Lawrence USD 497 is a learning community committed to ensuring 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. To achieve this mission, the school district gathered input from students, parents, teachers and staff, school board members, and community partners.

The district asked, “What’s going well?” “What areas need improvement?” “How can we raise the bar of academic success for all students and eliminate opportunity gaps?” and “As the budget remains a challenge, what should be the priorities of the district in order to make Lawrence Public Schools the best school district in the country?” The community’s response to these key questions led to the development of a five-year strategic plan.

This newsletter outlines the priority student outcomes, themes, objectives, and year-one initiatives and action steps that comprise the strategic plan. At the heart of the plan: student achievement and success!

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Board Meeting Calendar

October 28
November 11 and 25
December 9
January 13 and 27
February 10 and 24
March 23
April 13 and 27
May 11 and 26
June 8 and 22

Public meetings begin at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of the month, unless otherwise announced, at 110 McDonald Drive. Review school board agendas and minutes online at www.usd497.org/schoolboard. Watch a LIVE webstream or view video archives of board meetings online at www.usd497.org/webstream. View LIVE broadcasts of board meetings on LPS-TV 26 with a Midco cable box.

Find it at www.usd497.org:
- Job Opportunities
- School Calendar
- Breakfast and Lunch Menus
- Safety and Security Information
- PowerSchool Instructions
- Budget Information
Our PROCESS

A new Superintendent arrives and hundreds flock to meet him. They shine a light on district strengths and challenges and share creative ideas for school improvement. He listens and learns. He works with the school board, staff, and school families to develop a five-year strategic plan. Together, we launch year one of a plan that reflects the community's vision for the future of its public schools.

OUR PROMISE

Lawrence Public Schools will ensure that students of all races, backgrounds, and abilities achieve at high levels, demonstrate proficiency in reading by third grade and in math by eighth grade, and graduate on time prepared for success in college and careers.

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1. Identify what students should know and be able to do PreK-12 plus.
   a. Identify learning standards for consistent district wide implementation of the curriculum.
      1. Create district scope and sequence for each content, grade level, and course.
      2. Bring the scope and sequence and potential resources to district advisory committees for feedback.
   2. Use instructional resources that honor and preserve students’ diverse cultural backgrounds.
      a. Ensure the use of evidence-based, multicultural instructional resources.
         1. Identify the current resources teachers are using for content areas, grade levels, and courses.
         2. Evaluate these resources for alignment to standards, scope and sequence, and cultural relevance.
         3. Select primary and supplementary culturally relevant resources within the curriculum teams.
         4. Survey and gather staff input and feedback about curriculum and resources after one year of implementation.
         5. Review survey results and revise the curriculum and resources with content area, grade level, and course curriculum team.
         6. Define curriculum non-negotiables and ensure sustainability and accountability.

A Teacher-Designed Curriculum

Districtwide curriculum committees play a vital role in accomplishing the initiatives associated with the Cohesive Curriculum theme of the Strategic Plan.

"It’s a truly authentic way to have a teacher-designed curriculum. Those in the field are creating the products. They know our students. They know what works. And, we provide them with the time and training to bring the pieces all together," said Dr. Jennifer Bessolo, USD 497’s director of curriculum.

Lawrence Public Schools currently facilitates seven committees to review and establish curricular scope and sequence used across all buildings. They include the Elementary Curriculum Committee, Middle and High School English Language Arts Committees, Middle School Family and Consumer Science Committee, High School Health and Wellness Committee, and Middle and High School Math Committees. The district will add Social-Emotional Learning and Middle School Elective Model Committees later this fall. Teachers representing each grade level and course serve on the curriculum committees.

A cohesive districtwide curriculum provides a road map for all staff members. Each committee determines the framework for each subject matter and aligns it with district and state standards. The framework includes diverse resources that enable all students to see themselves in the curriculum. It also provides strategies to engage and inspire students. Committees design each unit to empower teacher choice. The framework provides resources and direction while enabling teachers the flexibility to infuse their own individuality.

The 2019-2020 school year marks three years of work for several of the curriculum committees. Team members continue to tweak units when they don’t align with standards and draft local curriculum while providing teachers flexibility. Secondary committees chart new paths toward bringing different building cultures together and creating a framework and resources for all secondary teachers.

"We feel a sense of progress. We have new resources that are dynamic in terms of diversity and rigor and that meet the needs of all students," said Dr. Bessolo.
Students Active and Engaged in Learning

What features would you add to an animal of your own creation? Kendall Patterson posed this essential question to her first graders during a Mystery Science activity at Sunflower Elementary. Her students learned about different abilities that animals have that enable them to adapt to their environment and survive.

The first graders created their own animals, coming up with whatever “superpowers” they felt their animals needed to survive. The class had earned a Stuffed Animal Day for their compliments and good behavior so they brought a stuffed furry friend with them to school. The students made sure to share their new-fangled animals and superpower stories with their stuffed animals.

Meanwhile, Sunflower music teacher Peter Gipson worked to teach students a new superpower of their own. He began his guitar unit with Amy Le’s fifth-grade class. The students identified the components of a guitar, noting the differences between a guitar and ukulele. Gipson paired students to take turns learning how to properly hold the guitar and play an easy G chord.

Students Learn to Garden and Cook

Students at Cordley, Kennedy, and New York Elementary will get out of the classroom and into the garden thanks to a Farm to School grant that community partner Sunrise Project received from the United States Department of Agriculture. The implementation grant of $83,728 enables Sunrise Project to work with the school district’s Farm to School program to provide robust gardening and nutrition programming to these schools.

Students will engage in gardening, cooking, and hosting school lunch “farmers markets” with weekly taste tests of fresh garden produce during the growing season. Sunrise Project will provide hands-on cooking experiences for students in grades 3-5 at each of these schools while establishing a gardening program at Kennedy Elementary and supporting the existing school gardens at New York and Cordley.

Students will also take field trips to the Sunrise Project Community Garden to learn more about the food system. As a result of this project, more than 750 students will grow, cook, and eat fresh produce as part of their school day experience.
1. Meet students’ unique academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
   a. Equip schools to effectively implement the district's multi-tiered, student-centered support system.
   2. Establish a District Leadership Team for the multi-tiered, student-centered support system (Ci3T).
   4. Develop a plan to support building Ci3T Teams by focusing on data, team membership expertise, and essential implementation components.
   5. Determine the need for additional budget authority and positions and develop job descriptions.
   6. Create a professional development plan for district and building administrators based upon building needs assessments.
   b. Set clear expectations for student instruction and ensure they are met through regular teacher observation and feedback.
   1. Partner with Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP Center) to revise and evaluate draft instructional framework.
   2. Develop a plan for the rollout of the instructional framework.

3. Create an administrative professional development plan.
4. Implement a tool for gathering instructional snapshots systemwide.
5. Embed existing practices in instructional framework and snapshots tool and explore partnerships to support them.
2. Decrease barriers to college and career readiness PreK-12+.

Students and Staff Challenged to Think Wrong

District and community partners challenged students from Broken Arrow, Hillcrest, and Deerfield Elementary Schools and Free State High School to think wrong during activities held in early October to gather student input for their Kansans Can School Redesign Projects. Representatives of KU’s Think Wrong Institute challenged students to generate unconventional solutions.

“I thought it was fun because everyone got to choose how they wanted their school to be,” said Tara Brunsell, a fifth grade student.

Elementary students listed things they loved or wished they had at school. They designed their perfect school, named them without using the word “school,” and invented mascots and slogans. One group came up with Unicorn Academy with, of course, a unicorn mascot. Another student group founded the school, Be Creative, with an owl mascot. Students addressed some of the concerns they have about school during the design challenge.

“Sometimes the tests are too hard for people. I think they need to make them more interactive and let the brain loose a little bit more,” said Hendrix Emerson, a fifth grader.

Gathering in their new media commons space inspired creativity from the Free State students. Groups defined student success and identified assets and challenges to attaining it. Teams picked a problem and devised the craziest way to solve it. Sharing their solution with a haiku, a student spokesperson said, “Choose the length of school, decide amount of homework, fix time and workload.”

The four Redesign schools have scheduled a Think Wrong parent workshop October 29. The 2019-20 school year serves as a planning year for Redesign.
Students Learn Civic Leadership

The Kansas State Department of Education selected West Middle School among ten schools for recognition for the civic engagement opportunities they offer to students. KSDE’s Civic Advocacy Network (CAN) honored West MS as a School of Promising Practice. West MS promotes civic engagement with its Hawk Hock Leader Program. The school trains 30 student leaders to help engage parents and community, develop a positive school culture, lead small groups of incoming sixth graders, and become supportive peers.

The school also offers leadership opportunities through its student Equity, Tech Team, and STUCCO. They host schoolwide activities. Advisory lessons around the topics of Community, Responsibility, Integrity, Respect, Empathy, Leadership, Accountability, Goal Development, Motivation, and Mindfulness support student leadership and civic engagement.

![West MS Honored for Civic Advocacy.](image)

The school’s garden, a partnership with The Merc Co-op, provides educational opportunities and summer jobs for students and helps the community by sharing the bountiful harvest. The West MS garden has a goal this year to provide 2,000 pounds of produce to the Just Food community food bank.

Cougars on the Prowl

Always on the move, Billy Mills Middle School Cougars tackle a variety of skill building lessons as part of their Core 4 classes. Ryan Jorgenson’s sixth grade English Language Arts class went on a book walk. A creative way to explore several different books, the book walk enabled students to decide what interests them most. They chose books including “I Am Malala” by Malala Yousafzai and “Born a Crime” by Trevor Noah.

A few doors down, Team Olympian sixth graders in Connie Merz’s class studied for their upcoming microscope test with a group quiz. They viewed different organisms through microscopes. Courtney Keller’s seventh grade students also prepared for an upcoming math test. They learned multiplication and division of fractions with a game of Math Bingo.

Meanwhile, Aubrey Kovisto’s seventh grade science class recorded daily measurements and observations of their group’s aquarium and terrarium. Students are observing the different organisms needed in each ecosystem.

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3 SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Theme, Objectives, and Year-One Initiatives and Action Steps

1. Encourage positive student behaviors and reduce behaviors that interfere with learning.
2. Provide safe and welcoming schools that engage every student.
   a. Foster authentic and caring adult connections for every student.
      1. Provide a framework outlining the elements, actions, and definitions critical to developing caring relations and meaningful connections.
   2. Determine a method for schools to identify the accuracy of the current state of moving adult interactions from nice to necessary.
3. Provide schools opportunities for reflection to grow the current level of meaningful interactions from what is done intuitively to what should be done intentionally.
4. Develop practical strategies and methods to intentionally infuse building relationships as a priority in all daily adult interactions.
5. Establish a method for using feedback to monitor and strengthen observable adult actions.
6. Provide opportunities to develop and support positive relationships through professional development and Professional Learning Communities.
7. Establish a process that focuses on strengthening relationships in schools as a catalyst for students’ academic success.
8. Identify opportunities and intentionally infuse authentic relationship-building into current practices, structures, and curriculum.
9. Design an accountability structure for sustainability.
10. Develop a communications plan to inform parents and community members of our efforts to ensure every student feels a connection with at least one adult at school.
   b. Implement a consistent districtwide emergency plan.
      1. Purchase and implement the use of a visitor identification and check-in system at all schools.
      2. Update surveillance camera software and train staff to use it.
      3. Develop and implement a surveillance camera maintenance plan.
      4. Develop and implement a surveillance camera replacement and expansion plan.
      5. Investigate and pilot a mobile security system.
      6. Determine the feasibility of implementation of a mobile security system.
      8. Develop an internal safety and security audit plan and train staff to implement it.
      9. Implement an internal safety and security audit plan for all buildings.
    12. Develop and implement security procedures and workflow for student internet searches using keyword flags.
    13. Develop and implement ongoing staff training in crisis procedures.
    14. Develop and implement an ongoing de-escalation and crisis management system.
    15. Develop a plan and custodial staff training for maintenance of electronic door locks and key fobs.
    16. Develop and implement a staff training plan for proper use of electronic door locks and key fobs.
    17. Conduct a feasibility study of the continued use of combination door locks.
    18. Evaluate City of Lawrence proposal to share the costs of school resource officers.
    19. Implement a system to add emergency SMS text alerts for staff, parents/guardians, and high school students.
    20. Equip all fire panels with call-in capabilities.
Morning Meetings Help Students Connect

With a grant from the Lawrence Schools Foundation, New York Elementary students start their day by practicing mindfulness. The benefits of these exercises include refining flexibility and balance, reducing stress and anxiety, developing concentration and focus, creating mind-body connection, and encouraging a sense of self, community, and teamwork.

“Thank you, Lawrence Schools Foundation! We are excited to start our day calm and ready to learn,” said Sunny Halsted, New York Elementary principal.

Kennedy Elementary students shook off any hint of the Monday blues by beginning a recent week with student-led activities. Jessica Franklin’s fourth grade students welcomed each other with an “alien greeting” of their own creation and discussed their weekends. A quick game helped students make connections while their teacher caught a glimpse of who may need extra support to successfully navigate the busy day of learning ahead.

Morning meetings serve as a great start to the school day.

Staff and Students Focus on Suicide Prevention

“We care about you. You are loved.” Free State High School staff members shared those messages in a video used to kick off National Suicide Prevention Week. Both high schools coordinate a variety of efforts to raise awareness of suicide prevention measures.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites suicide as the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15-34 in Kansas and nationwide. Kansas became the 19th state to pass the Jason Flatt Act in 2016. The bill requires at least one hour of training for all schools each year based on programs approved by the Kansas State Board of Education. The bill mandates school crisis plans include steps for recognizing suicide ideation, appropriate methods of intervention, and a crisis recovery plan. Free State and Lawrence High mental health teams continue to organize resources and activities to build awareness among students of suicide prevention efforts.

Both schools’ mental health teams partner with student groups and staff to organize activities for National Suicide Prevention Week. Students received yellow ribbons and bag tags containing a 24-hour crisis text line. Students can attach these to backpacks, sports bags, or purses. School staff and student leaders shared informational cards and resources with students during the lunch periods in the cafeteria and in classrooms. Posters with positive affirmations adorned the hallways and classroom walls. The mental health teams strive to inform students of warning signs and encourage peers to pay attention to and look out for each other.

“We go into all ninth grade health classes every semester and discuss prevention and warning signs. We state who to contact if you or a friend needs someone to talk to at our school or in the community,” said Lynisha Thomas and Carlissa Welsh, LHS social workers.

School mental health teams also provide information to school families during parent-teacher conferences and other schoolwide events. The Douglas County Suicide Prevention Coalition created this year a series of informational cards tailored to educators, students, and parents.

School mental health team members say that the most important thing parents need to know about youth suicide is that it is preventable. They stress the importance of parents educating themselves about warning signs and having conversations with their children about suicide, including asking direct questions, such as “Are you thinking about committing suicide?” Both high schools encourage students and parents to visit with a member of the mental health teams about any questions or concerns or to receive more information about suicide prevention.
Themes, Objectives, and Year-One Initiatives and Action Steps

1. Create positive and supportive work environments for all employees.
   a. Support the success and well-being of every employee.
   1. Develop and support Professional Learning Communities.
   2. Support the training and success of all classified employee groups.
   3. Update the classified evaluation tool to reflect duties of positions.
   4. Update for certified staff the Charlotte Danielson evaluation materials and professional learning.
   5. Revise and implement fall and spring climate surveys and staff stay and exit interviews.
   6. Add a climate and culture focus to each administrative monthly professional development.
   7. Implement a site-based monthly recognition program for all employee groups.
   8. Provide an overview of health and wellness resources to all staff members.
2. Attract high quality candidates for all employee groups.

All Students. One Team.

On National Custodian Day on October 2, the school district recognized the critical role custodial staff plays in schools. Custodians, perhaps known most for the many keys they carry on their keychains, are key to school safety and security, clean and healthy environments, and staff and student comfort. They are key to a positive school climate and culture, and to schools presenting a professional image. They also are key role models for students.

On a recent Friday, Broken Arrow Elementary custodian Kenneth Coons Jr. could be found leading Melissa Howard’s second graders to the pond. It was time to feed the fish!

All Broken Arrow students get a turn to accompany “Mr. Ken” to the pond. He helps them learn about the different fish and the ecosystem the fish need to survive.

It was evident from this visit that the students love the opportunity to see the fish nibble on the food they provide. But what’s more important to the students than the fish? Enjoying spending time in the school garden with Mr. Ken.
Superintendent Anthony Lewis led an entourage of staff and students down the hall at West Middle School to the classroom of Chad Aberle. There, Dr. Lewis surprised Aberle with the district’s Lawrence Horizon Award. The award honors exemplary novice educators in their second year of teaching. Truity Credit Union, a Lawrence Education Achievement Partner that supports the district’s staff recognition program, presented Aberle with $250.

“An initiative of our strategic plan is to foster authentic and caring adult connections for every student. I understand that one of Mr. Aberle’s strengths is building rapport with his students,” said Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis shared with Aberle’s class that he had been hearing lots of good things about their teacher. Aberle, who hails from Sabetha and graduated from the University of Kansas, teaches science and serves as the head wrestling coach at West Middle School and an assistant football coach at Free State High.

“What Chad did to create a culture for learning in his first year of teaching was unique. He quickly established close relationships with students and families, listening to the needs, concerns, and desires they had for their children. He created an inclusive environment where all students are accepted and learn together,” said Principal Dr. Brad Kempf.

“His strong content knowledge and his ability to build strong relationships make him a great teacher. As a result, we have a supported group of students who feel connected to their school, who are strong self-advocates, and who are excelling academically in science.” Kempf added.

In addition to surprising Aberle with the local recognition, the district will nominate him to the Kansas State Department of Education’s Kansas Horizon Award program.

“Mr. Aberle’s positive presence makes others flock to him, and that includes students because he takes the time to connect with them and to know a little bit about each of them,” said Carissa Miles, who worked with Aberle as a learning coach at West Middle School last year.
5 DATA-INFORMED DECISIONS

Themes, Objectives, and Year-One Initiatives and Action Steps

1. Use data to inform all instructional decisions.
2. Develop systems that support student-focused, data-based decision-making.
   a. Facilitate the accurate collection, analysis, use, and reporting of data.
   1. Develop a District Data Team to review data reporting methods.
   2. Create a data dictionary for the Academic Team.
   3. Determine measurement tools.
   5. Develop standard reports.
   6. Provide training and professional development on business rules for all personnel entering data.
3. Develop a schedule for checking for fidelity.
4. Collect staff feedback.
5. Develop a communications plan to keep staff informed.
6. Revise standard reports.
   b. Allocate resources according to research-based best practices for student success.
   1. Finalize the membership of the Budget and Program Evaluation Team.
   2. Communicate to budget managers the Budget and Program Evaluation Team’s selection of programs and departments for evaluation.
   3. Review requests for new funding.
7. Review and implement a prioritization process to evaluate budget additions, reductions, and reallocations, and present suggestions to the Board of Education.
8. Determine a list of programs to review in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year.
9. Provide the Board of Education an update about any requests for new funding for the 2020-2021 school year.
10. Present a draft of the 2020-2021 budget to the Board of Education.
11. Support the Board of Education in conducting the annual public budget hearing and considering approval of the 2020-2021 budget for publication.

District Uses Data to Bridge Digital Divide

“We are excited for eligible students to receive free high-speed wireless internet hotspots and 10 gigabytes of data each month for the duration of their high school careers under a new partnership with the $1 Million Project,” announced Assistant Superintendent Jerri Kemble at a meeting of the district’s Executive Leadership Team.

Kemble added that first, the district would need to collect some data. During late August and early September, the district surveyed high school students to see how many met the criteria required by the $1 Million Project. An independent public charity, the $1 Million Project’s mission is to help one million high school students who do not have reliable internet access at home reach their full potential by giving them free high-speed internet access. The charity requires that the students be 13+ years old and in grades 9-12. They must also indicate that they do not currently have access to reliable internet service at home to be eligible. The free hotspots are Child Internet Protection Act-compliant and filter online content to provide a level of comfort to parents about their teenagers’ online activity.

“This program is intended to help our students access online educational resources at home, and it is free for our schools and eligible students,” said Kemble.

Using the data from the student survey, the district identified nearly 200 high school students as eligible for the free service. Next, Free State and Lawrence High Schools began asking eligible students and their parents and guardians to sign the district’s Acceptable Use Guidelines and permission forms in order to check out the hotspots from the school libraries.

The school library media centers will have a few extra hotspots for checkout. Through the $1 Million Project, the district may survey students again and turn in a new order three times a year.

Through its Learning Forward, Future Ready initiative, the district already provides MacBooks to each high school student and iPads to all middle schoolers.

“We are committed to bridging the digital gap and ensuring students have the access they need to online resources. This is part of our commitment to equity in Lawrence Public Schools, including equitable access to technology,” Kemble said.

“Providing each of our secondary students a mobile device that they may take home to extend their learning is a great first step. Since we also know that many of our students do not have access to reliable internet service outside of school, it’s important for us to work with community partners to try to address that barrier,” she added.

The district continues to purchase internet hotspots called Kajeets. The secondary schools make Kajeets available to middle school students through library checkout. The Kajeets also are available to high school students who are unable to access Sprint’s services through the hotspots provided by the $1 Million Project.
USD 497 voters approved a $92.5 million school bond election in 2013 to fund facility and technology improvements to all of the community’s public schools. The majority of those funds supported upgrades to the district’s 14 elementary schools. District voters again chose to invest in the future by approving an $87 million referendum in 2017 for secondary school improvements.

The Secondary School Facilities Master Plan guides this ongoing work. The plan’s goals include creating 21st-century environments to support student-centered learning, accommodating a growing student population, providing safe and secure campuses, accommodating student privacy, creating equity across district facilities, and upgrading mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems to support high-performance schools.

Facility improvement projects at Billy Mills and Southwest Middle Schools were completed in the fall of 2018. The district and its architect and construction partners continue to add finishing touches to recently completed projects at Free State High and Liberty Memorial Central and West Middle Schools.

Free State High’s east classroom addition and new cardio and training room were completed last December. Construction completed for occupancy in August included interior renovation of the new library media center and learning commons, classroom renovations, an expanded weight room and new wrestling room, restroom and locker room improvements, parking lot and sidewalk upgrades, a new outdoor learning/dining area, new greenhouse, and new classroom technology. Free State’s improvements totaled $14 million.

Liberty Memorial Central Middle School’s $4.3 million project included modernization of the library media center, auditorium improvements, restroom and locker room renovations, the addition of learning pockets (break-out spaces) to hallways, roofing repairs, LED lighting upgrades, and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing improvements.

West Middle School’s $9.8 million project included modernization of the library media center, STEM lab improvements, restroom and locker room renovations, the addition of learning pockets (break-out spaces) to hallways, roofing repairs, LED lighting upgrades, fire sprinkler upgrades, and replacement of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system. Students and staff at both middle schools began enjoying these updates when they returned to school this fall.

The multi-year transformation of Lawrence High School, built in 1954, includes an innovation district connecting core classrooms to hands-on learning opportunities in career and technical education courses. A wellness/athletics district consolidates programs related to health, wellness, nutrition, fitness, and athletics, including new cardio and weight rooms and health classrooms. An open dining commons and media center at the heart of the school will extend the flexibility and function of those areas.

Expanded courtyards will provide outdoor learning opportunities and daylight to all core classrooms. A new wayfinding pattern will unify the various buildings that make up LHS, and strategic additions will create a single campus with controlled access during school hours for improved safety and security. The plan enlarges undersized core classrooms and corridors to bring the school’s capacity to 2,000 students.

Lawrence High’s nearly $50 million project continues to progress in stages. Phase one construction, substantially completed in August, included key parts of the innovation and wellness/athletics districts. Phase two is visible along Louisiana Street as a two-story addition is constructed to connect the renovated Annex to the main building.
Points of Pride: Student and Staff Success Stories

The Kansas State High School Activities Association surprised Free State High teachers and staff on their first day of the new school year with the announcement that Free State earned the 2019-2020 KSHSAA Performing Arts School of Excellence Award. KSHSAA presents this honor to only one of the 354 high schools in Kansas. The award recognizes successful music, speech, and drama faculty, students, and programs. Performing arts faculty pictured are Kristie Mullenix, Melissa Smith, Judy Erpelding, Randy Fillmore, Scott Ireland, Collin Watgen, Michael Shelton, and Ericka Walker. Not pictured: Kelly Thompson and Hilary Morton.

The Budget, Lawrence High’s student newspaper, received an All American critique from the National Scholastic Press Association. This is the highest rating, and one that LHS has earned multiple times. Congratulations to our LHS student journalists and Barbara Tholen, journalism teacher and adviser.

Southwest Middle School seventh grader Matthew Liu, a pianist, joined the Midwest Chamber Ensemble, a Kansas City, Missouri, organization, for two concerts. The organization gives young musicians the chance to play alongside local music professionals. Liu won the Midwest Chamber Ensemble’s youth concerto competition last spring.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation announced in September the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists in the 65th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. Lawrence Public Schools congratulates six National Merit Semifinalists: Liam McKinney, Ian Haas, John Loos, Rheaanne Walton, and Tate Fanshier, Free State High; and Lisa Yang, LHS. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,600 National Merit Scholarships worth more than $31 million that will be awarded next spring.

Sharon Green with Lawrence Family Vision visits each year to screen all of our early childhood students. Dr. Green is great with the children, distributes stickers, and speaks Spanish when needed. We truly appreciate her and this partnership.

The Lawrence Lions Alumni Association honored a leader in world affairs, a singer/songwriter, and an environmentalist at its Hall of Honor Induction September 29 in the LHS rotunda. The 2019 inductees are Cathleen Carothers, Class of ’91; Ashley Davis, Class of ’94; and Pamela McElwee, Class of ’88. Carothers, the current Consul General to the U.S. embassy in Athens, has worked for the U.S. Department of State. Davis has released seven albums of music in the Celtic tradition with bluegrass and folk influences. McElwee, a Rhodes Scholar who is currently a human ecology professor at Rutgers, has published many articles and several books about the environment. Congratulations to these Chesty Lion alumni.

The Governor’s Council on Tax Reform will conduct an 18-month, in-depth study and make specific statutory recommendations to state lawmakers. Shannon Kimball, a member of the Lawrence school board and president of the Board of Directors of the Kansas Association of School Boards, is among the Governor’s appointees.

The National Scholastic Press Association named the 2019 staff of The Budget finalists in the Pacemaker competition for the third consecutive year. The Budget was a Pacemaker winner in 2017 and a finalist in 2018. The Red & Black yearbook was a finalist for the Pacemaker in 2017. Congratulations to LHS journalism students and Barbara Tholen, journalism teacher and adviser.

A Free State High string quartet joined professional musicians in a touring Beatles vs. Stones show at the Lied Center in mid-October. The show pitted Rolling Stones tribute band Satisfaction against rival Brits Abbey Road in a musical showdown. Free State senior musicians Julia Lin, Micah Steele, and Alli Pittman, and junior Alex Chavez performed seven songs with the bands. The Free State Orchestra is under the direction of Judy Erpelding.

National History Day® announced that Danielle Lotton-Barker, Southwest Middle School gifted education facilitator, received a scholarship for an online course to study the Legacies of World War I with teachers from around the world.

The Kansas State Department of Education celebrated educators in September with Kansas Teacher of the Year banquets in each congressional region. Lawrence Teachers of the Year Peter Gipson, Sunflower Elementary music teacher, and Julitha Rials, Liberty Memorial Central Middle School special education teacher, were among 38 educators honored in Region 2 in Topeka. Gipson was named one of three regional semifinalists.
The Lawrence Board of Education approved the addition of middle school cross country for seventh and eighth grade students this year. Cyrenity Hardy-Billy, an eighth grader at Billy Mills Middle School, won first place in all three meets. “This is the beginning of something wonderful. It was a good first year. Next year we will have more races on our schedule,” said Elaine Mellenbruch, West Middle School cross country coach. Pictured are the Liberty Memorial Central MS cross country team, West MS girls, and Hardy-Billy.

Lawrence Public Schools congratulates three students: Noah Stussie, LHS, and Ellie LeBar and Erinn Waldron, FSHS, for their selection to perform with the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) 2019 All-National Honor Ensembles November 7–10, in Orlando, Florida. LeBar, a junior, and Waldron, a senior, are students of Scott Ireland, FSHS director of choral activities, and Olivia Henning, assistant director; and Stussie, a senior, is a student of Dr. Dwayne Dunn, LHS director of choral activities, and Randy Frye, assistant director.

The Lawrence Schools Foundation honored four high school seniors, Trevor Arellano and Samantha Turner, LHS; and David Stuart and Kaitlyn Hamilton, FSHS, as Foundation Student Champions. The students were recognized for their academic, athletic, personal, and community service achievements during the Foundation’s annual Community Education Breakfast in September.

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Thanks to the help of Images Salon in Lawrence and Michael Draper from Debonaire's Barber Shop in Topeka, students at New York Elementary received free haircuts, just in time for Picture Day in September.

High school student musicians performing with Black Violin at the Lied Center in October included Lisa Yang, Anna Marburger, and Donnavan Dillon, Violin I; Anoosha Redd, Felix Guo, and Emma Parsons, Violin II; Isaac Seybold, Julia Rossillon, Rose Hicks, and Joohye Oh, Viola; Ella Williams, Gabriel Kennedy Orive, and Sophia Ousdahl, Cello; and Emmeline Schneider, Bass; all of LHS; and FHS students Alina Matejowski, Mica Steeple, and Chloe Frazier, Violin I; Julia Lin, Sofia Lefort, and Maura Shire, Violin II; Ali Pittman, Terry Mechem, and Dingding Ye, Viola; Alex Chavez, Jake Chun, Morgan Kimura, and Makayla Atherton, Cello; and Elijah Ditto, Bass. Orchestra directors are Mariah Barnett, LHS, and Judy Erpelding, FHS.

Lawrence Virtual School student Logan Trenary, a seventh grader, is competing with Team USA World Wrestling Tours. His wins in both Greco and Freestyle matches against a Hungarian youth champion helped Team USA win a Hungary vs. Team USA Dual in Hungary.

Congratulations to these National Merit Commended Scholars: (top row) Will Burns, Julia Holder, Chuxia Guo, and Charlie Johnson; (bottom row) Spencer Hughes, Sivani Dayakar Badrivenkata, and Elliott Whisenant, of Free State High; and Amelia Vasquez, Lawrence High. More than two-thirds or about 34,000 of the approximately 50,000 high scorers on the PSAT/NMSQT® receive Letters of Commendation in recognition of their outstanding academic promise. Some of these students may become candidates for special scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

Lawrence High School thanked and congratulated Lawrence Police Department school resource officers Gwyn Fogarty and James Miller, who were promoted to the rank of sergeant. They are pictured with Dr. Cynthia Johnson, interim principal.