



USD 497 News Release

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Lawrence School Board President Announces Interim Superintendent Selection



Lawrence Board of Education President Kelly Jones announces the school board's selection of Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift as interim superintendent, pending board approval Monday. A 36-year educator and educational leadership consultant of Michigan, Dr. Swift plans to visit schools during the first week of school and will officially begin her employment August 30.

Jones invites the community to meet Dr. Swift during the Lawrence Schools Foundation's Kids Expo from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday and a meet and greet at 5 p.m. Monday before the board's 6 p.m. meeting, both at USD 497's Educational Support Center, 110 McDonald Drive.

"Dr. Swift's appointment marks a new chapter for our district. We are optimistic about her contributions and leadership during this interim period and are hopeful for Lawrence Public Schools under her guidance. We are confident that she will prioritize student and family engagement, improve our instructional and curriculum strategies, and advocate for competitive base wages for our teachers and staff," said Jones.

Board Vice President GR Gordon-Ross added, "Dr Swift comes to us with an attitude of openness and transparency. She is ready to get out and meet the community. She is a proven educational leader, and I am excited for our district to tap into her experience as we continue to work to improve student outcomes."

Following the June 29 resignation of Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis to lead the Durham, North Carolina, schools, the board worked with the Kansas Association of School Boards to collect and fully vet applicants for the interim position. Last week the board interviewed Dr. Swift and two additional finalists, USD 497's Deputy Superintendent Dr. Larry Englebrick and Dr. Thomas Ahart, an educational consultant from Iowa. The finalists also met with Dr. Lewis, and external finalists, with Dr. Englebrick.

"Dr. Swift brings a wealth of experiences that will be invaluable at this critical time for our schools. She has extensive expertise in fiscal management and innovative leadership, particularly in STEAM education and progressive policies. With her background as a teacher, coach, principal, and award-winning district administrator, combined with her unwavering commitment to educational equity and excellence, I am confident she will lead our district to even greater heights," said Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Englebrick said, "I see working with Dr. Swift as a tremendous opportunity for all of us. She brings a wealth of knowledge of systems design and improvement strategies from her previous roles. I look forward to supporting her in the continuous improvement of our district."

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During the interview process, Dr. Swift toured schools with educators and building administrators and met district administrators, certified and classified staff union leaders, and school family and community members from district advisory committees. The board invited them to provide written feedback. They described Dr. Swift using adjectives, such as kind, caring, positive, engaged, passionate, energetic, and children-focused. They cited appreciation for her extensive experience, strong leadership, community-building skills, inclusive approach, focus on equity, and problem-solving abilities.

“It was an honor to visit Lawrence Public Schools last week and to have the opportunity to connect with members of the team, students, parents, and community, as well as participate in an in-depth interview with the board. Across all the conversations and school visits, I quickly resonated with their deep care and commitment for children and a genuine shared enthusiasm to serve our students with a high-quality educational experience,” said Dr. Swift.

“Over the opening days of this school year, I look forward to visiting classrooms, schools, and back-to-school activities to greet and engage with students, staff, and families. I am excited to begin working alongside this extraordinary team to ensure a successful year for our students,” she said.

Dr. Swift has served as an educational leadership consultant since January, supporting PreK-12 education leaders, leadership teams, and board trustees. She previously served the Ann Arbor Public Schools as superintendent for over a decade. In Colorado Springs School District 11, she served as assistant superintendent, executive director, principal, assistant principal, resource coach, and a secondary English and Spanish teacher for 13 years. She also taught ten of those years in the Hurst-Eules-Bedford School District in Texas. Dr. Swift earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Arlington, her master’s at the University of Colorado, and a doctorate at the University of Denver.

In the Ann Arbor schools, Swift’s equity-centered leadership focused on student opportunities and achievement, fiscal responsibility, and community engagement. The district made noteworthy gains in student outcomes, particularly among traditionally underserved students. Improvements included increases in graduation rates among vulnerable students, reductions in disciplinary rates, as well as a continued focus on improving support for all students.

The Michigan Association of School Administrators named Swift its Superintendent of the Year in 2018. The National School Public Relations Association recognized her as a Superintendent to Watch for demonstrating dynamic leadership with a strong emphasis on communication.

Dr. Swift will become the tenth superintendent to lead Lawrence USD 497 since our district’s unification in 1965: Dr. Carl Knox (1962-84), Dr. Dan Neuenswander (1984-92), Dr. Al Azinger (1992-98), Dr. Kathleen Williams (1998-2000), Randy Weseman (2000-09), Dr. Rick Doll (2009-2016), Kyle Hayden (2016-17), Interim Superintendent Dr. Anna Stubblefield (2017-18), and Dr. Anthony Lewis (2018-Present).

The board plans to hire a firm this fall to conduct a national search for a long-term superintendent to begin their service July 1, 2025. This timeline provides ample opportunity for expanded community engagement to guide the board in hiring the best person to lead our district and serve our community moving forward. Find more information at www.usd497.org/InterimSuperintendentSearch.