor Brown, Sophie Racy, Cooper Hefty, Gilly Falin, Olive Minor, and Oliver Fredrick** earned third place at the KSHSAA 6A 4-Speaker Debate Tournament. This is the school's third consecutive top 3 finish.

FSHS Spanish teacher **Amanda Benavidez-Williams** received the Central States Partner in Language Education Award for making significant and sustained contributions to professional development opportunities and/or teacher training for world language and culture educators.



Students in Michelle Barnes' 4th/5th grade class at Woodlawn cheered and swarmed

their teacher for a group hug upon hearing Kansas Commissioner of Education Randy Watson name Barnes a 2024 Kansas Horizon Award winner. The state honor follows Barnes' selection as a Lawrence Horizon Award winner. She is an exemplary new educator in her second year of teaching.

FSHS French teacher **Karen Gipson** received "Best of Kansas" recognition for her presentation "Creating Class Characters to Build Writing Proficiency," at the Kansas World Language Conference in November. She will represent Kansas at the Central States Conference in March. Her presentation will be featured at the 2024 Kansas World Language Association Conference.



The Lawrence Schools Foundation and Lied Center of Kansas presented the annual Graham Edmonds Stading Ovation Award and a \$500 scholarship to **Kiana Sales**, LHS senior, following the Ovation! talent show produced this year by **Renee Dvorske**, LHS junior.

Lawrence Public Schools earned KSDE's Kansans Can! Star Recognitions for Social-Emotional Growth (Silver) and Academically Prepared for Postsecondary (Copper).



New York students enjoy a new installation of equipment on their playground. The elementary campus is one of several receiving new playground equipment this year.

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Congratulations to Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence 2024 Youth of the Year La'Ron Williams, a FSHS senior, his younger brother, Ja'Corey Williams, the Jr. Youth of the Year, and Youth of the Year candidates Abby Benally and Alex Johnson, both of FSHS. BGC photo by Carter Gaskins.



Lawrence Public Schools honored Dr. Andrew Taylor, BMMS, Joni Appleman, Deerfield, and Dr. Jenny Schmitt, LMCMS, as Principals of the Month during the second and third quarter.

FSHS student academic support educator Ted Juneau served as an assistant coach and head coach, respectively, of two teams inducted into the inaugural class of Topeka High's Sports Hall of Honor: the 1973 boys basketball team and the 1981 girls basketball team.

During first semester, PreK-grade 5 students checked out 76,989 books from their school libraries.

FSHS senior Sophie Racy earned the National Speech and Debate Association's highest honor, the Degree of Premier Distinction, awarded fewer than 3% of students competing in speech and debate across the world. Racy qualified to the NSDA National Tournament all four years and is the first three-time qualifier in the history of Kansas for the Tournament of Champions hosted by the University of Kentucky in April. Kelly Thompson coaches FSHS speech and debate.



The H.L. Hall National Yearbook Adviser of the Year program honored Barb Tholen, LHS journalism adviser and graphic design teacher, as a Distinguished Yearbook Adviser for her exemplary work from the previous year and throughout her career.



Nine seniors – Emmet Mathis, Lexi Willow, Breanna Blevins, Dillen Florence, Zoey Crooks, Autumn Beach, Maxx Krause, Caden Pennel, and Macey Wales – earned the required credits to graduate early in December from the Lawrence College and Career Academy.



Congratulations to LHS junior Opal Morris, whose photographs, including "Caught Up," were accepted into the Hays 5-State professional Competition and Exhibition at the Hays Arts Center. Angelia Perkins is Morris' photography teacher.



Third-year students in Keith Van de Riet's design-build studio course at KU designed and fabricated an 800-square-foot pavilion and companion rain garden with native plantings to provide shade and ecological benefits for the Ryan Gray Playground for All Children at Hillcrest. The partnership hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on a rainy day in December.



Under the direction of gifted education teacher Sarabeth Morgan, a team of Hillcrest fourth graders -- Anna Lawrence,

Milo Henry, Nora Mosher, Margot Langford, Owen Williams, and Corrina Yi -- earned Top 20 finalist status in the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains contest. They envisioned "Celestial Stops!" as a new exhibit for Science City.



Native American Student Services hosted the Miss Indian Lawrence Pageant December 1 at BMMS. Lawson Garcia, a FSHS senior of the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, earned Sr. Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence honors. NaFehna Farve, BMMS eighth grader and a Choctaw and Cupi'q Eskimo, was named Jr. Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence. Mycah McCabe, a kindergartner and a Navajo and White Mountain Apache, was recognized as the honorary Little Miss Indian Youth of Lawrence.

Congratulations to LHS students Sid Adams, Isabel Bonee, Oliver Elwell, Adele Erickson, Henry Farthing, Emily Hurd, Isabel Klish, Adriel Lamer, Cenna Ludwig, Annika Maximov, Opal Morris, Jerwin Rapada, and Connor Rayone who had a combined 23 works accepted into the Annual High School Visual Arts Competition. With three awards presented in four categories, Morris earned first in Photo (pictured), Farthing placed second in Photo, and Klish finished third in 2D. Their art teachers are Todd Poteet, Angelia Perkins, and Emily Markoulatos.



LHS theater teacher Craig Fisher was the Northeast Region 3 nominee for Kansas Thespian of the Year.



As a part of Black Lives Matter at School Week, Cordley Hawk Families read the

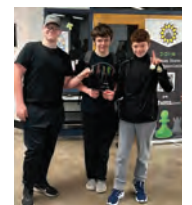
book "Radiant Child" about the life of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. They discussed the power of finding your own voice and honoring those who help us along the way. Students and staff made crowns to celebrate their "radiance!"

LHS junior Henry Farthing entered a portfolio of ten photos and earned recognition as a 2024 YoungArts National Award Winner! Selected works from Henry's series "You Should Probably Get Some Sleep" are pictured. Angelia Perkins is Farthing's photography teacher at LHS.



The Kansas State Department of Education awarded Lawrence Public Schools a three-year \$532,509 Stronger Connections grant towards its Safe and Supportive Schools goals. The funds will provide teachers professional learning around classroom management and restorative practices and support students and families with chronic absenteeism, student behaviors, and other barriers to learning.

LHS (pictured), SWMS, and Langston Hughes teams won first place trophies in K-12, K-8, and K-5 divisions, respectively, at the Thanksgiving Chess Tournament sponsored by area chess coaches to raise money for local food banks. Prairie Park and BMMS earned second place, K-5 and K-8, and Cordley placed third, K-3.



Livewell Douglas County presented a 2023 Culture of Health Champion Award to Pantelon Florez III, the district's experiential learning specialist and Farm 2 School coordinator. He is active in the work of the Livewell Healthy Kids workgroup to improve the physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being of Douglas County children and school staff.





Deerfield's Student Council promoted Bully Prevention Week with a spirit week in November, including a wear red and "Stop Bullying" Day to promote kindness and speaking up for others.



An LHS team made up of Owen Ackley, Davian Copeland, Myles Gragg, Luci MacMillan, Marcus Souders, and Ben Willems won first place in the Mathnificent Race, a math problem-solving scavenger hunt held during Washburn Math Day in November. Souders also earned second place Overall Senior in the competitive math exam. Emily Beecham and Matt Ellis are their math teachers.

LHS senior Oliver Elwell won first place in Ceramics at Washburn University's High School Art Day in November. His sculpture, "My Greenhouse," also was accepted into the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts' student exhibition



for display at its national conference in Richmond, Va. Emily Markoulatos is Elwell's ceramics teacher.



Among other schools honoring Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day on November 14 were Kennedy Early Childhood Center preschoolers. They took a story walk around their campus to learn about six-year-old Ruby's role in the desegregation of U.S. schools in 1960.



Lawrence Public Schools welcomed a regional Kansas Teacher of the Year Team in November hosted by 2022 Lawrence Elementary Teacher of the Year Monica Dutcher, a Hillcrest 4th/5th grade teacher. The team visited several schools, participated in a leadership activity, and enjoyed lunch prepared by Chef David Weakley's Culinary class at the Lawrence College and Career Center.



Native American Student Services organized a November visit by rapper Supaman, DJ Elementaz, and Haskell Dancers to BMMS. Supaman posed with LHS students Jada Big Eagle and Jaynece Wahwahsuck.



Students enjoyed Third Grade Theatre Arts Day in November at the Lied Center of Kansas, where they learned from performing arts professionals about choreography, production, makeup, puppetry, circus skills, acting, and careers.



Lawrence's new Burlington store and the national nonprofit AdoptAClassroom.org donated \$5,000 to Schwegler school for teachers to purchase classroom supplies. Principal Dr. Jared Comfort and district administrators attended the store's Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting in November to accept the "big check."



Lawrence College and Career Center National Child Development Associate candidates demonstrated mastery on their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of infants and toddlers assessments. They then began their early childhood education teaching internships to apply their newfound knowledge and skills. They are students of Dr. Kelly Welch.



SWMS Model United Nations students attended a Coffee with a Diplomat event at KU. Diplomat-In-Residence Sara Stealy talked to them about her 14 years of foreign service in Zambia, Latvia, Ghana, and Lithuania and about student programs and careers in foreign service. Danielle Lotton-Barker, gifted education teacher, sponsors Model UN at SWMS



Sam Gleeson's Plant Science class at FSHS identified, recorded, and collected 27 different species of seeds from the prairie on their school campus, and then planted a garden at HAMM Inc. Waste Services as part of a landfill restoration project.

Congratulations to Maci Perrins, a Langston Hughes fifth grader and back-to-back Douglas County Spelling Bee Champion! We are proud of all of the great spellers representing our schools at the county bee hosted by the Lawrence Journal-World in February at BMMS.



LHS senior Isabel Klish and sophomores Lola Brown and Selah Wolfe had artworks and photographs selected to be part of the International juried PKX Teen Art Exhibition April 18-May 17 at The Art Effect's Trolley Barn Gallery in New York. Todd Poteet is Klish's art teacher, and Angela Perkins is Brown and Wolfe's photography teacher.

LHS journalism students of Barb Tholen competed at the National High School Journalism Convention in Boston, earning top yearbook, literary magazine, and newsmagazine honors. Maya Smith's news writing and Maison Flory's photo portfolio received superior and excellent rankings, respectively.



Sunflower's English as a Second Language Team held its first Women's Group in November to build community, share food and fellowship, create fleece tie pillows, and discuss families' school experiences.



Students of Jessica Miescher-Lerner, WMS gifted education teacher, participated in the U.S. Crystal Growing Competition to grow the coolest and best quality crystals for cash prizes.

The Kansas Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance honored Stephanie Dickson, Sunset Hill physical education teacher, as the Kansas Elementary P.E. Teacher of the Year in November during its convention in Wichita.



Kansas illustrator and author Brad Sneed visited fourth graders across the district to talk about his more than 30 years of experience creating picture books. U.S. Bank sponsors annual school author visits.



Team STEAM Robotics placed second during the CowTown Throwdown off-

season scrimmage in Lee's Summit, Mo. They joined an alliance with Olathe Northwest's Ravonics, Lee's Summit's Team Driven, and Camdenton's team Laser. Jeanne Merritt mentors Team STEAM.



Lawrence Jefferson's Restaurants announced in October its Lawrence Coach of the Year, Dena Johnston, FSHS dance and cheer coach. With high expectations and an unwavering commitment to her student-athletes, Johnston plays a pivotal role in students' lives beyond their stellar performances in support of the school's athletic teams.

During the Kiwanis Club's Honors Dinner benefiting the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence in October, members honored Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis for his service, leadership, and dedication to empowering youth in Lawrence and supporting BGC programs, including as an ex-officio board member.



FSHS honored 135 students demonstrating perfect attendance during the first quarter. Every day matters!



Congratulations to the LHS gymnastics team for placing second at state in October.

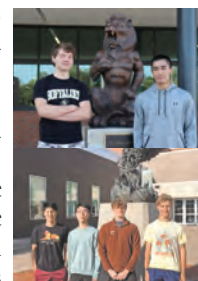
District Educational Support Center staff fielded six teams for the Junior Achievement Boo-a-Thon bowling fundraiser in October to support financial literacy education for students in the Lawrence Public Schools.



Kansas Hall of Fame and Associated Press photographer Charlie Riedel served as the juror of the 40th Hays Five-State Competition and Exhibition. He selected two of LHS senior Allie White's photos, including "Dulled" seen here, for display during the regional professional photography competition at Hays Arts Center in Hays. Angelia Perkins is White's photography teacher at LHS.



All Lawrence High and Free State National Merit Semifinalists advanced to finalists! Congratulations, Owen Ackley and Marcus Souders, LHS, and Steven Duan, Yejun Yun, Leonard Bass, and Jacob Loos, FSHS. They now have the chance to earn one of the 7,140 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$28 million to be announced in the spring.



Lawrence Public Schools hosted its annual American Education Week Celebration of School Volunteerism in November, honoring "Friends of Education" from each of the schools who give of their time and talents to support students and staff. Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis is pictured with honoree Megan Poindexter and Schwegler Principal Dr. Jared Comfort, teacher Christy McWhirt, and parent involvement facilitator Amy Shellhorn; and Free State's Friends Lew and Alicia Hanna with students Jasper Rightmeier and Gage Monse, and Principal Amy McAnarney. See more honorees at usd497.org/Volunteers.

