



# Listening and Learning for Educational Equity and Excellence

Anthony Lewis, Ph.D.  
Lawrence Public Schools  
Superintendent's Entry Plan

# Table of Contents

Letter to Staff and Community ..... pg. 3

Defining Equity ..... pg. 4

Priorities ..... pg. 4

Marking the Destination: Governance ..... pg. 5

Goals ..... pg. 5

Goal 1 ..... pg. 6

Goal 2 ..... pg. 7

Goal 2 (cont.) ..... pg. 8

Goal 3 ..... pg. 9

Goal 3 (cont.) ..... pg. 10

Goal 4 ..... pg. 11

Goal 5 ..... pg. 12

Goal 5 (cont.) ..... pg. 13

Goal 5 (cont.) ..... pg. 14

Completion of Entry Plan ..... pg. 15

The Lawrence Board of Education ..... pg. 16



“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.”  
- Sitting Bull

# Dear Staff and Community,

The Lawrence Public Schools' mission is to ensure educational equity and excellence so that students of all races and backgrounds achieve at high levels and graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and life in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

The Lawrence Board of Education has selected me as the incoming superintendent to lead staff in supporting the academic, social, and emotional success of 12,000 students. This will result in scholars prepared for success in college, careers, and life in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

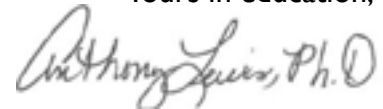
Our primary goal is to determine a road map for successful schooling in an effort to set high expectations and hold each other accountable for ensuring that through equitable access to rigorous, culturally relevant, and seamlessly aligned curriculum, and effective, research-based instruction, all students achieve at high levels, graduate on time, and are well prepared for their future. In order to accomplish this goal, our adherence to our school system's current vision is critical.

As the instructional leader of this school system, it is my distinct duty to ensure that this vision comes to fruition through our collective efforts as a community. This district has made some tremendous progress, and it is imperative that we continue that momentum and forward progress.

The District recognizes that challenges remain. The Board expresses a high level of urgency around race, equity, and engagement when it comes to preparing our successful high school graduates. I share that same sense of urgency, as does our faculty, staff, and community at large. This will require courageous leadership to enact data-driven systems of change. I will not hesitate to make important decisions that benefit all children as a result of my initial listening and learning tour of the school system.

I truly believe in asking lots of questions, which includes listening and learning in order to understand 'the story' prior to charting the course. This entry plan will allow me to begin assessing the organization's strengths and opportunities, identifying areas that will yield quick wins as well as areas that will need intense focus, and leveraging the momentum to not only create a network of contacts and resources in Lawrence Public Schools, but also to energize the community in committing to the vision of becoming the best school district in the country.

Yours in education,



Anthony Lewis, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

"The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."  
- Gaylord Nelson, former Wisconsin governor and U.S. Senator

# Equity

**Defining Equity:** In an equitable educational system, personal and social identifiers such as family background, income, race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression are not obstacles to accessing educational opportunities. The circumstances children are born into do not predict their access to the resources and educational rigor necessary for success. Within such a system, all individuals attain sufficient knowledge and skills to pursue the college and career path of their choice and become active and contributing members of their communities.

Some students require additional resources to achieve the same level of success as others. Educational equity means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education despite family background, income, race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Equity does not mean creating equal conditions for all students, but rather targeting resources based on individual needs and circumstances of students. This includes providing differentiated funding and supports and respecting students' voice and agency.

# Priorities

## Academics:

- Creating student-centered learning environments while leveraging technology
- Expanding social and emotional supports for students and families
- Using culturally-relevant curriculum in our classrooms

## Organizational Effectiveness and Planning:

- Laying a foundation for efficiency and effectiveness through our strategic plan and ensuring our organization is structured with student achievement at the forefront
- Creating succession plans and standard operating procedures for each department

## Communications and Culture:

- Building a culture of trust in our school community and community at large
- Leveraging partnerships to ensure innovation and secure valuable resources for our schools



# Marking the Destination: Governance

## The Direction

A public school system exists to serve its public. In the United States, we believe that all children should be given an equitable opportunity to learn how to become responsible and productive members of their communities, states, and nation. This foundational conviction took root when the first public school was founded about 150 years before the writing of the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution.

To function as intended, a school system has to be organized to identify the right destination for its public. That is the job of the Board: to help establish the ideal destination for children to arrive at the end of their public education. That is as true in Lawrence Public Schools as it is in every other school system. Everything that happens in the District should be a function of that grassroots input that travels from the public to the public's representatives, to the administration, and finally, to the office of the Superintendent of Schools.

It follows that the District can only succeed if it is governed well. That's why goal one of my first 100 days as Superintendent will be to develop unified school district governance by creating a transparent, trusting, and collaborative working relationship with the Lawrence Board of Education. My objectives include coming together as a focused leadership team, communicating effectively, and transitioning smoothly. Achieving these ends will ensure that our map is well drawn and our destination is clear. We will be headed in the right direction.

## Goals

This entry plan is designed to address the following goals and will be continually updated as I share my activities with the Board of Education and the Lawrence community:

1. Develop a transparent, collaborative, trusting, and productive relationship with the Lawrence Board of Education.
2. Ensure a laser-like focus on instructional programming to close resource gaps of the lowest-performing student groups while determining the academic, social, and emotional needs for all students.
3. Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency by providing a high level of support and service to schools, students, parents, and the school community.
4. Identify and analyze the critical issues in the District that represent both barriers and opportunities for accelerating the performance of all students.
5. Create opportunities to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders while proactively ensuring that all voices are heard and engaged in an effort to gain trust and confidence, ensure a comprehensive understanding of the District, and build excitement and momentum for the District's vision, mission, and strategic plan.

# Goal 1

Develop a transparent, collaborative, trusting, and productive relationship with the Lawrence Board of Education.

## ACTION 1

Share Entry Plan with The Board for feedback, suggestions, and guidance.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Emailed plan to Board members on June 19, 2018.

## ACTION 2

Engage in one-on-one meetings with individual Board members to deepen relationships and broaden perspectives on individual views of the district.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Began one-on-one meetings on July 9, 2018. Completed initial one-on-one meetings with all Board members on July 25, 2018. Next steps will be to establish a consistent schedule of one-on-one meetings with Board members.

## ACTION 3

Hold first Board retreat to discuss: issues, matters of governance, core values and beliefs, communication protocols, roles, responsibilities, norms, expectations, goal/agenda setting, consideration of a Theory of Action, types and amount of information needed and through what channels to help the Board make quality governance decisions, and regular professional development training for the Board and Superintendent.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Board Retreat was held on June 26, 2018, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Bioscience & Technology Business Center. The retreat was facilitated by Dr. Brian Jordan, Kansas Association of School Boards, and Kim Polson, Polson Consulting.

## ACTION 4

Collaborate on a performance evaluation format with objectives and indicators of success that can be used to evaluate the Superintendent in year one of tenure.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Indicators for the Superintendent's evaluation were discussed at the Board Retreat on June 26. The Board is in the process of finalizing the evaluation.

### PROGRESS KEY:



PENDING



INITIATED



COMPLETED

## Goal 2

Ensure a laser-like focus on instructional programming to close resource gaps of the lowest-performing student groups while determining the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students.

### ACTION 1

Analyze current student achievement data to include the following variables: academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, attendance rates, graduation rates, and disciplinary rates.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Began the process of analyzing data.

### ACTION 2

Meet with the Deputy Superintendent to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment to determine the current state of teaching and learning, and gain an understanding of how schools are progressing toward meeting their goals.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with the deputy superintendent on August 22, 2018, to discuss assessments. Conversations will continue to address curriculum, instruction, and the state of teaching and learning during our established meetings held every other Wednesday.

### ACTION 3

Meet with the Assistant Superintendent, Chief Operations Officer, Executive Directors, Directors, Principals, LEA, Teachers, and Staff to discuss school culture and climate to determine the level of central office supports needed to ensure continuous improvement at each school.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Conducted one-on-one meetings with all building principals July 24-27, 2018. Met with the chief operations officer on July 23 and August 20, 2018. Met with executive directors and directors on August 1, 3, and 17, 2018.

### ACTION 4

Evaluate the system's efforts toward improving instruction and graduation rates for all students with a special focus on students of color, English Language Learners, students from poverty, and students with disabilities.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Began the process of evaluating improvement efforts.

# Goal 2 (cont.)

## ACTION 5

Meet with students to listen and learn their perceptions of the quality of relationships and access to academic rigor in their schools and the district.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with groups of students on August 3, 2018, to listen and learn from them. Met with FSHS and LHS students on September 17 and 19, 2018.

## ACTION 6

Meet with staff, students, and parents to determine the emotional, social, and cultural supports needed for students to thrive academically.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:**

### PROGRESS KEY:



PENDING



INITIATED



COMPLETED





# Goal 3

Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency by providing a high level of support and service to schools, students, parents, and the school community.

## ACTION 1

Meet with the Executive Leadership Team and other district office employees individually and by departments.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Completed one-on-one meetings with all members of the Executive Leadership Team on August 1, 2018. Next steps will be to establish a consistent schedule of one-on-one meetings with key members of the Executive Leadership Team. Met with district office employees on August 17, 2018.

## ACTION 2

Review briefing documents from each division/department. Documents will include areas of major responsibility, major initiatives underway with projected timelines, significant/potential problems, and major decisions that need to be made. Using these documents will allow for quick understanding of the district's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to progress.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Superintendent briefing documents were submitted by departments on July 27, 2018. Briefing documents have been reviewed August 1-3, 2018. A summary of the briefings and principal one-on-one meetings was shared with the Executive Leadership Team on August 23, 2018.

## ACTION 3

Meet with school principals and teachers to determine their perception of the quality of and accessibility to student achievement data and the level of support offered by the District office staff.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Conducted one-on-one meetings with all building principals July 24-27, 2018.

## ACTION 4

Review and evaluate the District's efforts around leadership development and succession planning for school leadership.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:**

# Goal 3 (cont.)

## ACTION 5

Review critical documents, including but not limited to: policy and procedure manuals, board meeting minutes for last year (and further back as necessary), student achievement data, enrollment/financial projections and budget processes for the past three fiscal years, legal proceedings, facility reports, accountability plans and processes, project management protocols and plans, and safety and emergency plans.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** A review of critical documents has begun.

## ACTION 6

Review the current schedule and format for principal meetings to ensure meetings are beneficial to principals and aligned to District goals.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with the assistant superintendent and elementary and secondary directors on July 17, 2018, to discuss the format of principal meetings. Met with the assistant superintendent to discuss the format of monthly principals' meetings on August 20, 2018.

## ACTION 7

Review and evaluate the District's current performance management system to ensure effective and efficient operations across and within all departments, and to ensure key metrics and goals are established.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:**

### PROGRESS KEY:



PENDING



INITIATED



COMPLETED

# Goal 4

Identify and analyze the critical issues in the District that represent both barriers and opportunities for accelerating the performance of all students.

## ACTION 1

Review and evaluate the District's current process for establishing departmental goals to examine coherence aligned to the Board's goals.



### COMMENTS/RESULTS:

## ACTION 2

Review data from recent surveys, focus groups, and community meetings for the purposes of identifying barriers and opportunities.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Reviewed data from Patron Insight survey, Community Conversations, and ESDC survey.

## ACTION 3

Meet with the Director of Assessment, Research, and Accountability to review ABC data (attendance, behavior, core academics).



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with the director of assessment, research, and accountability on August 17, 2018, to discuss academic data.

## ACTION 4

Visit all schools to listen and learn from students, school families, principals, faculty, and staff.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Visited all schools. Continuous efforts to listen and learn will be afforded with consistent school visits.

## ACTION 5

Meet with the Directors of School Support to listen and learn of needs of all schools that are both barriers and opportunities.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with directors of schools on August 14 and 17, 2018.

### PROGRESS KEY:



PENDING



INITIATED



COMPLETED

# Goal 5

**Create opportunities to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders while proactively ensuring that all voices are heard and engaged in an effort to gain trust and confidence, ensure a comprehensive understanding of the District, and build excitement and momentum for the District's vision, mission, and strategic plan.**

Key questions for all stakeholders will include:

1. What are the strengths of Lawrence Public Schools?
2. What areas need improvement?
3. As the budget remains a challenge, what should be the priorities of the District?
4. How can we raise the bar of academic success for **all** students and eliminate opportunity gaps?
5. What will it take to make Lawrence Public Schools the best school district in the country?

## **ACTION 1**

Schedule meetings with various school parent organizations, site councils, and district advisory groups for initial listening and learning sessions, and discuss critical issues facing the system while creating opportunities for rich, honest, authentic engagement.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with members of the DELTA and Equity Advisory Council on August 1, 2018.

## **ACTION 2**

Schedule formal and informal meet-and-greet opportunities for community members by attending school and community events.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Attended the Community Safety Fair on August 11, 2018. Attended a lunch meeting with First Student bus staff on August 8, 2018. Met with Free State LEAP group on August 20, 2018. Attended the LGBTQ+ staff gathering on August 24, 2018.

# Goal 5 (cont.)

## ACTION 3

Meet with city and county administrators and locally elected officials to listen and learn about areas of concern, opportunities for growth, and solutions to challenges facing the system. Determine and adjust current protocols to routinely communicate with these groups while advocating for the children of the District.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug on July 31, 2018. Met with City Manager Tom Markus on August 22, 2018. Next steps will be to establish consistent meetings.

## ACTION 4

Establish an initial meeting with Lawrence Mayor and Douglas County Commission Chair. Establish quarterly meetings with the City Manager and County Administrator.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug and Commissioner Nancy Thellman on July 31, 2018.

## ACTION 5

Meet with state education leaders and lawmakers (Kansas Commissioner of Education, Kansas State Board of Education member(s), and Douglas County legislators) for an initial listening and learning session to discuss critical issues facing the district and solicit their support. Establish/understand a routine communication protocol with this group.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with Commissioner of Education Randy Watson on September 7, 2018. Met with G.A. Brie, Uniter School Administrators of Kansas, on September 10, 2018.

# Goal 5 (cont.)

## ACTION 6

Set up initial listening and learning sessions with key community leaders and organizations to hear concerns and hopes for the school system, discuss critical issues facing the system, and solicit support in moving the system forward.

These organizations should include but not be limited to:

- Key leadership across the business community, universities, Schools of Education, civic, non-profit, philanthropic, military, public safety, and other organizations as well as their professional organizations and affiliations.
- Community faith-based organizations, families of color groups, key religious leaders, and their professional organizations and affiliations.
- Key organizations such as The Chamber, Lawrence Schools Foundation/Lawrence Education Achievement Partners, Peaslee Tech, Boys & Girls Club, NAACP, Justice Matters, League of Women Voters, Lawrence Rotary Clubs, and other similar organizations.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Six listening and learning sessions have been scheduled for the months of September, October, and November. The schedule may be found online at <https://www.usd497.org/listeningandlearningtour>. Met with Lawrence Schools Foundation Executive Director and Board Chair on July 13, 2018. Met with KU Vice Provost of Diversity and Equity Dr. Jennifer Hamer on August 1, 2018. Met with Interim Dean of KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dr. Clarence Lang. Met with Dean of KU College of Education Dr. Rick Ginsberg. Met with the staff of color on September 13, 2018. Met with the Lawrence Interfaith Alliance and the Ecumenical Christian Fellowship on September 18, 2018. Met with CEO of United Way of Douglas County Jannette Taylor on September 20, 2018.

## ACTION 7

Schedule introductory meetings with members of the local media and establish protocols for communication with these outlets. Offer to meet with the editorial boards. The objective is to establish a framework for collaboration that is open, honest, transparent, and accurate.



**COMMENTS/RESULTS:** Met with the editor of Lawrence Journal World on September 5, 2018.

## PROGRESS KEY:



PENDING



INITIATED



COMPLETED

# Completion of Entry Plan



Near the end of the first 100 days, I will have learned a great deal about Lawrence, Douglas County, and Lawrence Public Schools through multiple meetings with key stakeholders. The internal and external public will receive updates regarding the transition on a monthly basis, with the Board of Education receiving a weekly update. Additionally, the entry plan will be available on our website at [www.usd497.org/EntryPlan](http://www.usd497.org/EntryPlan).

It is imperative that a level of transparency and trust is established through the implementation of the action items in this entry plan. The board, staff, school families, and community members stated that communication from the school system must be improved. In addition, based on the most recent Patron Insight survey, the District's record on making and fulfilling promises and efforts of the District to involve citizens in decision-making were among two of the lowest-rated factors. Once acted upon, goals three and five thoroughly address these concerns. It is my full intention to continue to open the lines of communication as we strive to continue to close gaps and improve outcomes for all students.

Around the completion of the entry plan, another Board of Education retreat will be scheduled to announce findings, propose plans, and collaborate on a planning system to drive improvements in equity, student achievement, and organizational efficiency. This will ultimately lead to the creation of the District's new five-year strategic plan.

The Board-Superintendent team will be able to work together to ensure that the District strengthens its commitment to a positive, productive culture with a laser-like focus on improving student achievement using the District's continuous improvement model. Proposed plans and agendas will be communicated to the school community to promote understanding, commitment, excitement, and support for the goal and purpose of making Lawrence Public Schools the best school district in the country.



"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."  
- Aristotle

# The Lawrence Board of Education



Front row: GR Gordon-Ross, Shannon Kimball (President), and Rick Ingram. Back row: Jessica Beeson (Vice President), Jill Fincher, Melissa Johnson, and Kelly Jones.

## **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

USD 497 is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate in its employment, admissions, placement, recruitment, and educational practices and policies. Discrimination against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is prohibited by Lawrence Board of Education Policy.







110 McDonald Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
785.832.5000  
[www.usd497.org](http://www.usd497.org)