



USD 497 NEWS

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Lawrence School Board President Announces Superintendent Selection



Lawrence Board of Education President Shannon Kimball announces the school board's selection of Dr. Anthony Lewis, an assistant superintendent in the Kansas City, Missouri school district, as Lawrence superintendent of schools, effective July 1, 2018. The board will conduct a special meeting at 6 p.m. to approve a three-year contract with Lewis, at a salary of \$215,000 for the 2018-19 school year.

“Dr. Lewis’s passion for education and his commitment to putting students first was abundantly clear to the board,” said Kimball. “He has a proven record of improving student achievement while building strong relationships with students, families, teachers, and the community. We are excited for the future of Lawrence Public Schools under Dr. Lewis’s leadership and look forward to working with him.”

This announcement follows the board’s interviews last week with two finalists: Lewis and Dr. Jayson Strickland, a deputy superintendent in the Kansas City, Kansas school district. Community members also had the opportunity to meet both finalists during meet-and-greet receptions and provide written input to the board.

On superintendent candidate impression forms, community members described Lewis as charismatic, personable, confident, professional, genuine, compassionate, thoughtful, and a good fit for Lawrence. They cited their appreciation for his passion for students, broad leadership experience, systems-thinking approach, and good sense of humor.

“I am extremely humbled and grateful to be given the opportunity to serve the Lawrence community. My education, work, and other community experiences have all prepared me to lead a district like Lawrence Public Schools as superintendent,” said Lewis. “My family and I are excited about being an active and involved part of Lawrence Public Schools and this great community. This was a very important decision for us, as we are looking for a community that we can be a strong part of, as well as a school district that is the right fit for us to live in while our children complete their education. We feel that the Lawrence school district provides this opportunity.”

“Researching the district and community, coupled with meeting some amazing stakeholders at the meet-and-greet reception, further validated that the Lawrence community shows a tremendous amount of support for its school system. I look forward to working for the students of Lawrence!” he added.

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Lewis will succeed Interim Superintendent Dr. Anna Stubblefield, appointed by the board following former Superintendent Kyle Hayden’s transfer into the role of chief operations officer on July 1, 2017.

“I have heard from many trusted colleagues that Dr. Lewis is a collaborative leader. I look forward to working with him and making this transition as smooth as possible, so our learning community may continue to build upon the current momentum surrounding our work toward board goals and on school improvement efforts,” said Stubblefield, who will serve as the district’s deputy superintendent next year.

Originally from Talladega, Ala., 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 School (2006-2011).

While at E. D. Nixon, discipline decreased by more than 50%, daily student attendance increased, and the school became an Alabama Torchbearer School during the 2007-2008 school year - one of only nine in the state, and again during the 2010-2011 school year – one of only eleven in the state. The school was ranked number 18 out of 706 schools in the state of Alabama, and was recognized as a 90/90/90 School (90% students of low socio-economic status, 90% students of color, and 90% students scoring highly on achievement tests).

The Kansas City, Missouri school district recruited Lewis to serve as principal of Benjamin Banneker Elementary School (2011-2012), director of elementary education (2012-2016), and assistant superintendent of schools (2016-present). In his present position, Lewis provides leadership and support to principals, schools, and programs; oversees school planning, implementation, coordination and evaluation of schools; and ensures that program activities comply with district policies, and that Missouri statutes align to the district’s strategic plan.

Lewis 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. The School Superintendents Association (AASA) selected him for its Superintendents Academy, recognized as one of the premier programs in the country.

He has served as an advisory board member of the National Principals Academy, Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City, and Kansas City Chief Derrick Johnson’s Defend the Dream Foundation; a certified data teams trainer with Doug Reeves’ Leadership and Learning Center, and certified facilitator of the National Institute for School Leadership. Lewis is a member of Phi Delta Kappa (Kappan of the Year in 2007), *Who’s Who Among American High School Teachers*, *Who’s Who in Black Alabama* (Inaugural Edition, 2011), and the National Education Association, among other professional organizations.

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Lewis's selection caps a national search process. Following interviews with three executive search firms in August, the board contracted in September with Ray & Associates to conduct a national superintendent search at cost not to exceed \$30,000. The firm contacted 934 individuals in 48 states about the superintendent vacancy, yielding 60 applications. The firm evaluated the applicants' experiences and academic backgrounds and screened candidates based on the candidate profile determined by the board from community input gathered through focus groups and surveys in September/October.

The criteria stated that the successful candidate will be a leader who:

- Possesses the leadership skills required to respond to the challenges presented by an ethnically and culturally diverse community.
- Inspires trust, has high levels of self-confidence and optimism, and models high standards of integrity and personal performance.
- Is a strong communicator; speaking, listening and writing.
- Is able to listen to input, build consensus and commitment among individuals and groups with emphasis on parental involvement, and is a decision maker.
- Is able to delegate authority appropriately while maintaining accountability.
- Possesses excellent people skills, can present a positive image of the district, and is committed to community visibility.
- Is strongly committed to a "student first" philosophy in all decisions.
- Can develop and communicate a vision of quality education for the future to the Board, staff and community.
- Possesses the ability to enhance student performance, especially in identifying and closing or narrowing the gaps in student achievement.
- Promotes a positive and professional environment for district employees and the board.
- Has experience recruiting and maintaining exceptional staff for the district and schools.

Ray and Associates interviewed and investigated candidates through references, state officials, other school administrators, and individuals who knew the candidates' abilities and strengths. The firm recommended the school board review 11 applications, representing candidates from Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. The board reviewed those applications on December 18, and invited a diverse group of six candidates to the initial round of interviews held the week of January 15.

On January 8, newly elected board members GR Gordon-Ross and Kelly Jones were sworn into office, along with board member Melissa Johnson, elected in November to a four-year term to continue her board-appointed service. The new school board announced on January 22 its selection of two finalists for the second round of interviews and public meet-and-greet receptions on January 23 and 24.

On July 1, 2018, Lewis will become the ninth superintendent to lead Lawrence Unified School District 497. Carl Knox served from 1962-84, followed by Dan Neuenswander (1984-92), Al Azinger (1992-98), Kathleen Williams (1998-2000), Randy Weseman (2000-09), Rick Doll (2009-2016), Kyle Hayden (2016-17) and Interim Superintendent Anna Stubblefield (2017-present).

Lawrence Public Schools, USD 497 is a learning community of 1,800 teachers and support staff serving approximately 11,700 students in PreK-Grade 12. The district offers a full continuum of educational services from support for families of infants and toddlers to adult education.