March 1, 2018

**USD 497 Honors 2019 Secondary Teacher of the Year**

Lawrence Superintendent of Schools Dr. Anthony Lewis announced today at Liberty Memorial Central Middle School that Julitha Rials, a special education teacher, is the 2019 Lawrence Secondary Teacher of the Year. Truity Credit Union, a Lawrence Education Achievement Partner, presented $1,000 to Rials.

“Ms. Rials is an advocate and resource for students. She educates and advocates for all students in all ways, especially in areas of equity. She is very much dedicated to helping students by empowering them,” said Principal Jeff Harkin. “She is trusted by students. They continually seek her out for guidance, not to solve their problems, but to be heard and supported.”

This is Rials’ seventh year teaching at Liberty Memorial Central. She previously taught for a short time at Southwest Middle School after serving for seven years as a paraeducator there. She also worked in the district business office for two years as an accounting technician. Rials is a graduate of Lawrence High School. She earned a bachelor’s degree at the University of Kansas and her master’s at Baker University.

“Ms. Rials utilizes differential instruction to meet the learning interests of all students and shows tremendous flexibility in the delivery of course content, assessment, and the setting of learning goals based upon established standards,” said Dr. Robert Durgan, a district Autism and behavioral consultant. “She is sensitive to student diversity as she promotes learning by stimulating a student's interest, appreciating their diverse individual backgrounds and experiences, and accommodating their learning needs.”

“Ms. Julitha Rials always exceeds expectations and continues to provide rigorous and engaging educational support. Her students experience high levels of social and academic reinforcement. She shares resources with general education teachers to provide an understanding of her students’ individual needs,” said Shakiyya Bland, district learning coach.

Lawrence Public Schools annually select an Elementary and a Secondary Teacher of the Year for local recognition and nominate eligible educators to the Kansas State Department of Education’s Kansas Teacher of the Year program. Dr. Lewis presented the elementary award yesterday to Peter Gipson, Sunflower Elementary music teacher.