



## USD 497 News Release

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### **Special Recognition**

The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday recognized several community partners for their support of the Lawrence Schools Foundation. The Lawrence Municipal Court, Velocity Church, and Lawrence Rotary & Sertoma Clubs have been integral in supporting the Back2School Douglas County school supply drive, making annual donations of socks and shoes, and purchasing and collecting snacks for students. "A strong educational system is the foundation for a prosperous community," said Dena Johnston, executive director of the Lawrence Schools Foundation. "They do all of this to help meet the needs of our school community."

### **Board Policy JBCC: Enrollment of Nonresident Students**

The board's regular meeting began with a public hearing for Board Policy JBCC - Enrollment of Nonresident Students. State legislation allowing out-of-district transfers takes effect January 1, making the new policy necessary. The policy will guide the determination of the district's capacity to accept nonresident students at each grade level in each school. No members of the public spoke during the hearing. Later in the meeting, the board approved the new policy on first reading. A second reading of the policy will occur in November.

### **MOU: Truancy Prevention Services**

The board approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the district and community partners: the Douglas County District Attorney's office, Kansas Department of Children and Families, Douglas County Criminal Justice Services-Youth Programs, Center for Supportive Communities, and O'Connell Children's Shelter. These partners work to prevent truancy by supporting school families with student attendance issues.

### **Work Session: Lawrence Virtual School**

Prior to its regular meeting, the board met for a work session about its virtual education program. One of the first in Kansas, the Lawrence Virtual School (LVS) opened in 2004 as a charter school with 169 students in grades K-8. LVS currently serves 600 K-12 students from across the state.

LVS Principal Zach Harwood shared enrollment data showing a steady decline since peaking in 2012-2014. LVS enrollment saw another spike in 2020-2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. According to the Kansas State Department of Education, virtual schooling options in Kansas increased from 19 in 2017 to 64 today. These include virtual programs and schools. A map of where LVS students reside showed the greatest concentration from the Lawrence and Kansas City areas. Harwood noted data tracking significant improvement in LVS graduation rates from 52.1% in 2016 to 83.8% in 2022.

LVS courses follow local, state, and national curriculum standards; however, it is unique in that its teachers provide direct instruction. Several LVS educators joined the work session online to share information about their school days and student caseloads. They praised the homeroom model LVS uses to assign teachers to a group of students to build relationships and provide support. "It is a lot more work, but it is priceless," said Michelle Andersen, an LVS high school teacher.

Chief Academic Officer Patrick Kelly told the board that the district wants to serve as many kids for whom the virtual school model works well. "What I want to be cautious of is recruiting kids for whom the model doesn't work just because we get dollars for them," he said. State aid for students attending a virtual education program is \$5,600 per full-time and \$2,800 per part-time student.

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