May 6, 2021

Administrative Announcement: Southwest Middle School

Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis announces the selection of Billy Mills Middle School Assistant Principal and Athletics Director Dr. Carissa Miles as principal of Southwest Middle School, effective July 1, 2021, pending school board approval. Kristen Ryan, who has led Southwest since 2012, will become the school district’s director of elementary schools next year.

“Dr. Miles has proven success as a middle school educator and leader and in connecting with students, staff, and families to build strong relationships, a sense of community, and a positive school culture,” said Dr. Lewis. “She will be a strong advocate for every student at Southwest.”

Dr. Miles will complete her second year in her current position in June. She previously served five years as an AVID coordinator, teacher, and strategies instructor at West Middle School and two years as a third grade teacher at Hillcrest Elementary. Prior to joining the Lawrence Public Schools, she taught English at the middle-school level for three years in the Emporia school district. Dr. Miles earned bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree at Emporia State University and her doctorate at the University of Kansas.

“It has been a pleasure to serve as the assistant principal at Billy Mills Middle School. I am thankful for the relationships built and the opportunities to grow and develop as a professional educator. I look forward to hearing the many great accomplishments of our Cougar scholars as they continue the ir education in Lawrence Public Schools and beyond,” said Dr. Miles.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as principal at Southwest Middle School and look forward to serving the community. Southwest Middle School is one of many excellent schools in USD497, and I am thrilled to honor the school’s history while continuing its exemplary legacy. I am committed to partnering with students, staff, families, and the school community in order to ensure that every student is given an exceptional educational experience in which individual and collective potential are top priority. The opportunity to work with Southwest and the community in this capacity are truly an honor,” she said.

The school district surveyed members of the Southwest school community for input about qualities they desired in a principal. Dr. Lewis and district administrators screened applicants for the principal position and selected finalists to meet with three school-based advisory committees. Southwest Middle School students, staff, and parents made up the committees. They met the finalists and shared input to inform the Superintendent’s decision.

Built in 1995, Southwest Middle School currently serves 639 students in grades 6-8.

The district will immediately begin a search to fill the assistant principal/athletic director position at Billy Mills Middle School, which currently serves 515 students in grades 6-8.

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