



USD 497 News Release

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School Board President Announces Superintendent's Resignation



Lawrence Board of Education President Kelly Jones announces the resignation of Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis, effective mid-August, pending board approval. Completing his sixth year of service to Lawrence Public Schools, Dr. Lewis has accepted the superintendent position in Durham, North Carolina.

“Dr. Lewis’s roots are in Alabama and special education. During my tenure on the board, I observed that combination means every student is family and his professional and ethical standards are only outmatched by his endless generosity in service,” said Jones.

“I am grateful for his educational leadership generally and, in particular, through the pandemic. His commitment to educational equity and excellence is evident at the district and community levels, as well as at the state level, including his service to the Kansas African American Affairs Commission and the Governor’s Commission on Racial Equity and Justice.

“I am also inspired by Dr. Lewis’ work with his Student Advisory Council. The Council exemplifies his commitment to centering students in all decisions and meaningfully incorporating their feedback.

“He has set the bar high for our next superintendent of Lawrence schools,” Jones said.

In January of 2018, then-Board President Shannon Kimball announced the selection of Lewis, an assistant superintendent in Kansas City, Missouri schools, as Lawrence superintendent.

“Dr. Lewis has exemplified student-centered and equity-focused leadership the past six years. Under his guidance, USD 497 has aligned our work to our strategic plan, shaping and focusing our efforts to improve student achievement, staff pay, and the financial health of our district.

“I have always appreciated Dr. Lewis’ passion and care for students and his commitment to leadership in our community. I wish him well in his new post, and I am confident that as we navigate this transition our district is well-positioned for success in the coming years,” she said.

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Originally from Talladega, Alabama, Dr. Lewis and his wife, Tiffany, are the proud parents of six children: Jasmine, Akirah, Anthony II, Sierra, Kailey, and Braxton. Dr. Anthony Lewis began his career in public education as a special education teacher at Jefferson Davis High School (2002-2006), and in educational leadership, as an assistant principal, and then principal, of E. D. Nixon Elementary (2006-2011).

The Kansas City, Missouri school district recruited him to serve as principal of Benjamin Banneker Elementary (2011-2012), later promoting him to director of elementary education (2012-2016), and assistant superintendent of schools (2016-2018). He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in special education at Alabama State University in Montgomery and a doctorate in educational leadership and policy from the University of Missouri in Columbia.

“This decision is full of mixed emotions,” Dr. Lewis said. “It has been an honor to serve as superintendent in Lawrence. Working alongside so many dedicated and talented educators, supportive families, and amazing scholars has been a joy.

“We have been through a lot together. We have navigated challenges, celebrated achievements, and built a school district that’s poised for even greater success. Fostering a culture of inclusivity and belonging and prioritizing the well-being of our scholars and staff has been a goal while doing this work.

“I often share with our district and building leaders that family comes first. It’s now time that I heed those words. This next move not only provides an opportunity to pursue a new adventure, it allows me to be closer to my family,” Dr. Lewis said.

Under Dr. Lewis’ leadership, the Lawrence community came together to create a plan for school progress, our district’s first comprehensive strategic plan in nearly two decades. The school board also adopted its Equity Policy, recognizing the importance of making and supporting significant shifts in mindset and practice to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students. The policy formalized a commitment to advancing educational equity by applying a systemic change framework to school governance and resource allocation.

Among other progress made during Dr. Lewis’ Lawrence tenure, 2018 to Present:

- Achieved the highest graduation rates in 16 years with the percent of students graduating in all racial/ethnic subgroups increasing or maintaining since 2018.
- Built strong partnerships with city and county officials, including shared leadership of our community’s response to and recovery from the global pandemic.
- Implemented historic staff salary increases totaling \$6.65 million in 2023-24.
- Expanded college preparation with 456 students taking at least one concurrent course.
- Grew workforce readiness with 342 students earning business and industry certifications and 48% of high schoolers enrolled in courses in 22 career pathways.

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- Improved student achievement with 69% of students in grades 3-8 and 10 scoring at Levels 2-4 on state assessments in English language arts, and 68% in math (2022-23).
- Launched College and Career Center Academy offering alternative path for high school students, earning National School Boards Association Magna Awards Grand Prize.
- Opened Kansas' first public Montessori school. The school has a waiting list to enroll.
- Served 559 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in early childhood programs (2023-24).
- Developed a districtwide private fiber wide area network (projected \$3M General Fund savings).
- Used federal COVID-relief funds to increase academic, social, and emotional support for students, provide staff retention incentives, and improve school facilities.
- Installed district's first solar energy project (projected \$480,000 General Fund savings).
- Approved an innovative STEAM learning program to grow enrollment at Liberty Memorial Central Middle School.
- Earned Kansans Can Silver Star Recognition in Student Social-Emotional Growth and Copper Star Recognition in Students Academically Prepared for Postsecondary.
- Trained more than 200 educators in the science of reading (LETRS).
- Joined the Kansas Teacher Retention Initiative to measure and improve employee engagement and retention.
- Adopted CharacterStrong PreK-Grade 12 curriculum to support student social-emotional needs and character development.
- Expanded staff training and use of restorative practices to build community and address student behavioral needs.
- Implemented Attendance Matters campaign to increase awareness and family engagement and improve absenteeism.
- Launched mentorship program partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kansas.
- Piloted and approved a new K-5 math curricular resource.
- Partnered with LMH Health in Summer Leadership Academy providing professional mentorship and exploration of healthcare and government careers.
- Secured a \$500,000 Stronger Connections grant to support student behavioral health.
- Students, staff, and schools earned state, regional, and national recognition.

"I care deeply about Lawrence Public Schools. Our youngest kids love their schools. Tiffany and I appreciate our friendships here and community support shown our family," said Dr. Lewis.

The board will meet soon to plan next steps related to the transition in district leadership.

The seventh-largest district in Kansas, Lawrence Public Schools employs more than 1,530 employees, serves more than 10,650 students, and operates 18 schools and four programs offering a continuum of educational services supporting individuals from birth to adulthood.