

# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

The Lawrence Public Schools, USD 497, Board of Education seeks applicants to fill a vacancy due to a board member's resignation. Applicants must complete the full application and submit it to the Board Clerk **no later than 5 p.m. on August 15, 2022.**

The board will review applications during its August 22, 2022, regular board meeting and select candidates to interview at a specially called meeting on August 29, 2022. At the August 29, 2022, meeting, the board will interview the selected candidates and choose one applicant to appoint to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, through January 8, 2024. A special election for a two-year term (January 8, 2024, through January 12, 2026) for this board seat will be held on November 7, 2023.

For more information, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#).

*Please be advised that all applications when shared with the Lawrence Board of Education become public records accessible to the media and the public. (Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

kimbeets.ks@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 07 / 2022

Full Name \*

Kimberly Beets

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2926 ATCHISON CIR

Cell/Home Phone \*

9136690736

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

15 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

In the past, I have volunteered with shelters, food banks, and with Big Brothers & Big Sisters here in Lawrence. I attend at Boys & Girls Club and school events, contribute to fund raisers, and vote regularly. I have a 1st grader and a 3 year old and I have been pursuing a PhD while working full time, so spare time for school and community involvement has been sparse the past 5 years. However, I am wrapping up the final stages of my dissertation and my children are becoming more independent, so I am finding that I have more time to dedicate to our community and I would love to start now!

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I have been primarily engaged in the higher education community for the past ten years, but my life and our society at large has taken a trajectory that inspires passion for the K-12 system. I am in the final stage of my PhD in Social and Cultural Studies in Education, currently writing a quantitative dissertation using nationwide census data regarding educational attainment. I worked for the School of Education at KU for five years with current and future educators, and learned about about the KSDE requirements for schools and educators, so I am familiar with the infrastructure we must conform to and abide by to meet state standards, while also deeply understanding the obstacles we face as a community to meet the standards of the teachers and children/families in Lawrence. I would like to serve on the board because I have a unique mix of experiences within and outside of the educational system, and because I am a parent in the school district. I want to contribute my knowledge and experience to helping children in the community while being supportive of our district's teachers and staff.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

Someone on the school board needs to be an active listener, empathetic to teacher and parent concerns, and a strategic thinker and decision maker. I am able to listen to opinions that differ from my own and think critically about the arguments being made. I try to avoid preconceived notions and form judgements and decisions based on logic and evidence. I feel strongly about respecting others and making sure they feel heard, while also setting up a foundation for them to have reasonable expectations. I find that often people want to be heard and empathized with, and if someone takes the time to listen and explain, it can resolve so many issues through simple communication and understanding.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I learn best by observing others. I will hone and develop my board member skills by observing my peers who have more experience in this capacity and emulating the qualities I admire. I will encourage all school board members to think logically rather than politically and I will seek out the concerns and opinions of parents, teachers, and staff in the community to make sure their voices are being heard.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

The role of the school board is to lead, serve, and advocate. As a member of this esteemed group, I will lead by demonstrating a respect for others and making difficult decisions when necessary to help our schools and our students thrive. I will serve by truly listening to the concerns and needs of our students, teachers, and staff experience within their schools, understanding that I am responsible for the decisions that impact their daily lives. And I will advocate by sharing those concerns and opinions with the board, with administration, and with the state of Kansas.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The greatest strength of the district is that it is in Lawrence, KS. We have a wonderful community-minded group of people in this city and a population who is uniquely invested in the mindset of "it takes a village" when it comes to each other and our children. It is a truly supportive and loving community and that is not the case everywhere.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

The greatest challenge facing the district is two-fold: reduced enrollment and financial constraints. More parents are removing their children from the public schools in town because they feel their voices aren't being heard or respected. Teachers are overworked and underappreciated, leaving little time for actual professional development and leading to burn out and unruly classrooms. Invaluable staff positions are severely underpaid, leaving positions open for paraeducators, janitorial staff, and other positions unfilled. These things result in schools being unable to meet the needs of students and parents removing them from our schools in favor of private or homeschool. A result of this enrollment flight is that our budgets are being cut due to lower enrollment and fiscal resources are being drained. The district needs someone on the schoolboard who our citizens feel they can talk to, connect with, and who will address their primary concerns. Our district does not live in a silo. We should work with neighboring and peer-sized school districts, learn from them about how they are navigating similar concerns to our own, and employ a strategic plan for the future. Money management, attention to detail, and strong data analysis skills are going to be vital to the district's future success.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

If budget were not an issue, I would like to see bussing options in town and more before and after care options. I would also increase wages for paraeducators and school staff.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

The best way to attract candidates is to post positions widely and pay a livable wage based on the actual cost of living in Lawrence. Training and professional development go a long way toward increasing job satisfaction, as does a ladder to career progression/promotion. Hiring people isn't too difficult, but to keep them you have to treat them well. Instilling a culture of respect, gratitude, and autonomy for all positions is vital.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

I do not believe in micromanagement. In theory, those who run the schools should be the experts on school administration and child development and it should not be the business of those who do not have the same expertise to dictate their day to day work. If we trusted them enough to hire them for their job, then we should trust them enough to do their job. However, like with anything else, trust is earned. If there are numerous complaints from students and parents and staff about significant issues within the schools which may impact learning and safety, then it will need to be urgently and seriously dealt with by the school board.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

I believe the board should have significant involvement with budget priorities. As representatives of our community's interest in the schools, it is our job to make sure the funding we receive is allocated in a reasonable way.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

LPS reference: Anna Busby - 785-766-7846

Professional reference: Laura Leonard - 785-691-7736

Community reference: Lydia Benda - 785-626-2135

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**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

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Google Forms

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Email \*

trevor.bollinger@protonmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

10 / 10 / 1994

Full Name \*

Trevor J. Bollinger

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

3210 Charlotte Ln, Lawrence KS 66047

Cell/Home Phone \*

(620) 295-0286

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

01/01/2020-Present

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Cordley Elementary School Classroom Fundraiser (March 2022)

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I have a strong desire to benefit the community I live in. Despite only living in Lawrence for two years, it has become home for myself and my growing family. I want to play a part ensuring the children in Lawrence have access to the best educational opportunities possible. To do so, I believe the teachers in Lawrence public schools need a strong board of education capable of taking on difficult budgetary requirements in a manner that maintains the confidence and support of those teachers. Currently, Lawrence is not especially competitive insofar as pay and benefits compared to surrounding schools. I believe finding ways with the current budget to allocate resources to maintain teacher happiness will in turn create a better educational environment for the students through better retention and overall more satisfied teachers. My expertise that I can provide in these efforts are predominantly critical thinking and deep analytical skills derived from my legal education as a student at KU Law. Outside my legal education, I have held positions in various financial institutions as an insurance agent, underwriter, and business analyst.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

A successful board member must place the success of the students first, closely followed by supporting teachers. I have always had a desire to make my community better, acknowledging that to do so starts with engaging that community's youth. As an undergraduate at Washburn, I volunteered at multiple events to help Big Brothers Big Sisters of Topeka, an organization I have continued to support financially after moving out of Topeka. I hope to continue working in a capacity to be of help to my community's youth, and I believe working as a board of education member in Lawrence is the best way for me to do so.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

If I am appointed, I will be a quick study of my fellow board members and what the current vision for Lawrence Public Schools is. I believe the best way to be a competent leader is to listen to those who have more experience in the position before me, while still recognizing the need to ask hard questions and occasionally present opposing viewpoints and opinions as necessary for the betterment of board. As iron sharpens iron, I believe that presenting all ideas and viewpoints, even those outside my own beliefs, necessary in the prevention of creating an echo chamber amongst leaders.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

As part of my election law course at KU Law, I did a great deal of research on Kansas boards of education and their composition and election processes. Outside of that, it is my understanding that the school board sets the course for the success or failure of a district through approval of various policies and staffing decisions. While the school board is ultimately in charge of the district's educational direction and approval of administration and staff, I am a firm advocate for listening to those closest to the action. In short, while the decision to approve or deny staffing selections falls to the board, I would give more weight the opinions and recommendations of the faculty and administrators in a given school.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The teachers. From my experience and exposure to some of the teachers in this district, they all have a deep appreciation for each students' unique situation and a genuine care for every students' wellbeing.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

At present, I believe budget and finances are the greatest challenge to Lawrence. As I've stated elsewhere in this application, Lawrence is not especially competitive with surrounding districts. Despite the deep care each teacher has for each student, I foresee retention problems, if not already present, if we cannot find a way to keep those teachers satisfied with their jobs in Lawrence.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

I would like to see teachers' salaries increased, strong retention bonuses, and a review of the current benefit package in hopes of creating more incentives for young teachers to come to Lawrence and for current teachers to stay and continue their good work for the district.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

See above. (I would like to see teachers' salaries increased, strong retention bonuses, and a review of the current benefit package in hopes of creating more incentives for young teachers to come to Lawrence and for current teachers to stay and continue their good work for the district.)

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

It depends. If a particular school is struggling administratively, some extra support and guidance would be in the best interest of the students. However, generally I believe competent administrators can handle day-day-day operations and can report those operative practices to the board for review.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

The board should be deeply involved and meticulous in budgetary preparation given the current budget deficit and to prevent said deficit from worsening.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

At this time, I have no conflicts that would prevent me from running in November of 2023. If I am selected and am performing my job well, I would absolutely like to maintain that position.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Gina Meier-Hummel: (785) 760-5961

Director Paul Cope: (785) 864-2348, paul.cope@ku.edu

Rebecca Reaver: rreaver@usd497.org

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Email \*

anneirenecostello@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

04 / 08 / 1977

Full Name \*

Anne Costello

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

4428 W 25th PL

Cell/Home Phone \*

9137071257

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

I have been living in Lawrence for over 15 years, not including the years I lived in Lawrence while attending the University of Kansas.

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Leadership Lawrence Facilitation Team member, August 2022 - present

Leadership Lawrence Advisory Board member, June 2022 - present

Lawrence Schools Foundation board member, January 2022 - present

Superintendent's Advisory Board member, Sept. 2021 - present

Leadership Lawrence, Class of 2021 - 2022

Broken Arrow PTA Treasurer, Aug. 2021 - July 2022

Broken Arrow site council - Aug. 2020 - July 2022

Broken Arrow PTA member, Aug. 2020 - July 2022

Costello - 2

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

Learning is a life-long endeavor and schools play such a huge role in that. I have a long-held passion for learning. One of my degrees is in middle-secondary social studies education. I stumbled into my current career as a buyer after graduation. Despite a love of teaching, I cannot afford the pay cut it would require to start teaching. My current job has provided me with bountiful experience in managing a budget and balancing competing priorities, two things that will be helpful to me as a member of the board.

My first experience with a school board came in high school, when the Olathe schools were looking to ban a book. As I attended meetings in opposition to the ban, I was exposed to the role of the board in student's education. I remember wondering at the time if the board ever spoke with students to understand their perspective. It was then that I first thought about running for school board at some point. After watching the budget issue play out over the last year, my desire to run for school board was solidified. I have 2 children in the district as well as a husband that works for the district, so the success of the district is very personal to me. I want to ensure that the children of Lawrence receive the best education possible. As a college town, we should value education highly and I want to be a part of making that happen. That and some encouragement from friends led me to apply.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

The number one priority is focusing on serving ALL students. No one student is more important than any other. Similarly, as a board member, I will serve in trust for the entire community and not just certain constituencies. In my job as a buyer, my focus is on the customer. When developing strategic plans and product assortments, the satisfying the customer is always the first priority. Similarly, as a board member, serving the community will be my first priority.

A board member needs to have an open mind and be willing to listen to all sides. Very few decisions will be cut and dry, and a board member should exercise due diligence in understanding all sides of an issue. During these past few years of controversial topics addressed by the board, I found that I sometimes changed my opinions on an issue after listening to all sides. I know that my perspective is just one of many, and it is important to hear from others before making any final judgements. As board members we must speak our opinions as well as listen carefully and respectfully to others.

I also believe that honesty and transparency are of utmost importance. When faced with difficult decisions, the board needs to be as transparent as possible in order to gain buy-in from all stakeholders. I believe in transparency and open communication. In my job, I practice open communication daily. Constructive criticism and is not easy to give, but is extremely important in developing the people who report to me. I have to communicate effectively with the different teams I work with in order to run my business successfully.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

There are several ways I can develop my skills. First, I will use my fellow board members as a resource. Everyone brings a different set of skills to the table, and I plan to learn from each of them. Secondly, I will take advantage of any training opportunities available. The state school board offers new board member training sessions and workshops that I would like to participate in.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

According to the board manual. the board delegates all administrative duties to the superintendent, but makes all decisions in matters concerning policy. Board members are to communicate to the superintendent and other board members expressions of public reaction to board policy and school programs. The board should seek communication between itself and students, staff and the community.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The greatest strength of this district is its staff. The dedication of the staff and teachers who have remained with the district throughout out a pandemic and despite being paid significantly less than teachers in surrounding districts is admirable. Without them, our students would not succeed.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

Above all, school finance is the most pressing issue. The state has starved our schools for far too long. We need to pressure Topeka to fund our schools more or to allow us more opportunities to fund them ourselves. With school finance so directly tied to enrollment, Lawrence experiencing declining enrollment only makes things worse. The lack of affordable housing in Lawrence is contributing to this issue. The county has prohibited the development of new subdivisions outside of city limits Lawrence has decided to focus on infill rather than annexation. The lots within the city limits, for the most part, are the same lots developers have been passing on for years as they are not suitable for development or are too costly. Annexation is not an easy solution either, there are landowners unwilling to sell and those who are possess land that does not have access to utilities, making development even more costly. Our city loves its seniors and students with disposable income, but what are we doing to attract families? It is a vicious cycle. We need to attract families to grow enrollment to better fund our schools. In order to attract families, we need affordable housing, jobs and good schools. The district, city and county all need to work together on what should be a common goal. Additionally, the district needs to work with the community to re-evaluate boundaries. There was a lot of work done 10+ years ago looking at population imbalances, this work needs to be updated. I was glad to see the district employ a consulting firm to aid in the budget process and dig deeper into demographics and housing as well as looking at facility usage. I wish this had happened last year. The data might not have been ready in time for the decisions that had to be made last year, but it would have signaled to the public that the district was looking seriously at this issues it was facing and not just trying to rush through budget cuts. Once the data comes back, the district needs to partner with the community to determine the go forward strategy. Are neighborhood schools still viable? If not, how are we going to shift students that makes sense and does not put undue burdens on families in regards to transportation, after-school care, etc. Finally, the entire country is facing a teacher shortage. We need to be able to retain the talent we have as well as recruit new talent when necessary. We are already at a disadvantage when it comes to salary. What other incentives could we offer to help offset this or how to we continue to adjust the budget to allow for better pay. Our classified staff needs to be paid a living wage. We have open positions that continue to go unfilled because the pay is not competitive. This issue can no longer be overlooked.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

The first action I would take would be to raise salaries of ALL staff to be competitive with surrounding districts. Next I would take actions to help breakdown some of the barriers our students face. I would hire additional teachers to lower the student/teacher ratios. Then I would look to rebalance attendance. This could mean building additional schools on the west side and/or expanding existing schools. I would increase financial support for existing extracurricular activities as well as fund additional. I would find before and after school care for all elementary and middle school students who need/want it as well as provide free meals year round for all who are interested. I would offer transportation for all students, regardless of distance from school. I would work to provide free internet access to anyone in need. The goal is to allow students to focus on their education and not have to worry about getting basics needs met.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

I believe the best way to attract and retain talent is to show staff that they are valued. This must be done in several ways. First is recognition. Teachers often move onto different roles when they feel overlooked or undervalued. The district needs to be able to identify and show recognition for when staff has gone above and beyond. By recognizing success and hard work, it will help to create an environment that staff will want to stay in and will increase loyalty. Second is rewards. This includes but is not limited to increases in pay. Rewards can be tailored to staff and what they value most. It could be anything from free snacks to an extra paid day off. Next, the district needs to structure regular continuing professional development, This can build loyalty along with giving them the tools to be highly successful in their roles. Staff also need to feel support in their roles. They need to know they have somewhere to go where they can share their ideas and action will be taken. Lastly, there should be a culture of community within the schools. Culture in the workplace can be a stronger driver of loyalty than pay. Work needs to be done to develop positive cultures within all schools and the district at large in order to attract and retain top talent.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

The board should not have be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. The board should hire the best administration possible to manage the day-to-day. However, if the administration and day-to-day operations are no longer supporting the strategic goals of the district, the board is required to step in and take corrective action. I do believe the board should be in our schools regularly. This is not to interfere with operations, but to witness first-hand the execution the strategic direction as well has to gain familiarity with students and staff. This can go a long way to show recognition and support, which are key in retaining and attracting talent.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

The board should aid in the strategic planning for the district by providing clear priorities to the administration prior to development of the budget and constructive feedback once the budget has been presented. The board should not dictate the details of the budget unless they are not aligned with the strategic priorities.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes, I commit to running in the November 2023 election.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Mike Gillman - VP/AD at Lawrence High School; mgillman@usd497.org

Sue Hack - Executive Director of Leadership Lawrence for the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce; shack@lawrencechamber.com

Annie Myers - CFP at Feldmeyer Financial; annie@feldmeyerfinancial.com

Heather Grunert - VP/DMM at Payless; heather.grunert@payless.com

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Email \*

alerixon@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 15 / 2022

Full Name \*

Alicia Erickson

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

621 Lyon st, Lawrence, KS 66044

Cell/Home Phone \*

785-969-3482

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

Since fall 1997 with the exception of 8 months

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Woodlawn PTO member, Board President Ten Thousand Villages, Leader of Save Our Schools 497

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

Service on a board of education is an important way I can work toward the betterment of our students, staff, and community. I have the passion and perspective to serve in a way that listens to all various points of view.

The USD497 board has many effective policies and procedures and works hard to engage with various voices. I believe there is room for improvement in engagement with district staff. I also think we can do more to seek out more diverse voices. This would strengthen the district's connection with the community and build trust with staff. I have worked with people of differing perspectives and passionate beliefs, both through Save our Schools 497 and through my professional work experiences. My time with SOS497 has refined my ability to listen to different perspectives and work toward ensuring all people feel seen and heard regardless of our perspectives about a given situation. I have heard concerns from staff and community members to understand better people's lived experiences from many diverse situations.

I served as the board president at Ten Thousand Villages for four years. Maintaining a respectful and effective relationship between the board and manager while supporting the voices of the employees and volunteers directly relates to serving on the USD497 board.

I believe board members need a detailed understanding of budgetary policies and limitations. I have attended as many BPEC and boundary meetings as possible and worked with experts in the community to expand my understanding of the district's current budgetary needs. I worked as a branch manager for a local bank for years and have experience in communicating complex budget issues with customers simply and effectively. I worked at KU on grant management – spending most of my time understanding, adjusting, and presenting budget projections and reconciling actual expenses.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

I believe the most important qualities for a successful board member are to listen, consider, and question. It is also crucial to be accountable for decisions, to be a trustee for the voices of the community, to be aware of the privilege involved in being able to interact with the board and to seek out ways to amplify voices left out of conversations. It's also critical to be open to new ideas and constructive criticism from district administration, staff, and the community.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I will continue to read relevant research topics and educate myself about budgetary and governance best practices. I will seek out professional development opportunities to expand my knowledge. I will seek out community engagement opportunities and work toward finding ways to engage with the community and staff so that voices are not neglected from important conversations. I will maintain professional relationships with board members, district administration, and community members.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

The role of a school board member in relation to working with administrators is to find common understanding while working toward a long-term goal of student success. A board member should foster an environment of both support and accountability.

The role between board members and staff should be one of empathy, listening, and support. Staff must feel free to express their concerns with the board without fear of reprimand or retaliation. The building staff is the lifeblood of the school, and their direct interactions with students daily provide a unique perspective that must be heard and valued. Limiting or filtering the interaction between the board and staff creates an echo chamber that leads to limited understanding. It also leaves staff feeling unheard, unappreciated, and unsupported.

Interaction between a board member and students must be one of supporting, listening, and amplifying. These voices must be at the center of decisions being made. Students should be respected and heard even if those voices contradict the district's or board's perspective. From recorded messages to a young child's artwork, students must know their concerns are being heard and not silenced. They must be given the opportunity to dissent.

A board member's role with families is similar to that with students in that it must be one of listening, supporting, and amplifying. Each board member must act to serve the community – and to do that – must engage with all voices and perspectives and help amplify those voices and express concerns to the district. There should be trust and true engagement between the board and families.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The staff, the students, and the community are our district's greatest strengths. Our district has an amazing staff, both classified and unclassified, who serve our students and community from a place of passion, a desire to help, and constant work toward a better and more inclusive atmosphere. Our students are a hard-working, engaged, and diverse group. When their voices are supported and amplified, it can forge a better path for the entire community.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

In my opinion, budgetary limitations and individual and institutionalized bias are the biggest challenges for the district. When considering budget cuts, all voices must be heard, and voices typically not involved in the conversation must be actively sought and included. Limited funding also impedes adequate and respectful pay for teachers and staff, damaging retention and job satisfaction – which ultimately harms the school environment and student experience. Biases in both our institutions and in individuals must always be sought out, evaluated and reformed. This is a journey without end and to consider the harm of biases "fixed" is to become complacent and cause harm.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

Without budgetary restrictions, I would want to see all building staff receive robust compensation increases and narrow the pay gap between positions. I would see that all positions are filled with passionate and open-minded individuals and that class sizes were small and supported. I would ensure that special education is fully funded. I would have funding and positions in place so that staff has support and education, and the students and staff have the freedom to find creative solutions for successful education. I would have the best curriculum funded, ensure teachers receive thorough training, and provide powerful and rigorous social-emotional learning and support. True accomplishment would be a school environment of support, nurture, and success for all students and staff.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

To attract and retain the best staff, there must be a long-term plan for compensation at USD 497 to be competitive with other districts. A successful work environment extends beyond just compensation, however. Employees must feel seen, heard, and supported at all times. They must be given resources and supplies to ensure success. They must have connections with other staff and community members that know and proclaim their value. Critical decisions, such as school closures, must be given careful weight and consideration, knowing that such discussions immediately affect retention. Staff must be given growth and learning opportunities that they value. They must have leaders that foster a community of support and understanding and that listen and effectively engage.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

Board members should tour and meet with staff from all schools to ensure they are hearing from all voices within the district. They should be involved in hearing about success and challenges directly from staff. They should enact and evaluate policies that ensure the day-to-day operations at the school are inclusive, successful, and supported.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

Budgetary oversight is an incredibly important aspect of a board's work. The district's budget priorities should start at the district administration level, and it should not end there. Budgetary priorities should evolve from engagement with the community, the staff, and the students. It should be a conversation that allows for all voices and needs to be heard and addressed and ensure that priorities and burdens are inclusive and evenly distributed.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

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Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Carole Cadue-Blackwood 785-330-1712 ccaduebl@usd497.org

Jayci Roberson 785-410-8897 Jayci.Roberson@usd497.org

Barb Heeb 785-760-3372 barbheeb@gmail.com

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**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Lawrence Board of Education.

This form was created inside of Lawrence Public Schools.

Google Forms

# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

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For more information, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#).

*Please be advised that all applications when shared with the Lawrence Board of Education become public records accessible to the media and the public. (Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

grgordonross@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 08 / 2022

Full Name \*

Ronald "GR" Gordon-Ross

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

971 E 1338 Rd Lawrence, KS 66046

Cell/Home Phone \*

785.813.1769

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

26 Years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

I have five children, three of whom have graduated from the Lawrence Public Schools. From the time they started in kindergarten I have been an active and involved parent within the school system. I have volunteered at Prairie Park, Billy Mills and LHS for PTA/PTO events, extracurricular activities such as band, choir and orchestra trips, sporting events (soccer, volleyball, swimming, track & field) and various other events. I served on the District Elementary Efficiency Committee in 2012, as a community member of the Boundary Committee from 2016-2018 and from 2018-2021 as a member of the Board of Education. During my time on the Board, I served on the Facilities Committee, the LEA and PAL Negotiations Committees, and the Boundary Committee. I also represented the Board on the city Horizon 2020 committee, the Peaslee Tech Board and the Billy Mills, Langton Hughs, Broken Arrow, Schwegler and Prairie Park Site Councils at various times.

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

Public education has always been very important to me. My mom set an example for me of serving on a school Board when I was younger, and it was always a goal of mine to do the same. There is a lot of work to do within USD497. During my time on the Board a lot of good work was accomplished. We laid the foundation for a student-centered approach to the work with the Strategic Plan that was created. But there remains work to do. That work required an understanding of that student-centered, equity lens that started it - as well as a broad vision of all the areas impacted by the Board's decisions. I have both recent and current experience with the issues the Board is facing and will be able to step in immediately and help move forward in accomplishing the district's strategic goals.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

There are many qualities that make up a successful Board member, but the following stand out as significant

- The ability to listen to both sides of an issue before you decide
- Not to come to the Board Table with your mind already made up
- The ability to understand and recognize that things change – and what you thought you knew yesterday might not be what you know today
- The ability to see past the emotion of any single decision and make the choice that is best supported by the data/numbers before you. Board members represent the whole community and need to make decisions based on the best interest of the whole district and not for a single group or individual
- The ability to understand your role as a Board member and staff's role as staff – and not to confuse the two. The Board has a role to delegate day-to-day operations of the district to the Superintendent, and they need to honor that role at all times. The Board has the duty to course correct based on Board and district policy, but that is very different than being involved in the day-to-day operations of the district.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

There are a variety of opportunities to attend seminars, conferences, and classes sponsored by the Kansas Association of School Boards, the National School Board Association, the Kansas State Board of Education, and the Kansas State Department of Education. Online offerings over the last several years have made it easier to attend at least part of some of these events. Within the school district the Board has an annual retreat organized by the past president and offers opportunities for growth and learning, such as Beyond Diversity training. Being an active and engaged Board member by attending your assigned committee meetings and Site Council meetings prepared and ready to engage, collaborating with your fellow Board members as well as meeting regularly with the Superintendent will help develop Board member skills. Being active in the Lawrence community outside of bi-monthly Board meetings is another way to develop those skills. During my time on the Board I found attending District and Community events and interacting with the people present was a great opportunity to interact with the public. Concerts, sporting events, parades, rallies - just getting out and being active helps you become a better Board member because you have an opportunity to hear what your constituents have to say.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

The Board should interact with individuals within its purview without micromanaging them. The Board, for example, is charged with setting policy and thus can direct administration on a course of action. But the Board should not then step in and tell administration the specific details of how to accomplish that course of action. The Board can ask the Superintendent for a report and make a course correction, if needed. As for staff, scholars and parents – the Board should be available to hear and listen to anyone who may have an issue or complaint and help direct them to the appropriate resources to resolve their complaint. The Board, or an individual Board member, should not step in and try to solve a single person's problem on their own.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The greatest strength of our district is the many levels of diversity you can find within it. You can find diversity in our student body. We have a wide variety of cultures, races, and ethnicities represented within our buildings. You can find diversity in our staff. Across administration, certified staff, and classified employees, scholars and families have the opportunities to see themselves in our staff. You can find diversity in the various activities available to our scholars. They participate in sports, music, robotics, theater, and chess, just to name a few. You can find diversity in the activities our scholars excel in. We produce state and national level champions in academics, sports, and fine arts. You can find diversity in what our scholars choose to pursue after high school. We have scholars who go directly to work, go to four-year colleges and universities, to community college. Some graduates join the military while others pursue vocational training. Our greatest strength is our diversity.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

Our greatest challenge is finding, and then maintaining, a balance between the traditional and the efficient. There are ways USD497 has always done things, and those traditions are important to a lot of people – but they aren't always the most efficient. But just because something is the most efficient doesn't mean it is the best answer to current realities. As the district continues to move forward and learns what its new financial normal really is, that balance is going to be key to making it all work. And part of that key is involving as many stakeholders as possible in the process.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

I would like USD497 to become energy neutral by means of solar, wind, and other renewable energies. I would love to see the district start to replace building roofs with solar roofs or just add solar panels. At the same time, I would love to explore putting in a wind turbine on one or more pieces of district property. Doing this would allow us to not only free up general fund dollars used to pay the energy bill, but also to be an example of how to make it happen.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

The most straight forward answer here is with increased compensation. As a district we have struggled, and continue to struggle, with comparable compensation compared to districts around us, both in immediate compensation and career earnings. But increased compensation comes with other challenges that make it a difficult goal to achieve. There are other ideas to explore in the short-term as the Board continues to look at and work on compensation. Two such ideas are the rebuilding of the salary matrix (for both classified and certified staff) and the other is to examine work load. Or, put another way, what can we remove from employee's plates that has been piled on over the years to give them some time and freedom back within their workday?

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

No. Day-to-day operations are outside the purview of the Board of Education. Day-to-day operations of the school district are under the purview of the Superintendent, who manages or assigns to designees all operational aspects of the district. That is their job. The Board's job is to set policy to help frame the environment in which they perform that job day-to-day. When the Board, or individual Board members, get involved in the day-to-day, they lose sight of the bigger picture of their overall responsibilities. As stated previously, the Board has the duty to course correct based on Board and district policy but that's different than being involved in day-to-day operations.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

The Board approves and monitors the budget, but does not make budget priority recommendations. The Superintendent, and their staff, make those recommendations. That work goes to the previous question of being involved in day-to-day operations. The district has paid staff to determine and do that work on behalf of and for the Board's ultimate review. At the end of the process, the Board will inevitably need to make adjustments based on budget constraints by adjusting items or removing specific things from the budget. But that work should be done after district staff has done their work first.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes, I plan to run for one of the 4-year seats in the November 2023 election.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Megan Epperson: 785.840.7119, megan.epperson416@gmail.com

Jeff Dickson: 913.322.1164, jdickson@usd497.org

Jared Comfort: 785.832.5860, jcomfortku@gmail.com

Larry Englebrick: 816.225.5791, larry.englebrick@usd497.org

Matthew Herbert: 785.550.2085, matthewjherbert@gmail.com

Malcolm Proudfit: 785.979.0138, mdproudfit@gmail.com

Jessica Beeson: 785.691.6678, jessmbeeson@gmail.com

**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

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# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

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Email \*

Helloamymcvey@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

07 / 28 / 2022

Full Name \*

Amy McVey

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2904 Westdale Rs

Cell/Home Phone \*

7858656054

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

14 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Lawrence Emergency Shelter; Area Business Owner

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

Both of my children attended Lawrence Public Schools (one will be a senior at Free State High School this year). I appreciate this community; and now that my children are older, I want to give back. I also do a lot of facility upgrade work for other school districts and counties, and I believe my contribution in the areas of procurement and mechanical system knowledge/green energy could be beneficial to ensuring Lawrence Public Schools enjoys excellence from their construction vendors.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

Seek to understand; serve all children; be a steward of the community; honor divergent opinions; ensure open and honest communication; take an active interest in the district's mission; be open to new ideas and constructive criticism

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I would attend all recommended KASB Board Member Trainings and take advantage of board professional development resources; seek guidance from my field service representative and board leadership team; and ensure I am up-to-speed on all policies and regulations.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

I understand the role to be an advocate for the students and a representatives of the Lawrence community to the State of Kansas; a leader who works to set district vision, goals, and policies and provide oversight concerning the budget and construction procurement, and to provide to evaluate/ensure the schools have qualified staff and are well run.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

As a parent, I have appreciated the high standards and expectations of students within the district. Lawrence Public Schools has excellent teachers and administrators, great communication, and is well respected throughout Kansas.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

I believe the greatest challenge facing the district is a financial one – both at the district level and at the household level. We will need to make smart (and sometimes tough) decisions to ensure students receive the resources they need to excel.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

I am a big proponent of mental health and would like to see more services available in our schools. (Like the WRAP program.) I would also support a rich trades/mentorship program for students interested in becoming electricians, HVAC technicians, etc...

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

Ensure a streamlined hiring process, proper compensation, and an effective human resources framework; show appreciation; strive for a positive, professional culture that rewards excellence.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

I don't believe the board should have day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools. Rather, the board should cultivate a strong relationship with the superintendent. However, as a trustee of the Lawrence community, I do believe shared accountability enhances performance. For example, the board should work with key stakeholders to navigate and balance federal and state mandates with community values and goals. I would also find shadowing staff at different schools beneficial.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

I believe those who best understand the needs of students at the school-level should be granted authority to make decisions on certain resources. However, boards hold fiduciary responsibility for the district. That's why it is imperative that board members be up-to-speed on monthly budgets, participate in open and honest (sometimes hard) conversations with the community concerning the budget, and ensure budget deficits do not impede our ability to properly educate students.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Wendy Vertacnik, Art Teacher at Lawrence High School, Wendy.Vertacnik@usd497.org; Paul Slaven, Garmin Designer, paulmslaven@gmail.com; Ben Mendenhall, Garmin Project Manager, mendenhall.ben@gmail.com

**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Lawrence Board of Education.

This form was created inside of Lawrence Public Schools.

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# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

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Email \*

clint.ramirez.stephens@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 15 / 2022

Full Name \*

Clint Ramirez Stephens

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2809 Lawrence Ave.

Cell/Home Phone \*

405-612-0062

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

since 2017

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

- Billy Mills Middle School Site Council
- Schwegler Elementary School Equity Team
- Jayhawk Club of Rotary International
- Leadership Lawrence, 2019

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

The upcoming years will be a new chapter for USD 497 in post-pandemic education. My experience and expertise are highly relevant to the challenges ahead.

Credentials:

- Ph.D. in Education, focusing on quantitative analytics
- Research expertise in how educational organizations thrive after budget cuts
- 11 years of teaching in higher education
- Curriculum development and assessment in leadership education of youth
- Experience serving on community and non-profit boards prior to joining the Lawrence community

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

Listening, leadership, and collaboration are all three necessary for effectively serving in our school board. For listening, it is gathering information and insight from all stakeholders from students to staff to community members. This must be done proactively, by going to where these stakeholders are and inviting them to share--especially when opinions are different. For leadership, the board has an express responsibility to oversee the administrators' execution of the strategic goals the board sets. This leadership includes supporting the administrators but not micromanaging the tactics they use to perform their work in carrying out the board's objectives. Finally, collaboration is required to engage with the stakeholders through community events, school functions, and relevant staff meetings to share the board's vision while inviting further input and considering stakeholder's views.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

In addition to engagement with the Kansas Association of School Boards and the National School Boards Association, I further would seek out skill development with the Kansas Leadership Center. For financial oversight responsibilities, I also will need to develop further my fiscal accounting knowledge.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

The board's role is summed up as "Noses in, Fingers out" -- to oversee the administrators, staff, students, and families but not to micromanage their decisions or weigh in on individual circumstances. The board's role is in setting policy and hiring the administrators to execute that policy.

The board members further have a responsibility to empower each of these stakeholder groups and to serve as a two-way conduit of information in the district.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The district has collectively the best K-12 educators in Kansas, and competitive nationally. This asset continues to be the greatest strength of the district in delivering the high-quality education we are known for providing.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

- Leadership in making difficult decisions
- Balancing curriculum and extra-curricular priorities
- Teacher and staff recruitment and retention

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

My top three goals would be to:

- Raise up our disadvantaged students to have equitable experiences among all students
- Improve student-teacher ratio for each classroom to the best practices based in research for every learning environment
- Shift back the start times for schools, based on research, to accommodate students getting improved sleep and teachers having sufficient prep time to deliver their best curriculum to awake and fully-engaged students

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

The above discussion of the board's responsibility in empowering employees through supporting their work, providing them resources to do their work, and compensating them competitively.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

No. The role of the board is to determine strategy and put in place the individuals to execute that strategy. But staff and administrators do not benefit from board members participating in tactical decision making.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

With the budget as the embodiment of our district priorities, the board has responsibility to set the top-level budget lines to align with the board's strategy. But the board has much smaller role in the decisions on how the administrators execute that strategy with the resources provided.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses. \*

Andrew Taylor, Principal at Billy Mills Middle School, [andrew.taylor@usd497.org](mailto:andrew.taylor@usd497.org)

Megan Stuke, Director of The Willow Domestic Violence Center, [mstuke@willowdvcenter.org](mailto:mstuke@willowdvcenter.org)

Cameron Beatty, Professor, Florida State University, [cbeatty@fsu.edu](mailto:cbeatty@fsu.edu)

**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

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Email \*

phil.riedel.olathe@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 04 / 2022

Full Name \*

Phil Riedel

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

4723 Moundridge Ct. Lawrence, KS 66049

Cell/Home Phone \*

9137077259

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

Two Years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

None

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I feel being on the USD 497 School Board is a way to serve and give back to the community, parents and most importantly the students. I am retired, have the time and I know serving on a school board is one of the most important duties in the community.

I was a career Educator. I was a teacher, coach, sponsor and administrator during my Educational Career. I feel my experience as a parent, teacher, coach and building administrator would serve me well as a school board member.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

I feel the following qualities are most important for school board members; patience, be understanding, a good listener, thick skinned and most importantly not becoming a board member with an agenda.

I feel my experience as a parent, teacher, coach and school administrator will assist and develop me as a board member.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I feel first developing my board member skills by listening, observing and learning from others. But with that being said, I am not afraid to ask questions and share observations to the school board.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

I feel it's very important in being a board member to be a good listener but also I understand and a very strong believer in the "Chain of Command". At times it can be a slippery slope but it's so important to earn that trust of administrators, staff, students and families.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

I am still learning about the Lawrence District so again, might be difficult for me at this time but I feel the Lawrence School District strength is being adaptable, being willing to step outside the box to change to address issue and develop strategies and programs.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

I feel challenges facing the Lawrence District, like most districts during this time, is budget questions and trust within the community.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

Honestly, not an easy question, because in this day and age, no budget restrictions is not reality! I feel a school board must be physically responsible about budget. It's easy to please everyone when the answers are Yes but when you have to say no, not popular with people. I get it, but sometimes the answer needs to be no.

Bottom line, I would like to see the Lawrence District assist all students in being successful! And successful looks different for most every student.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

I feel it's important to give employees; ownership into district and their job, if employees have ownership, have trust between employees and district and proper and fair compensation for employees.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

I feel the school board having day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools is not the duties of a school board. The duties of the school board is to set policy, set the budget and hire great administrators, teachers and staff and let them do their jobs of running the day-to-day operation of the schools.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

I feel it's important to get input from staff, listening to parents/community and a recommendation from the superintendent and the school board approves the budget.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

At this point, hard to answer this question. My initial reaction would be to say, yes. But who knows the future and what the future holds, sorry not a great answer, I'm usually direct and to the point.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses. \*

Being in Lawrence a short time, I haven't met a lot of people.

I would like thank you for considering me a candidate for appointment to the USD 497 School Board.

Julie Ward, Para Professional at Lawrence HS,  
573-795-5425

Just to be transparent, Julie is my son-in-law's mother. Again, being new to Lawrence, I haven't met a lot of people.

Rick Riffel, Insurance Adjuster, Lawrence  
785-550-0750

David Howard, Retired Supt at Basehor  
913-208-3035

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Thank you for your interest in serving on the Lawrence Board of Education.

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# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

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The board will review applications during its August 22, 2022, regular board meeting and select candidates to interview at a specially called meeting on August 29, 2022. At the August 29, 2022, meeting, the board will interview the selected candidates and choose one applicant to appoint to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, through January 8, 2024. A special election for a two-year term (January 8, 2024, through January 12, 2026) for this board seat will be held on November 7, 2023.

For more information, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#).

*Please be advised that all applications when shared with the Lawrence Board of Education become public records accessible to the media and the public. (Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

bringingcarehome@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

07 / 28 / 2022

Full Name \*

Jeannette Lynn Smith

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

818 N Michigan Circle

Cell/Home Phone \*

7855504372

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

11 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Foster parent for teens in USD 497, educational advocate for children in care, foster parent advisory board member.

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

In my previous life I was the Executive Director for an Alzheimers Community. At that time I needed to be an advocate for those who could not advocate for themselves. I now am a foster parent for intensive level children and have the awesome responsibility of helping them navigate a dysfunctional system while trying to get them educated and create as normal of a life as possible. We also help them create a life they want goong forward.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

I have developed strong relations with teachers, psychologists, therapist and counselors. I am a strong child advocate now. With my husband, we have raised our 5 children who are now adults and over the past six years we have learned to navigate and get done what needs to happen for the success of the children that come into our care. We now have adopted our 12y old son and are in the process of adopting our 17 year old daughter.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I am a believer in information. Information allows us to make informed decisions. I will research the job description and roles and responsibilities so that I am prepared as well as I will listen. I will listen to the needs of parents and educators. I will visit the schools since i have children in both middle school and high school giving me a first hand look at how decisions made by the school board will impact the students and educators.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

The role as I understand it is to be the voice of the people in our district. My role would be to understand the critical issues and then work with the board to prioritize those issues and create our plan for change. Finally I would assist with the execution of those plans and then measure the success and challenges.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

We are in the midwest AND we are still progressive with meeting our children's needs. These are the future leaders of our community and knowing this we must prepare for their and our future. I believe we have some the best educators in the country. This is where we can thrive. We must use the brain power from all directions including athletics, special education and academics.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

1. The expectations of the students and their behavior with educators which carries out to the community.
2. Creating a safe and effective learning environment for students and educators.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

Incorporate more real life classwork for electives such as budgeting, trade aptitude and exposure as well as buying a home and understanding a contract. I would get more parents involved in school activities and choices. I would incorporate more tools so that technology enables school from any location. I would invest in state of the art software creating both safety for the children and allowing it to support our educators.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

It is never going to be salary because this is not why teachers become teachers. We need to experiment. We need to involve the students so their buy in helps roll out programs. We are a college town. We should be so progressive people seek us. Compensation has to occur in other ways not just wages.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

I think the board should do what is necessary. If there is a situation that required board members attendance it should happen. I never expect someone to do anything I would not do myself. Again this is our community and these are the people who will be running it. We need them prepared.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

I think it should be significant. In this district we have one fund and the board should be helping prioritize which things are purchased first. The board sees the high level view while the schools see the street level. The board should be the broker between the district residents and the schools.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Erica Wheat Free State High School  
Megan Perry Cordley Elementary  
Joe Berry KVC Therapist and Trainer

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Google Forms

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Email \*

Heatherascanlon@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 07 / 2022

Full Name \*

Heather Sprague

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

629 Alabama St, Lawrence, KS, 66044

Cell/Home Phone \*

9135681879

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

Three years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Pinckney Elementary volunteer, Youthfriends volunteer

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I have worked in state politics for many years, and have closely observed the education committees and policies. I have a great depth of knowledge about the state's education system, funding, and am an advocate for schools in my work. I have always wanted to participate more locally, and I care very much about Lawrence schools and my daughter, and all of our children's, education. I believe I could bring a fresh voice and ideas to the table along with my expertise in education policy.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

Knowledge, leadership, teamwork, willingness to learn, open-mindedness, creativity, problem solving and critical thinking skills. I have acquired and honed these qualities through many years of work in state-level politics as a former chief of staff and presently as the director of government affairs for my firm. I have to utilize these skills on a daily basis, work with people who I may fundamentally disagree with but can always reach compromise, and come up with creative solutions to issues.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

Observation and research, foremost. I am incredibly interested to learn more about how local issues work, specifically the school board, and take a comprehensive approach at educating myself on the district's issues by research and talking with people who have experience. I would like to learn and develop those skills by observing other members of the board, having conversations with each of them, as well as with school administrators, educators, parents and staff.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

I understand the board to be advisory, while making tough decisions and compromises in order to accomplish what is best for everyone. Board members should be familiar with administrators and staff and able to work alongside them. Board members make decisions that impact all involved, and must have intimate knowledge of the community, schools, families and students, in order to find the best and most impactful solutions and policies.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The thorough sense of community felt throughout every school. This district is different than any I've seen thus far in the care, commitment, and sense of camaraderie. I've been impressed and grateful at every turn.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

Funding solutions. There is a great challenge here and I know that there is no easy answer. That is one of the main reasons I would like to be a part of this board and help resolve this. As I stated previously, I have a great depth of knowledge around the state funding structure and formula and I feel I would be able to quickly understand and grasp the situation and provide thoughtful, creative ideas to help.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

I would like to see every student afforded all - and equitable - opportunities for a world-class education and recreational activities. I'd also like to see a raise in pay for educators and the humble work they do. And of course, it would be wonderful to be able to keep every school open. I think these are the most fundamental aspects of education in general. These opportunities lead to economic development, a strong workforce, and a better future for all of our children.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

By continuing to provide the highest quality educational opportunities. Good schools are essential to economic development.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

In my opinion, the board is an advisory role, and should not necessarily be involved in the routine administration of education. However, I do think that the board must set the standard and put forth policies to create and improve upon that routine, and should survey schools on an intermittent basis to ensure everything is going smoothly.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

A great deal of involvement - at least as much as any other entity involved. I've also learned in my work a great deal about the budget process, and that it takes the input and knowledge of many in order to create a solid, responsible, and sustainable fiscal situation.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Absolutely.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses. \*

Lori Kemme, Pinckney School teacher  
Derek Hein, Principal of 1861 Consulting  
Maren Bradley, PTO President

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Email \*

jstnthmsfree@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 09 / 2022

Full Name \*

Justin Thomas

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2417 McKinley Ct. Lawrence, KS 66047

Cell/Home Phone \*

4342841341

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

7 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

I have attended many USD 497 functions over the years as my wife, Rachel Thomas, used to work under Julie Boyle. So I've been to Free State High football games and I've been to (and participated in) Lawrence Schools Foundation events. I worked closely with Maria Englebrecht in staffing Paraeducator positions for the district while I worked at Express Employment in Lawrence.

I've also served at many Chamber of Commerce events, usually acting as an emcee for some of their monthly events.

And I am also still an active substitute member of Douglas County Connections. I've given my personal business to many of these local companies in my time as a member & participant and therefore have only intertwined myself more heavily into the health of the local Lawrence community.

And although I never saw this to complete fruition, I was working on setting up a monthly resume workshop with the Center for Great Futures at Boys & Girls Club through Express Employment until I found my most recent position at Lawrence Memorial Hospital.

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

As I mentioned in my previous answer I've been very familiar with USD 497 over the years I've lived in Lawrence thanks to my wife's former employment with the school district as well as my own direct connection to the school district when staffing paraeducator & other temporary administrative positions with Express Employment. I believe my organizational skills, creativity, education, & keen eye for details will all serve me very effectively in this role.

But I want to serve on the board because like no time that I've ever witnessed in public education - we are experiencing monumental challenges. Dealing with all the chaos wrought by the pandemic, all of the inevitable fallout that came from dealing with that same chaos, huge educational setbacks on the timelines for students (especially for at-risk and marginalized groups), major staffing & retention issues, & of course, navigating the precarious financial situation USD 497 currently finds itself in. I want to serve because I work best in times of need & crisis. I work with extreme diligence and I am driven by my passion to work in service of others. USD 497 needs someone who can help navigate these troublesome times, and I am positive I can be that someone.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

First of all, a board member needs to be someone who can serve others. This is not just a feather in your hat, a title to throw around. A board member needs to understand that they are meant to serve the local educational community foremost, and that means putting your ego & your own designs aside to fight for what's best for the ENTIRE district.

That means that a board member should also be observant and a careful listener. How can a board member hope to be effective in their role for the community if they don't take the time to listen to what their community is telling them? To passionately seek out details and a variety of perspectives on key issues in our community should be a foundational practice for a board member. This also means that even if it is difficult to do so, board members need to heed even the smallest dissenting voice in a room full of voices. Giving everyone in the community a chance to speak their minds is what truly imbues a board member seat with such value.

I am caring, extremely observant, passionate about doing better for the next generation of leaders, creators, & decision-makers; and I am a man of action. I don't sit idly by and wait for solutions to come, I go out and try to discover them for myself. I am also open-minded & creative. I firmly believe there are new & unique ways to improve our current public education systems that are cost effective too!

I am a product of public education myself and I take great pride in that. When I was young I had a very fragmented family life, school wasn't just school for me. It was an escape from all of the ugliest parts of my life. It was a place where I could work hard and be proud of what I achieved. It was a place where I could feel safe and happy with friends who were my age, even if it was just a few hours a day. It meant so much more to me than just grades on a report card, in so many ways, school saved my life & gave me opportunities I wouldn't have found anywhere else. If I can contribute in even a small way to another kid's ability to find that saving grace in education, I will do whatever it takes!

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How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I've never held a formal board position like this before so my goal at the beginning is to be extremely observant. I plan to go in without an ego and an understanding that while I am in a role like this to serve, that I also have much to learn.

I will work hard to communicate and build relationships with other members of the board, and I will ask for learning opportunities from more veteran members of the board as often as I possibly can.

Even if I had much more experience as a board member, there is still absolutely work to be done to make this role as valuable as possible, and I intend to put in the work. I'm not here for myself, I'm here for the students, family members, & staff of USD 497.

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Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

It is a board member's role to provide decisions on policy and high level matters that impact the district, administrators, staff, students, & family. And then it is also their job to relay these decisions, provide guidance on implementation, and transparency & education on the 'why' these decisions were made.

But make no mistake this does not happen in a vacuum. It is also a board member's responsibility to hear feedback on these decisions both before matters are settled and after they are implemented. They need to be responsible for tracking by results. This is crucial for improvement, board members need to have an acute awareness of what is working for their district, what the community thinks about the decisions they've made, and whether or not they're actually working.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

Something that I've loved seeing in USD 497 is the diversity of the student population we serve. Additionally I think the school district does an amazing job at cultivating community-based partnerships that serve both students and their families so effectively. A perfect example of this is how fully integrated Boys & Girls club is with USD 497. I was in BGC when I was in middle and high school myself, but I was bussed to a stand-alone building after school every day. I think about the amazing integration USD 497 has built in Lawrence and I think to myself how amazing that would've been for so many other kids that I grew up with if that integration and convenient access existed in my hometown.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

It's largely financial. The district is still in a deficit yet they need to figure out how to slow the exodus of qualified faculty and staff members while also trying to somehow bolster enrollment. This problem is at the heart of many of the district's woes right now.

And the other major issue is a crisis of spirit. Satisfaction and support for the district has dropped on all fronts whether it is employees, students, their families, or just concerned community members. They've lost faith and they're starting to lose hope that we can ever turn this situation around. The impact on morale has been striking in the last couple of years.

But all is not lost, even with what feels like insurmountable issues. I think it's about taking it back to basics and just reminding the community that someone IS there who cares. Someone who is fighting for them; fighting for a better tomorrow.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

I would like to see a reduction in class sizes, refreshed supplies, & a healthy dose of spending on newer textbooks and other useful digital classroom resources.

I would like to see school libraries offered more resources and more diverse reading options. And I would love to see a greater variety of extracurricular and sustainability initiatives offered for students to pursue.

And I would ABSOLUTELY spend more money on employee benefits, raises, & retention funds. We can't have a school system without the amazing administrators, teachers, & staff members that support it.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

Well I've actually had this conversation before with USD 497 when I worked at Express Employment with Lori Stithem. It was specifically about Paraeducators for middle & high schools, but we could scale up this conversation to pretty much any open role in the school district right now.

In a perfect world, we could throw a lot of money into salary budgets. In a much more realistic world, USD 497 really doesn't have that option.

So what do we do? Put someone like me on the school board. I have a wealth of recruitment & employment experiences, both professionally & as my graduate field of study. With my time as a recruiter here in Lawrence, again I worked directly with the district HR office as well as directly with at least one administrator from nearly every school in the district, and I grew an acute awareness of all employment-related issues that face the district at the very frontlines of education, especially with paraeducators and other entry-level administrative positions. The only way I even kept the school district account profitable through the height of the pandemic was through constant flexibility & creative solutions (and sometimes just sheer tenacity).

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

Day-to-day I wouldn't believe so. I've always imagined a school board to be a committee of people that focus on higher level decisions so that schools can focus on effectively operating themselves on a daily basis. I actually believe that a sign of a healthy school district would be one that didn't need daily guidance or interference from their school board members in order to operate effectively.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

It should be a heavy involvement. While I won't pretend to be a financial professional, a conversation about pure dollars & cents can only go so far. A school board should be an effective vehicle by which budgetary & financial information is processed, but then is discussed through the lens of community needs, student needs, family needs, etc.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

I would, yes.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses. \*

Maria Englebrecht - Minglebr@usd497.org -  
785-330-4637

Danae Johnson - Danae.Johnson@lmh.org - (785) 764-1557

Shania Lamm - Shania.Lamm@meritrustcu.org - 785-418-2487

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Google Forms

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Email \*

ttozer@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 03 / 2022

Full Name \*

Travis Tozer

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

3112 Flint Dr, Lawrence, KS 66047

Cell/Home Phone \*

17858061344

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

15 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

New York Elementary Site Council (2021-2022), West Middle School Site Council (2021-2022).

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I've wanted to serve on the board since 2020 and wanted to serve my community since I was 10. I think almost any person of at least moderate intelligence with a strong conscience is inevitably drawn to public service. And public education has always been essential to building well rounded adults and positive individual outcomes. In that vein, I can think of no better use for my time than to do my part for the Lawrence school district. This is why I ran for the board in 2021.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

Communication, diligence, cooperation, attention to detail but also the ability to see the larger picture, and a selflessness that puts the position before the person. I have over 10 years experience in the energy industry. I've overseen dozens of large scale projects and worked alongside thousands of people from all over the country.

There is also a different type of answer that is maybe even more important than what I've written so far: empathy is probably the most important overall trait.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

By listening. Listening to more experienced board members, school faculty, staff, administrators, and especially the students. One of the most valuable lessons, learned from my 4th grade teacher, is that there's no shame in admitting you don't know and need help.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

As I understand it, a board member should hear the concerns and arguments of all parties involved in an issue and vote for the best choice. From my experience with the Save Our Schools initiative, hearing the needs of the people in the district is absolutely foundational to serving on the board. However, that has to be balanced with the recommendations of the administration to accurately gauge the needs of the district.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

The commitment to inclusivity. Diversity is the keystone to tolerance and eventually acceptance. Kids benefit massively from a thorough exposure to different ways of thinking and differing cultures. In today's charged political climate, committing to inclusivity is a brave and commendable act.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

With the recent threat of school closings, and the budget cuts that were made to avoid them, I imagine that the district is struggling to balance quality of education and services within the limitations of available funding. Maintaining a well rounded, high-quality educational experience under such circumstances is the worst challenge I can foresee.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

As I said once during the campaign, teachers should be paid like engineers. It follows that non-classified staff compensation should be raised accordingly as well. It'd be nice not to fear the loss of talent to larger nearby districts. But even more so, that would draw STEM-educated graduates into careers in public education.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

By being what Topeka and Kansas City can't. Lawrence is a unique gem for NE Kansas, if not the entire state. Large enough to fund adventurous, progressive projects, but not so big as to be bogged down with big city politics. I believe Lawrence has a community that can come together on goals better than our neighboring cities, and we already take advantage of that. Recognizing it and holding the course is how I would go about it.

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

Not directly. In fact, I am under the impression that is prohibited. But that being said, I think there is a great benefit to personally exploring and observing the schools. While wistfully imagining myself as a board member, I had intended to do just this for all the schools in the district; developing relationships with staff, interacting with students, and getting to know the district from the ground level.

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

I sense this is a somewhat loaded question; I attended all the board meetings that were held during the Save our Schools movement. The board and the administration have to understand and respect one another's roles and responsibilities: i.e. the board serves at the pleasure of the public, and is therefore responsible for advocating for the people of the district. Conversely, I believe in letting professionals do their jobs.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

I was planning on it anyway, so...that's a definite yes.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses. \*

LPS: Kelly Jones - Kelly.Jones@usd497.org

Professional: Dave Bintz - Dave.Bintz@gmail.com

Community: Linda Aldridge - Laldridge1@att.net

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Thank you for your interest in serving on the Lawrence Board of Education.

Tozer - 5

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Email \*

lou@happyshirtprinting.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

08 / 10 / 2022

Full Name \*

Lindsay (Lou) Wilson

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

439 Elm Street

Cell/Home Phone \*

7854250943

How long have you been a resident of Lawrence? \*

18 years

List Lawrence school or civic activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Na

Explain why you want to serve on the board, including relevant experience and/or expertise you would provide in this position. \*

I have children in the district, which keeps me invested in the schools. I helped organize during the Save Our Schools rally's. I do not have previous experience but no one does when they start out, I would like an opportunity to get my foot in and help keep my community and the schools positive and safe for my children and others.

What qualities do you think are important to being a successful school board member? How do you embody these qualities? \*

I think in any board position it's important to see the whole picture and not just an issue from your bubble. I am good at recognizing why people may differ on a subject and skilled and communicating when issues of difference arise.

How do you plan to develop board member skills if you are selected? \*

I've always been a practice learner. So coming to meeting and getting involved would be the most beneficial ways for me to learn and grow.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with administrators, staff, students, and families. \*

I think school board members, like many elected officials, represent a community and are the microphone for that community. Essentially they are the middle-person for families and staff to communicate effectively.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the district? \*

In as much as I can tell the district seems to listen and respond to its community

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

I think most obvious is budget and what to do with issues of budget. It is hard to keep a large population happy when it is necessary for changes.

If you had no budgetary restrictions, what would you most like to see the district accomplish? \*

No budgetary restrictions? Higher pay for teachers and free preschool.

How can the board help attract and retain the best possible employees for the district? \*

Recognize strong voices in the community, I think in a small town like Lawrence it's important to employee more grassroots types than "business" folks. I say this because it seems as though people here respond better to their peers

Should the board have any day-to-day involvement in the operations of the schools? Explain. \*

Off the top of my head I don't believe so. This opinion could change once I saw the way the schools interacted with the board

In your opinion, how much involvement should the board have in the preparation of school district budget priorities? \*

Equal, considering the school has hands on experience with what is going on it seems fair that they should have equal if not more say.

If selected, do you commit to running for the board in the November 2023 election? \*

Yes

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Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (teachers, principals, PTA/PTO or site council officers, district staff) and at least two \* professional or community references, including phone numbers or email addresses.

Jayci Roberson/ Jayci.roberson@usd497.org

Lindsey kellenberger/ 316-993-9202

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**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. August 15, 2022.**

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Lawrence Board of Education.

This form was created inside of Lawrence Public Schools.

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