

# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

The Lawrence Board of Education seeks applicants to fill a vacancy on the board. Applicants must complete the full application and submit it to the Board Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on June 13, 2023.

The board will review applications during a specially called board meeting on June 20, 2023, and select candidates to interview at its regular meeting on June 26, 2023. At the June 26, 2023, meeting the board will interview the selected candidates and choose one applicant to appoint to serve the remainder of this term, through January 12, 2026.

Be advised that all applications become public records when the applications are shared with the Board of Education, meaning they are accessible to the media and the general public.

For more information about serving on the Lawrence Board of Education, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#). *(Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

danielbusinger108@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 06 / 2023

Full Name \*

Daniel Businger

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2938 Atchison Circle, Lawrence, Kansas 66047

Cell/Home Phone \*

650-291-4431

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

6

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

I have not be apart of any but been interested in working on the board.

List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

I worked on several political campaigns.

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

I would love to serve on the board to help serve the students of this community. As someone who is younger i believe i have what it take to bring a new vision to board and help grow our kids grow and thrive in ways the previous board members have not.

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

1. Commitment to Education: A successful school board member should have a genuine passion for education and a strong commitment to improving the quality of education in their community.
2. Communication and Collaboration: Effective communication skills and the ability to collaborate with diverse stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and administrators are essential for a school board member to effectively address issues and make informed decisions.
3. Strategic Thinking: A school board member should be able to think strategically, set goals, and develop plans to achieve them. This involves analyzing data, understanding trends, and making well-informed decisions for the benefit of the students and the school district.
4. Ethical Conduct: Upholding high ethical standards is crucial for a school board member. They should act in the best interest of the students, maintain transparency, and demonstrate integrity in their decision-making process.
5. Problem Solving: Being able to identify challenges, find innovative solutions, and address the needs of a diverse student population is a valuable quality for a successful school board member.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

The role of a school board member involves working with various stakeholders, including administrators, staff, students, and parents. Here's a description of how a school board member typically interacts with each group:

1) Administrators: School board members collaborate with administrators to establish and implement educational policies, develop budgets, and set goals for the school district. They provide oversight, support, and guidance to ensure effective administration and management of schools.

2) Staff: School board members work closely with teachers, principals, and other staff members. They may engage in discussions about curriculum development, professional development opportunities, and personnel matters. Board members often value input from staff members and consider their expertise when making decisions.

3) Students: School board members have a responsibility to represent the interests and well-being of the students in their district. They may visit schools, attend student events, and seek student input on important matters. Creating a positive learning environment and advocating for the needs of students are key aspects of their role.

4) Parents: School board members actively engage with parents by attending parent-teacher association meetings, hosting community forums, and listening to their concerns and feedback. They work collaboratively with parents to address issues, make policy decisions, and ensure that parental perspectives are taken into account when shaping the educational system.

Overall, school board members act as advocates for all stakeholders involved in the education system, seeking to create an environment that fosters academic success, supports teachers and staff, and meets the needs of students and parents.

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

1. Quality Education: A strong school district often excels in providing high-quality education, offering rigorous academic programs, and having well-qualified teachers who are dedicated to their students' learning.
  2. Student Achievement: A successful school district frequently demonstrates high levels of student achievement across various measures, such as test scores, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates.
  3. Community Engagement: A strong school district fosters active community involvement, with robust partnerships between schools, families, and local organizations. This collaboration often leads to a sense of shared responsibility and support for the district's goals.
  4. Comprehensive Resources: Successful school districts typically allocate resources effectively, ensuring that students have access to well-maintained facilities, up-to-date educational materials, technology, and a range of extracurricular activities.
  5. Innovative Approaches: A great school district embraces innovation, promoting creative teaching methods, incorporating technology in education, and adapting to evolving educational practices to better meet the needs of students.
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What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the district? \*

1. Adequate Funding: Insufficient funding can pose a significant challenge for districts, impacting resources, teacher salaries, infrastructure, and the ability to offer a well-rounded education.
2. Achievement Gap: Addressing and narrowing the achievement gap, which refers to disparities in academic performance among student groups based on factors like race, socioeconomic status, or special needs, can be a persistent challenge for districts.
3. Student Well-being: Ensuring the physical and mental well-being of students is an ongoing concern. This includes providing appropriate support services, addressing issues like bullying, fostering a safe and inclusive environment, and promoting social-emotional learning.
4. Teacher Retention and Professional Development: Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, as well as providing them with ongoing professional development opportunities, is crucial for maintaining educational excellence. Challenges may arise in attracting teachers to underserved areas or offering competitive compensation and growth opportunities.
5. Technology Integration: Incorporating technology effectively into the learning process and providing equitable access to digital resources can be a challenge for districts, especially in terms of infrastructure, professional development, and ensuring that technology enhances learning outcomes.
6. Changing Educational Landscape: Keeping up with evolving educational trends, standards, and pedagogical approaches can be a challenge for districts. Adapting curriculum, assessments, and instructional methods to meet the changing needs of students requires continuous evaluation and improvement.

It's important to note that the greatest challenge facing a district may vary depending on its specific circumstances, demographics, and priorities. Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment within the district would provide a more accurate understanding of its unique challenges.

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

The school board plays a vital role in attracting and retaining the best employees for a district. Here are some ways the board can contribute to this:

1. **Competitive Compensation:** The board can work to ensure that the district offers competitive salaries and benefits packages for employees. This includes conducting salary reviews, advocating for fair compensation, and considering incentives or performance-based rewards.
2. **Supportive Work Environment:** Creating a positive and supportive work environment is crucial for attracting and retaining talented employees. The board can establish policies that promote collaboration, respect, and professional growth. They can also advocate for resources and support systems that help teachers and staff succeed.
3. **Professional Development Opportunities:** The board can prioritize and allocate resources for ongoing professional development opportunities. This may include workshops, conferences, mentoring programs, and access to cutting-edge teaching strategies and resources. Supporting employee growth and career advancement helps attract and retain dedicated professionals.
4. **Recognition and Appreciation:** Recognizing and appreciating the efforts and achievements of employees is important. The board can implement recognition programs, celebrate accomplishments, and foster a culture of appreciation within the district.
5. **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Involving employees in decision-making processes can enhance their sense of ownership and job satisfaction. The board can solicit input from teachers and staff on relevant matters, actively listen to their perspectives, and engage in transparent communication.
6. **Strong Recruitment Efforts:** The board can collaborate with district administrators to develop effective recruitment strategies. This may involve attending job fairs, advertising vacancies widely, and leveraging professional networks to attract top talent. Clear job descriptions and streamlined hiring processes can also contribute to attracting the best candidates.

By prioritizing competitive compensation, supportive environments, professional development, recognition, employee involvement, and effective recruitment efforts, the school board can play a crucial role in attracting and retaining the best possible employees for the district.

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

The level of day-to-day involvement of the school board in the operations of schools can vary depending on the specific governance structure and policies of a district. However, it is generally recommended that the board focuses more on setting policies, overseeing district-wide goals, and providing strategic direction, rather than getting involved in the day-to-day operations of schools. Here's why:

1. **Focus on Governance:** The primary role of the school board is to govern the district by establishing policies, making decisions that align with the district's mission, and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Board members should focus on setting the overall vision and strategic direction for the district.
2. **Administrative Expertise:** Day-to-day operations of schools require expertise in educational administration, which is typically the responsibility of the district's administrators, principals, and other staff members. Board members are often elected or appointed for their broad knowledge of education and community representation, rather than their expertise in operational matters.
3. **Avoiding Micromanagement:** Excessive involvement in day-to-day operations can risk micromanagement, hindering the autonomy of administrators, teachers, and staff members. It is generally more effective for the board to establish policies and guidelines that empower and support the professionals responsible for the daily management of schools.
4. **Strategic Focus:** By maintaining a strategic focus, the board can concentrate on long-term goals, educational policies, budgetary decisions, community engagement, and holding district leadership accountable for achieving desired outcomes. This allows board members to better serve the overall interests of the district and focus on high-level improvements.

However, it's important to note that the board should still remain informed about the overall functioning of schools, receive regular updates on key performance indicators, and ensure that policies are being effectively implemented. The board may also address significant issues or concerns that impact the overall direction and success of the district.

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## What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

The board of education plays a critical role in setting school district budget priorities. Here are some key aspects of their work in this area:

1. **Collaborative Budget Development:** The board should collaborate with district administrators and finance officials to develop the annual budget. This involves reviewing the district's financial status, revenue projections, and expenditure needs. Board members should actively participate in budget discussions and provide input based on their understanding of district priorities and community needs.
2. **Aligning Budget with District Goals:** The board should ensure that the budget aligns with the district's educational goals, vision, and strategic plan. They should consider the priorities established for student achievement, instructional programs, student support services, and other areas. By aligning the budget with these goals, the board helps prioritize resources and allocate funds accordingly.
3. **Assessing Community Needs:** The board should engage with the community to understand their priorities and needs. This can be done through public hearings, surveys, community forums, or other means of soliciting input. By gathering community perspectives, the board can make informed decisions on how to allocate resources effectively.
4. **Balancing Equity and Fairness:** The board should strive to ensure equity and fairness in budget allocation across schools and student populations. They should consider the needs of diverse student groups, such as students with disabilities, English language learners, or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The board should assess resource distribution to minimize disparities and provide all students with an equitable learning environment.
5. **Fiscal Responsibility:** The board has a responsibility to oversee the financial health of the district. They should exercise fiscal prudence and make decisions that promote long-term financial stability. This includes considering factors such as revenue projections, expenditure trends, debt management, and potential risks.
6. **Transparency and Accountability:** The board should maintain transparency throughout the budgeting process. They should clearly communicate budget priorities, engage in open discussions, and provide opportunities for public input and feedback. Additionally, the board should monitor budget implementation, assess outcomes, and hold district leadership accountable for effective financial management.

By actively participating in collaborative budget development, aligning the budget with district goals, assessing community needs, ensuring equity, practicing fiscal responsibility, and maintaining transparency, the board of education can effectively set school district budget priorities that support the district's mission and improve educational outcomes for students.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

No

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address. \*

Professional: Tamara Moore: (856) 283-7040

**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 13, 2023.**

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

This form was created inside of Lawrence Public Schools.

Google Forms

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Email \*

rabyers54@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 08 / 2023

Full Name \*

Robert A. Byers (Bob)

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

1707 East 21st Terrace, Lawrence, Ks, 66046

Cell/Home Phone \*

785-979-3084/ same

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

I moved to Lawrence in 1978 to attend graduate school. I loved the community so much that I stayed and raised my family here.

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

In 2004 - 2008 was a member of the district's Equity Council and in 2008 was elected by the council as its Chair.

2009-2013 Elected to the Lawrence School board and served one term. During my term on the School Board, I served as the Board's representative on Negotiation Committee and as the representative on the Equity Council.

2013 - continued as a member of the Equity Council.

2014 - 2015 filled a board vacancy for a year. During that year was a Board representative on the Negotiation Committee and the Equity Council.

2015 - 2021 served on the District's Finance Committee which currently is the District Cite Council on which I currently serve.

Most recently was a member of The Future Planning Committee of the Lawrence Schools.

I have served on numerous other groups within the district regarding strategic planning and development maintenance of schools.

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List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

I represent Douglas County on the Board of Directors for Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging. (JAAA) For the last 2 years, I have served as the Board Chair.

Over the past 40 years as a Lawrence resident, I have been involved in developing community resources for children and families in Lawrence. Prior to my retirement, I was involved in the development of child welfare programs in the state.

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

I see this opportunity to serve on the board as a chance to continue my service to the Lawrence community and to help improve the schools as Lawrence moves as a community into the future.

The experience that I will bring to the Board is 40 years of child welfare practice and an understanding of state rules and regulations and their application. I also bring experience in school finance and operations having served as a prior Board member.

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

There are 3 qualities that I feel a School Board member must possess.

1) Have the ability to see the Big Picture. The decisions that come before the Board are interrelated and decisions often have consequences in multiple areas. A Board member must be able to see beyond what's obvious. I feel through my education as a social worker and my experience as an administrator in child welfare programs has equipped me well.

2) The ability to use data/information to guide decision-making. To plan and then use the information to guide actions taken. Through my time previously spent on the School Board, I have a keen awareness of the importance of the use of data to guide decision-making.

3) The ability to listen. This is important as a Board member because that is where you get your sense of community and your direction. I am a social worker trained in listening. Through years of working as a line worker then, supervisor, administrator, and program director, I learned and demonstrated how to effectively listen and take action to better my agency/community and the people in it.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

In regards to all four populations, the role of a single school board member is to listen, ask questions and to provide information. Only as the full board does that role change to advisory and oversight as it relates to the school superintendent and the district as a whole.

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

The district's strength is its staff which includes administration, teachers, and support staff. I feel this way because when the district has to make hard decisions the staff has pulled together and met the needs of students.

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

Funding is the greatest challenge that the district faces, due to declining enrollment and a legislature that does not see school funding as a priority.

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

I think most people will say it comes down to ensuring competitive salaries and benefits. I believe, in addition, that it is as important to ensure a positive and safe working environment.

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

No. The Board hires a superintendent who hires an administrative team to handle the day to day operations of the schools. The Board's involvement should, for the most part, be oversight done by setting up policies and procedures within the district that direct how the schools operate. There should be very few times when the Board would be involved in the day to day operations of a school.

What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

This is not a simple question with a simple answer. The district, in my view, has a lot of competing demands and requirements that have to be addressed when deciding upon a budget. Its work should be to develop goals and directives to guide it into the future and then set its budgets over time to reach those goals and directives.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

NO / NO

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address. \*

Patrick Kelly : Chief Academic Offices USD 497 785-832-5000 ext 2405

Kay Emerson : Community Member 785-304-3808

Susan Harrison: Program Director JAAA 785-235-1367

Kevin Harrell: Exc.Dir. Special Services USD 497 kharrell@usd497.org

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Email \*

plcarttar@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 13 / 2023

Full Name \*

Paul L. Carttar

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

633 Indiana St; Lawrence, KS 66044

Cell/Home Phone \*

785-218-1288

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

49 (of my 69) years: 1953-76; 1993-99; 2003-present

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Over the years I have been involved in countless activities as a student, parent, son of former board member (Maggie Carttar), uncle to many former students and a community member. Literally the only office I've held was Student Body President at Cordley in 1964!

List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

I've served on the boards of several organizations in Lawrence and elsewhere. Lawrence boards include Lawrence Memorial Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce, the Kansas Bioscience Innovation Center, Kansas International, Van Go Mobile Arts, the Friends of the Lied Center, Helzberg Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program (KC), the KU Alumni Association, the KU Honors Program Advisory Board. I am currently Vice-Chair of the CIS-MA board.

Outside Lawrence, I have also served on many boards -- currently including the African Venture Philanthropy Alliance (Nairobi, Kenya); the Social Ventures Hong Kong Advisory Board; the Global Alliance of Impact Networks Advisory Board (Singapore); the GreenLight Fund (Boston) and Stanford Graduate School of Business Alumni Ambassadors Group (California)

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

My desire to serve is a function of two factors: the magnitude and variety of key challenges facing public education in Lawrence, and my belief that I am distinctively equipped by the breadth and diversity of my experience to help the district and community navigate a successful, sustainable path forward.

As for the challenges to public education, they are truly unprecedented and complex:

- Student learning challenges post-COVID, complicated by social media;
- Demographic trends that are reducing the school age population;
- Formidable competition to the Lawrence public schools from other educational alternatives, including private schools, neighboring public districts and home schooling;
- Funding pressures resulting from inconsistent, opportunistic public policies;
- Political/cultural controversies
- Rapidly evolving technology and scientific research that are transforming learning processes and pedagogy

As for my experience, I have served in many roles (personal and professional) that are relevant to finding strong solutions to these problems here in Lawrence:

- Being a student in Lawrence public schools for all my K-12 years, including elementary at New York and Cordley, junior high at Central and high school at LHS;
  - Being a parent of three now-adult children who attended public and private schools in Lawrence (Hillcrest, Deerfield, Quail Run, Sunflower, Raintree, Bishop Seabury, Southwest, LHS and Free State); and two excellent public districts in San Mateo, CA and Wellesley, MA;
  - Working as a consultant, board member and funder/investor with many innovative education-related organizations, including Teach for All, Turnaround for Children, New Leaders for New Schools and Communities in Schools;
  - Working in government at the state and federal levels, including Vice Chancellor at KU responsible for legislative relations and Director of the Social Innovation Fund in the Obama Administration;
  - Serving as chief program officer for the Kauffman Foundation at a time we fundamentally redesigned its strategy for K-12 educational impact.
-

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

The school board is a team of committed citizens who have extraordinary responsibility for making decisions that will shape the schools and community for years. As such, success for an individual must be defined in terms of how one actually enhances the success of the team in achieving its goals.

In that context, several qualities stand out that equip someone to add value to any ambitious, results-minded team. Overall, I believe I have developed and demonstrated these over the course of my career:

- Ability to work productively with others, possibly of very different views, to set a clear course and achieve consensus around difficult choices. I've served (and still do) on many boards of vastly differing types of organizations locally, nationally, and in Africa and Asia.
  - Unerring focus on the mission. As a consultant in the social sector for more than twenty years, this has been my defining asset.
  - Ability to select, motivate and support effective leaders of organizations, including staying out of their way. My time on the LMH board with Gene Meyer is the best illustration of this.
  - Respect and empathy for the myriad people whose lives may be affected by key policy decisions.
  - Reliance on facts in processing issues and making decisions – both qualitative inputs from knowledgeable people and quantitative data and analysis. Facts are the ultimate basis for consensus.
  - Having a broad context for processing information toward making informed decisions. Since KU, I've lived on both coasts and Europe and have worked on six continents, in contexts involving radically differing people, situations, purposes and capacities.
  - Once decisions are made, being able to engage in authentic, transparent efforts to build acceptance and support among those most affected, who may very well be the strongest opposition.
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Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

To deliver on its “five key works,” board members must engage productively with these four constituencies, as well as others such as the community at large – though the nature of that engagement will differ.

The core role for board members outside the board is with the superintendent and senior management, where a respectful, high-confidence, accountable working relationship is essential to success. I have learned time and again how a strong CEO who is totally aligned with the board and reliably good at his/her job can create uniquely high, sustained value, both driving positive results and leveraging the time and energy of the board. This was certainly what the LMH board developed with Gene Meyer, who drove excellence for over twenty years.

The role with respect to other administrators and staff is different, as the “chain of command” essential to effective operations (not to mention a positive culture and work environment as explained below), runs directly through the superintendent and senior managers. So the role of the board should be more to understand their work reality (good and bad), reinforce the board’s commitment to their success and promote a compelling vision for collective success.

Students and parents are wholly different, as they are the direct beneficiaries/“customers” of the district, whose lives will forever be affected by their experience with the schools. However, this relationship is very tricky, as the district team has the professional expertise regarding how to achieve given results, while students and parents are likely to have strong – and conflicting -- views on goals, policies and practices. So the key role of the board members is to deeply understand the perceptions, experiences and needs of students and parents to enable the district to find the “sweet spot” between what is desirable, effective and doable.

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

I believe that the greatest strength of this district is the deep, steadfast commitment of the Lawrence community to the concept of educational excellence for all of its young people. Of course, this is grounded in the fact of being a “college town,” where a relatively high percentage of the population is involved professionally in the education industry and where many more came to Lawrence for education and have high educational aspirations for their children.

For the most part, this is an enormous advantage for Lawrence policy-makers as has been demonstrated consistently in the past, including reliable support for education-related funding initiatives and strong engagement of parents and community members in education-related events and causes.

That said, there are some notable complications to this “strength” as well, in ways that inevitably complicate the work and lives of board members. Achieving consensus can be much more difficult and time-consuming. Opposition to decisions can be much stronger and longer-lasting. And where people have choices, that opposition can have real consequences, such as driving some parents to withdraw their own kids from the public schools.

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

Building on the prior question, I believe the greatest single challenge is effectively navigating the myriad public process complexities in a way that addresses the many unprecedented challenges referenced above and materially advances the district toward achievement of “the promise” of educational excellence for all. Given the many realities of Lawrence, Kansas and even the US, the solutions the school board embraces and the path it sets will be imperfect. But the journey is never complete, and the board can still make significant progress in positioning the schools to effectively serve the students of Lawrence and this community very well for the long-term.

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

First and foremost, I believe the key to achieving this goal is to create an environment where outstanding educational professionals believe they are able to apply their skills and capabilities effectively over time to realize their own aspirations for professional fulfillment.

While basic economics for the employees is an important foundational consideration, my own experience throughout my career has been consistent with the many studies over time in many professional settings that have correlated sustained job satisfaction with several other factors beyond pay per se. Key factors typically seen to be more critical in hiring and retention decisions include a culture of professional respect, consistent and clear management policies and practices that empower and support strong performance, clear and consistent job expectations that balance high achievement goals with what is possible and enables authentic accountability for both positive and negative outcomes.

It is, however, also true – again in my experience -- that pay can become a seminal issue in certain circumstances. These would include situations where pay levels are so low compared to competitors that they actually convey lack of appreciation or even disrespect or where the other non-pay factors are not being realized.

Clearly, the board is now preparing to implement a major pay raise for staff, but they may also be facing changed circumstances from the school closure that may complicate their lives. Accordingly, it will be especially important that the board closely monitor what is actually happening on the ground and what results are forthcoming.

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

As a general rule, the board should not have day-to-day involvement in school operations. Rather, this should be the core purview of district management and staff, including principals, teachers and service providers, who must be empowered, supported and held accountable by the board, consistent with clear mandates and plans that have been established by the board to advance and achieve the overall strategy and budget and operational priorities of the district.

However, there are two major qualifications to this. First is the absolute need of the board to have reliable, timely information about what is happening on a day-to-day basis regarding the operations of the schools – which can/should be gleaned from many sources, notably regular reports. Obviously, accurate, timely information is fundamental to the board’s ability to understand how goals and results are tracking and what, if any, corrective action is appropriate.

Second is the important role of the board’s physical engagement and visibility to management and staff on their own turf. The role of board members can be very abstract, so it is critical that board members have regular but occasional presence in the schools – although this must be clearly distinguished from “day-to-day involvement.” This presence has some ceremonial aspects, eg reinforcing the board’s involvement and demonstrated commitment, but can also be essential to exposing board members to “real-life” people, situations and such that inform the board member’s understanding of what is happening in the schools and how the board can best address any deficiencies or problem areas.

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What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

As with any organization – public, private or nonprofit – the budget for USD497 is the single clearest, substantive manifestation of what a board of directors is committing to achieve and how it expects to make things happen. This is true because by definition the budget sets forth how exactly leadership believes that very limited resources can best be deployed to drive accomplishment of goals – so any board that embraces results and accountability must believe that, or they would change the priorities and numbers accordingly.

Therefore, the board of education must “own” the budget and drive its content, beginning with the core goals it aims to achieve and what actual priorities for spending are most likely to deliver. Of course, this is completely consistent with what is laid out in the district's “BOE Governance & Operating Procedure document under the “Five Key Works.”

Of course, that does not mean that the board has to do all the work by itself – far from it. If the board has an robust working relationship – and confidence – in the superintendent and district staff, they should be given responsibility for generating initial draft of priorities, actual financial scenarios and recommended actions and initiatives. Still, this would be subject to thorough review and, where necessary, modification to ensure that the board can approve, support/defend, and ultimately achieve the results envisioned.

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Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

No

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Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and \*  
at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address.

Lawrence Public School reference: Patrick Kelly

Professional/Community references:

1. Wendy Kopp; Founder, Teach for America: wendy.kopp@teachforall.org
  2. Gene Meyer; former CEO, Lawrence Memorial Hospital: genemeyer1212@gmail.com
  3. Bart Littlejohn; Lawrence City Commissioner: nrlittlej3@gmail.com
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This form was created inside of Lawrence Public Schools.

Google Forms

# Lawrence Board of Education Member Application

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Email \*

anneirenecostello@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 13 / 2023

Full Name \*

Anne Costello

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

4428 W 25th Place

Cell/Home Phone \*

913-707-1257

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

I have been a resident of Lawrence for the past 16 years, not including the years I lived in Lawrence while attending the University of Kansas.

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Educate Lawrence member, Feb, 2023 - present

Futures Committee member, Sept. 2022 - Feb. 2023

Sunflower PTO member, Sept. 2022 - present

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

Broken Arrow PTA Treasurer, Aug. 2021 - July 2022

Broken Arrow site council, member, Aug. 2020 - July 2022

Broken Arrow PTA member, Aug. 2020 - July 2022

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List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

Leadership Lawrence, Class of 2021 - 2022

Leadership Lawrence Facilitation & curriculum teams member, August 2022 - present

Leadership Lawrence Advisory Board member, May 2022 - present

Lawrence Schools Foundation board member, January 2022 - present

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

After watching the budget issue play out over the last few years, my desire to run for school board was solidified. I have 2 children in the district as well as a partner that works for the district, so the success of the district is very personal to me. I want to ensure that ALL children of Lawrence receive the best education possible.

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 make that career shift. 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.

I was lucky to be a member of the Futures Planning Committee and obtain more in-depth training on the budget. The school budget process is overly-complicated by the state. It is imperative that we have an open and transparent budgeting process to build trust with the community that we serve.

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

In my job as a buyer, my focus is on the consumer. When developing strategic plans and product assortments, satisfying the customer is always the first priority. As a board member, the number one priority is focusing on serving ALL students. Additionally, serving the community will be my a top priority. I will serve in trust for the entire community and not just certain constituencies.

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.

I 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, as part of the management team, open communication is a daily requirement. Constructive criticism is not easy to give, but is extremely important in developing the people who report to me along with recognizing them when they are doing well. I have to communicate effectively with the different teams I work with in order to run my business successfully.

Collaboration & team work are also important traits of a successful board member. I practice this daily in my job where I work cross functionally to execute our strategy, manage inventory and analyze sales. Everyone on the board should have the same goals, we may differ in how we believe we accomplish those goals, but we need to work together or we will never accomplish anything.

A board member should be an advocate for a strong public education system. I joined Educate Lawrence in order to help spread the word about what was happening at a governmental level in regards to education. I have written many letters to our legislators encouraging them to fully fund special education, prioritize funding for public schools over vouchers, supporting our trans youth in their right to play sports, and in support of local control of our schools.

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Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

The board is responsible for hiring superintendents and evaluating their performance. Board members should serve as advocates for teachers, students, and families. We are there to listen to their input and work to make the system better for all. The board must create a culture and framework that support staff and encourages innovation with the goal of continuous improvement. We are accountable to our students, staff, parents and the community who elected us. Currently there are no times for dialogue between the board and the public. I would like to see opportunities for the board to interact with the public. For example, could we offer mini education sessions on topics like the budget or progress on district goals where the public is able to ask questions?

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

The greatest strength of this district is its staff. I value the dedication of the staff and teachers who have remained with the district throughout the pandemic, despite being paid significantly less than teachers in surrounding districts. 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 (including fully funding SPED to the statutorily required level) 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. What are the city and county doing to attract families? We must attract families to grow enrollment in order to better fund our schools. Good schools are needed to help draw families. It is all connected. The city, county and school district have shared goals and should be working together regularly to develop strategic initiatives with the goal of drawing more people into the area. We need to create affordable housing, attract new businesses (and thus jobs). These will help to draw families, which will provide more funding for the district to spend on improving our students outcomes.

The Futures Planning Committee, which I served as a part of, was tasked with making data driven decisions with the goal of finding \$16M in savings. At the end of the process we realized at best 25% of that goal. Our staff will still not have competitive salaries, despite proposed raises. We did not realize the savings to account for increases in utilities, insurance, etc. Nor did we come up with money to put back into reserves. We need to explore all options. While we are receiving more money in state base aid per pupil, there is no guarantee that it will not decrease in future years. Have we exhausted all other options? Did we review all contracts and vendor agreements to ensure we are not overpaying? There were additional ideas brought forth by the FPC that should be explored for possible additional savings.

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

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. I believe the best way to attract and retain talent is to show staff that they are valued. Teachers often move onto different roles when they feel overlooked or undervalued. First and foremost is paying them a competitive and/or living wage. Another way to show staff they are valued is to consider their work/life balance. In the process of budget cuts, we have increased student teacher ratios across the board. We have had third grade classes with over 30 students this past year, which was higher than the middle school and high school ratios. We are giving the staff small raises while tasking them with a lot more work. We need to save money in the budget for contingency staffing to help reduce class size. Developing a positive culture is also important. Staff need to feel supported in their roles. They need to know they have somewhere to go where they can share their ideas or needs and are heard.

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 must step in and take corrective action. I do believe the board should be in our schools regularly. Being present in schools is not to interfere with operations, but to witness first-hand the execution of the strategic direction, as well has to gain familiarity with students and staff.

What should the board of education's work be in setting 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.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

My husband is a teacher at Lawrence High School.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address. \*

Dr. Bill DeWitt 785-760-7861  
Michelle Fales 785-331-7589  
Heather Grunert 785-554-4058

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Email \*

jenidaley@icloud.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 07 / 2023

Full Name \*

Jeni Daley

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

1106 W. 21st St., Lawrence, KS 66046

Cell/Home Phone \*

(316) 655-6502

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

14 years

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

I've served on Site Council at Woodlawn Elementary since my oldest began kindergarten, coached basketball at Free State High School for 2 years, and worked for the Boys & Girls Club of Langston Hughes for 4 years. Most recently, I was a teacher at Free State High School where my students earned All Kansas honors.

List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

I dedicated two years to the Kansas Scholastic Press Association board, where I actively contributed to the advancement of scholastic journalism. Additionally, I committed to serving the Hillcrest Neighborhood Association for two years as the secretary, working to enhance the quality of life in a prominent neighborhood in our community. Currently, I proudly hold a position on the Greenhouse Church Advisory Board, where I have the opportunity to provide valuable insights and guidance to our pastoral leadership team.

From 2013 to 2015, I had the privilege of serving as the marketing coordinator for the Lawrence Public Library, working alongside some of the most prominent community leaders in Lawrence. In this role, I spearheaded the coordination of all opening day events, and designed the comprehensive signage package for the building, effectively capturing the library's essence and inviting the community to explore its offerings. I promoted the library's services, fostering engagement and participation within our community.

In 2013, I graduated from the University of Kansas, equipped with a wealth of knowledge and a strong commitment to making a positive impact in Lawrence. During my time at the university, I engaged with the community through my involvement with the Boys & Girls Club of Langston Hughes for four years to empower and support kids in our community. Additionally, I served as an Americorp member, further solidifying my commitment to community service and civic engagement.

These experiences shaped me into a compassionate, driven, and Lawrence-oriented individual. I am eager to continue leveraging my skills, knowledge, and passion to serve our community and contribute to its growth and prosperity.

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

I'm an accomplished product manager in a prominent edtech company, but prior to this role, I enjoyed a successful teaching career spanning eight years, during which I earned local, state, and national awards, including the Kansas Horizon Award, the national Journalism Education Association's Rising Star Award, and being named the Secondary Teacher of the Year for Gardner Edgerton in 2022. With two master's degrees in education, including one in educational administration, I possess a unique and well-rounded understanding of the educational landscape, both inside and out of the school system.

My perspective is rooted in the intersection of excellent teaching, effective leadership, and advanced technology. Beyond the USD 497 district, I taught in two neighboring districts of similar size, providing me with valuable insights into board priorities and methodologies. I had the privilege of participating in the superintendent interview panel for Gardner Edgerton USD 231, which expanded my understanding of decision-making processes.

As a journalism teacher, I guided students in reporting on board activities, granting me invaluable insights into district finances, structures, and decision-making. Additionally, I served as the marketing coordinator for the Lawrence Public Library during the era of opening their new building, a cherished institution within our community. Both of these positions required analyzing and managing \$70,000+ annual budgets, giving crucial insight to the financial health of organizations.

My professional experience includes serving on boards, delivering speeches before boards, and reporting directly to them. These interactions have equipped me with the necessary skills and understanding required for a position of high value. Between our neighborhood, school, and church, I am deeply invested in this community as a parent of three students, a proud KU alumna, the spouse of a teacher, a former teacher, a certified principal, a passionate advocate for the Boys and Girls Club, a homeowner, a consistent voter in local and state elections, and a responsible taxpayer.

With my extensive background, I offer a unique perspective and unwavering dedication to the improvement of our educational system. My commitment to transformative education, coupled with my expertise in community relations and the educational landscape, make me an outstanding candidate for a position on the school board.

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

1 - Ability to ask challenging questions - Tough questions uncover the root issue, going beyond the superficial problem. In my role as a product manager, I'm asking questions about our customers, our designs, and our processes on a daily basis, constantly challenging the status quo to ensure the success of our organization.

2 - Strong understanding of finance, budgets, and data - I've managed departmental budgets of \$70,000+ for over a decade, have a master's in educational administration, and have gone the extra mile to understand budget breakdowns and legal implications of different types of monetary funds.

3 - Active listening to all stakeholders - school board members represent facets of the community, and have to faithfully show up and listen to their needs and concerns. Listening to feedback is critical and requires thick skin. I don't take anything personally - my goal is to live unoffendable. As a journalism teacher for 8 years, my students' work was always in the public eye, which brought critique and commentary. I have become a professional at having hard but courteous conversations while maintaining strong relationships.

4 - Making wise and equitable decisions - although many can ask questions, few can make wise decisions. I gather all pivotal information from all stakeholders prior to making a decision, thinking long-term and planning now for what's to come later, striving for equity in the decision-making process. I work for a nonprofit committed to reaching underserved students, and that equity has been a priority for every organization I've dedicated time to.

5 - Developed educational philosophy - if you don't have a strong educational philosophy rooted in data-driven recommendations and research, it's easy to be completely swayed by emotional testimony. I have the educational expertise in and out of the classroom, various leadership positions to provide a well-rounded outlook, and the community roots to value the humans in the equation.

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Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

1 - Administrators: School board members have a critical role in holding administrators accountable while providing support and guidance. They work in partnership with administrators, encouraging a shared vision and promoting strategic thinking. Board members push for continuous growth, providing constructive feedback and ensuring that administrators bridge the gap between the board's objectives and the needs of the staff.

2 - Staff: Board members recognize and appreciate the valuable work done by staff on the front lines. They actively listen to staff concerns and advocate for better working conditions and fair compensation. Additionally, board members may provide some oversight to curriculum and technology development, ensuring that it aligns with the district's goals and meets the needs of both students and educators. The board works with union representatives to establish the negotiated agreement each year as well.

3 - Students: Board members prioritize the success and well-being of students. They allocate resources wisely, investing in the right areas to create an optimal learning environment. They actively participate in selecting competent leaders who can inspire and support students. Board members also ensure that teachers have the necessary resources and support to provide quality education. They promote student accomplishments and celebrate their achievements.

4 - Parents: Board members value the input of parents and actively listen to their concerns. They recognize the importance of including parents in pivotal decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and considered. Board members advocate for improved communication between administrators, staff, and parents. They stay informed about parenting trends that may impact the educational landscape and strive to understand the desires and dynamics of families within the community. By advocating for conditions that support parental well-being, board members create an environment where parents believe their children can thrive.

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

In a dual-university town, our students and families are dedicated to pursuing education at a higher level compared to many surrounding districts. It's not merely about having access to these rich sources of knowledge; our students possess an innate curiosity and the ability to delve deeper into learning concepts. It is evident that the students in Lawrence strive for excellence, consistently attaining top rankings in academic programs such as journalism and debate, and boasting a high number of National Merit semifinalists. Regardless of the challenge, competition, or academic opportunity presented, our students consistently exceed expectations. Lawrence fosters a culture of unwavering commitment to education, and our kids stand as our greatest strength.

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

Financial challenges pose the most significant hurdle for our district, as tight budgets restrict our ability to retain high-quality teachers. I made the difficult decision to leave my teaching position due to this very reason. Supporting our three children on two teacher salaries in Lawrence became increasingly challenging, prompting me to explore alternative career paths. Although my husband continues to teach in the district, he has had to take on additional coaching positions that consume a substantial amount of his time, sacrificing dinner and bedtime with our kids most nights. We need to address this issue head-on.

It is imperative that we not only retain exceptional teachers in Lawrence but also attract new talent to our district. Lawrence has the potential to be a sought-after destination for educators, yet we currently see teachers commuting long distances to neighboring districts in search of higher pay. Our financial priorities must center on supporting and valuing our teachers, increasing their pay. Additionally, we must exercise due diligence in making informed decisions regarding curriculum and technology, ensuring that our investments align with our educational goals while being mindful of budgetary constraints.

While we acknowledge the need for building maintenance and improvements, it is disheartening to witness the closure of schools before their bonds are fully paid. Furthermore, the declining birth rates in Lawrence pose ongoing financial challenges due to the structure of school funding in Kansas. While we may anticipate potential growth, such as the battery plant in De Soto, we must also face the reality that our city and schools may not currently appear attractive to new families. Relying solely on projected population growth in the coming decade would be imprudent when all the data says otherwise. Cost of living in Lawrence is expensive and our schools don't currently have an A rating - those are the two factors most people prioritize when selecting where they want to live.

After closing two elementary schools (and repurposing Kennedy) and repurposing a middle school, we now must commit to our current building structure and redirect our attention toward auditing all other financial aspects and decision-making processes. The challenge will be ensuring the long-term sustainability of our district, empowering teachers, and ultimately leading to the success of our students. We must prioritize a thorough evaluation of our financial structures to guarantee that every dollar is allocated wisely.

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

1 - Increase pay - as big a bump as possible immediately, then nothing less than a cost of living raise every year; redeem all past salary schedule freezes as well.

2 - Mentor staff into leadership growth opportunities - provide clear guidelines for growth and advancement within the district so our outstanding teachers seek administrative positions internally and our classified staff sees next step for growth.

3 - Offer creative benefits packages - including flexible work options when students are not in the classroom, increased PTO, and better parental leave policies.

4 - Recruit and select the best leaders - great principals retain great staff.

5 - Build trust back - it starts with transparent communication, following through on initiatives, gathering data and feedback using quality methods (a lot of trust was broken with the agency that conducted the school closures process), and specific goals from the superintendent with metrics and accountability measures in place.

6 - Ensure curriculum and technology solutions are vetted by teachers - we've made some poor tech decisions without consulting staff on the front lines, which is often the final straw for frustrated educators. Any major technology or curriculum decision needs to be assessed by the biggest stakeholders.

7 - Collaborate with KU - we should be attracting the top talent coming out of KU, providing volunteer opportunities for early education majors, more robust research partnerships, and getting every KU education student in the doors of USD 497 multiple times before they graduate.

8 - Collaborate with the city - we need to make Lawrence a place that's attractive to families and partner with the city to identify opportunities for family-friendly enhancements and specific marketing to attract families. Better parks, better housing, and better city amenities will bring people to us - both students and teachers.

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

The board should not have day-to-day involvement in school operations, beyond attending events to support students and staff and occasionally volunteering in the classroom to stay in tune with frontline needs. Their primary role is to establish policies, set goals, and provide strategic direction. Here's why:

- > Strategic Oversight: Boards focus on long-term strategies, not routine operations.
- > Administrative Expertise: School administrators have the necessary expertise for day-to-day management.
- > Efficient Decision-Making: Board involvement can lead to delays in decision-making.
- > Accountability: Defining roles fosters accountability between the board and administrators.
- > Board-Staff Relationship: Allowing administrators autonomy builds trust and collaboration.

School boards should focus on governance and strategic decision-making, while administrators handle daily operations. This ensures efficiency, accountability, and a positive board-staff relationship.

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What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

The board of education plays a critical role in setting the district's budget priorities. It includes collaborative decision-making, establishing educational goals alongside administrators, analyzing the financial resources allocated to the district, assessing the needs and priorities of stakeholders from varying lenses, balancing the budget equitably and efficiently, and providing sustainable long-term planning solutions. We must think of the impact of budget solutions beyond tomorrow and what the students in 10, 20, and 30 years will need. As a board, we have a commitment to quality data collection methods that influence budget decisions instead of data that tells the story we want to hear. Our job is to partner with the current administration while committing to our students and community, regardless of who is in the administrative positions currently. Financial planning and balancing a tight budget might be the single most important role of the school board, as money often dictates success, equity, and health.

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Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

I do not have any business contracts with the district, nor does my family. My husband is employed as a teacher for USD 497.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address. \*

1. Kathleen Morgan, Director of Development & Partnerships for Lawrence Public Library Foundation (direct supervisor at the library) and parent of former students in Lawrence and spouse of former USD 497 board member Scott Morgan - kmorgan@lplks.org or (785) 843-3833
2. Jayci Roberson, principal of Woodlawn Elementary (worked with her through Site Council) - jayci.roberson@usd497.org or (785) 410-8897
3. Frank Bell, principal of Gardner Edgerton High School (direct supervisor at GEHS) - bellf@usd231.com or (913) 856-2600
4. Matt Baysinger, CEO of Swell Spark (friend) and parent of students at Hillcrest Elementary - matt@swellspark.com or (785) 550-4800
5. Jared Scholz, executive pastor of Greenhouse Church (pastor and friend) and parent of students at Woodlawn, Lawrence Virtual School, and Lawrence High - jared@greenhouselawrence.com or (913) 233-9639

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Email \*

rebekahgaston@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 13 / 2023

Full Name \*

Rebekah Gaston

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

845 Missouri St., Lawrence, KS 66044

Cell/Home Phone \*

785-979-7395

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

19 years: 1997-2001, 2002-2005, 2011-2023

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Equity Advisory Council, Committee Member, 2022 – present

Volunteer Summer Food Service Program Site Coordinator, Pinckney Elementary Breakfast Program, Summer 2023

Pinckney Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization, 2021-2023; served as Secretary in 2022-23

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List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

Lawrence Community Shelter, Board Member 2022 – present

Harvesters Summer Food Service Program Site Coordinator, Summer 2022

Kansas State Employee Health Care Commission, Governor's Appointee – 2021-2022

Kansas Human Trafficking Advisory Board, Governor's Appointee – 2019-2023

Lawrence Public Incentives Review Committee, 2017-2021

Douglas County Bar Association, 2011 – present; Executive Committee Member, 2018 – 2020

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

A mini-resume as background:

2006-2014 Attorney at Kansas Legal Services, then solo practice focusing on children's law, then prosecutor at the Douglas County DA's Office

2014 – 2018 Policy advocate at Kansas Appleseed

2018-2019: Operations Director for Laura Kelly campaign, then Special Assistant on Governor-Elect's transition team

2019-2022: Administrative leadership team at Kansas Department for Children and Families. I served as Director of both Policy and Economic and Employment Services for the first two years, then Director of Agency and Community Collaboration the next two.

2022- present: Attorney at Kansas Holistic Defenders, providing preventative legal representation to families with children to help prevent crises that could lead to abuse/neglect allegations.

My experience as an attorney in child welfare and truancy cases brings a unique perspective. Families' trust can be eroded if the district is too reliant on the court system to solve issues identified by schools. Further, my experience at DCF during Gov. Kelly's first term was invaluable; that team was devoted to supporting families and creating a culture of "mandatory supporting" to replace the report-first mindset that can leave families feeling targeted rather than valued.

Also at DCF, I genuinely enjoyed learning about the state budgeting process and TANF grant budgets. I am educating myself about school finance, and I believe my interest in the topic will motivate me to gain the fiscal acumen to become an effective board member.

I learned federal child nutrition policy during my time at Kansas Appleseed, and saw innovative ways communities across Kansas implemented nutrition programs. The past two summers, I led efforts to create summer meals sites near Pinckney Elementary, one of the highest-need schools in 497. Additionally, my time at Appleseed and DCF educated me about legislative advocacy, and I look forward to using those skills in Topeka during legislative sessions.

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

The most important qualities for a school board member are the ability to listen to stakeholders – including parents, students and community members, and district staff -- and the skill to follow-through to ensure stakeholder feedback is meaningfully incorporated into district policies and practices. The key is not merely listening to the voices that are the loudest or that show up at the right time and place; it is making the space for the marginalized voices to be heard and valued as well. I've spent a lot of time on gathering feedback from individuals with lived experience during my work at DCF and Kansas Holistic Defenders, as they are the experts on the work each agency is doing; I think that experience will translate to efforts I would undertake to hear from families as a school board member.

Related, an ability to be open-minded to encourage the district to try new innovations is important. My efforts to bring summer meals to the higher-need neighborhoods exemplify my commitment to dedicating my time to creative solutions.

It's also important to be able to have candid responses about what is realistic for the district, even when it's difficult. Transparent, straightforward communication is imperative. The communication piece is not easy, but I've worked on my skills regarding difficult conversations as a supervisor at DCF and Kansas Holistic Defenders, and as a state official testifying on behalf of DCF in front of sometimes-hostile legislative committees.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

- 1) School board members work most closely with the superintendent, who relies on high-level administrators to implement policies and ensure building-level staff are equipped to meet the district's day-to-day needs. As a school board member, I anticipate asking questions about how the district's policies and practices are advancing equity.
- 2) School board members should ensure staff members have the resources and support they need to educate children, and that the budget includes adequate pay and benefits for them to meet their basic needs, care for their families and plan for retirement.
- 3) For students, the school board's role is ensuring district-wide policies ensure each student's safety and inclusion, and that those policies are being enforced consistently.
- 4) School board members should be responsive to parents and should listen to the feedback they provide regarding budget priorities and district-level policies. Board members should avoid stepping into building-level disagreements between parents and teachers or principals.

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

It's a tie between the experienced and dedicated staff who spend their careers at USD 497 and the Lawrence community. I am so grateful for the amazing teachers and staff who work in this district and educate our children decade after decade.

Regarding the strengths of the community, we have parents and community members are committed to making the district the best possible resource for every child in Lawrence. Our open-minded community is not focused on banning books or demonizing public education; we value our teachers and want every student to learn to think for themselves. The district also successfully promotes belonging for students who may not feel supported in other districts, particularly those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

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

The greatest challenge is meeting the continuously changing needs of students, particularly coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students' needs – both academically and socially/ emotionally – are much greater than before COVID. A large part of responding to those changes is learning new ways to engage and collaborate with parents and community members.

District leadership and staff members will best serve students by being open to new ideas, possibly from unexpected sources. They will need to maintain a continuous improvement mindset, recognizing that there is always something new we can try to reach more students.

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

Retention should be the first focus; the district will not attract new staff if we're not retaining current staff. Board members can be more responsive teachers when they are telling us what they need. The district can provide multiple opportunities for teachers and staff to share their feedback, through a variety of paths (consider anonymous surveys, focus groups, etc.)

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

Generally, no. The board should not get involved in individual disputes between parents and teachers/administrators; the board should be focused on district-wide, high-level oversight of policies and budgeting.

What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

As the board focuses on approving and monitoring the district's budget, it should ensure the superintendent and district leadership have demonstrated that the budget aligns with the district's other priorities, most importantly attracting and retaining the best teachers and providing equitable opportunities for all students.

Board members should plan to spend time advocating for increases for education funding at the state level, and coordinating with other school board members across the state, to ensure public education advocates across the state are making the strongest case for education funding to key legislators.

The board of education should also ensure district staff and partners are well-positioned to access additional funding, including grants and private donations, to bring in federal and foundation funds to expand programs and resources for educating Lawrence students. It may also be worth investigating additional options for Medicaid reimbursement of services provided by school staff.

One more focus should be investing where the return is highest, such as early childhood education; every dollar we invest in pre-K will lead to students who are better able to learn during their elementary and middle school years. Likewise, investing in school nutrition programs – such the Summer Food Service Program and the Community Eligibility Provision – brings returns of students who are able to access adequate nutrition and better able to learn and reduces unpaid meal balances which the district might otherwise have to cover with general funds.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

Neither I nor any member of my family has a business contract with USD 497. No one in my family is employed by USD 497.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and \*  
at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address.

Lawrence Public Schools references:

Julie Henry, Julie.henry@usd497.org, 785-832-5000 – ext. 2191

Tabitha Pestock, Tabitha.pestock@usd497.org, 913-231-9921

Community and professional references:

Ashley All, ashleyanstaettall@gmail.com, 785-766-0382

Dr. Ashley Bloom, ashleyebloom@gmail.com, 785-550-5870

Heather Hall, hah4170@gmail.com, 785-691-7603

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**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 13, 2023.**

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

The Lawrence Board of Education seeks applicants to fill a vacancy on the board. Applicants must complete the full application and submit it to the Board Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on June 13, 2023.

The board will review applications during a specially called board meeting on June 20, 2023, and select candidates to interview at its regular meeting on June 26, 2023. At the June 26, 2023, meeting the board will interview the selected candidates and choose one applicant to appoint to serve the remainder of this term, through January 12, 2026.

Be advised that all applications become public records when the applications are shared with the Board of Education, meaning they are accessible to the media and the general public.

For more information about serving on the Lawrence Board of Education, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#). *(Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

miltons123@aol.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 12 / 2023

Full Name \*

Milton Scott

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

3700 Trail Road

Cell/Home Phone \*

785.550.3700

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

41 years

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

- Chair, Lawrence Free State High School Site Council 2005 – 2006
  - Vice-Chair, Lawrence Free State High School Site Council 2004 – 2005
  - Vice-Chair, West Jr. High School Site Council
  - Chair, Sunset Hill Elementary School Site Council
  - Vice-Chair, Sunset Hill Elementary School Site Council
  - Homeroom parent – Sunset Hill Elementary School 6th Grade (Anne Barbee class)
- 

List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

- Chair, Trustees' Ministry, Ninth Street Missionary Baptist Church 2012 - 2019 and 1997 - 2000
  - Chair, Douglas County Community Corrections Advisory Board 2012 – 2016, and Co-Chair 1992 -1993
  - President, League of Women Voters Lawrence-Douglas County 2001 -2002; 2000 – 2001 and 1996 - 1997
  - Member, Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence Board of Directors, 2009 – 2013
  - Member, 7th District Judicial Nominating Commission 2004 – 2007
  - Member, University of Kansas Commission on the Status of Women 1986
  - Member, University of Kansas Women's Recognition Committee 1986
-

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

I feel that I offer diverse skills from both personal and professional experience that will allow me to be highly effective as a school board member. As a parent who had a child that needed an IEP, while attending schools in USD 497, I am familiar with this educational support system. In my professional career, I have worked with many children and families in both the foster care system and Section 8 and public housing programs who felt left out or not important to the point that they were disengaged in their education. I believe serving on the school board is a means to use my experience to give back and stay engaged in our community.

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

My life and professional experience will permit me to bring a diverse perspective to the School Board. I have highly varied life experiences, from growing up in public housing in a community of very high poverty rates, to obtaining my Master of Science, Higher Education, at The University of Kansas - Emphasis in Educational Policy and Leadership and becoming a professional administrator and member of the American middle class in my adopted home of Lawrence. I have spent most of my professional career in affordable housing. As a single father whose children attended Sunset Hill Elementary, West Jr. High and Free State High schools, I have personally encountered a wide range of family and child-related issues. As well, I have been involved in a variety of local organizations.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

As a long-time Director at the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority and later Executive Director/CEO of the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority, I can bring a perspective to board discussion that encompasses my professional and personal approach of “collaboration, cooperation, compassion”.

Working with Administrators – The Board must provide the vision, goals, and policy and to challenge administration to look at ways to take the district to the next level of excellence.

Working with Staff -The Board needs to seek opportunities to listen, advocate, support, encourage and recognize educational staff.

Working with Students – The Board should seek opportunities to advocate, support, recognize, and encourage inclusion.

Working with Parents – The Board should listen, engage, partner with, and be responsive to parents.

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

USD 497 has a strong educational environment that fosters diverse opportunities. Also, USD 497 has a rich history of working with its community partners.

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

1. Teacher and staff recruitment and retention.
2. Families and students that feel disengaged with the educational system – both socially and economically.
3. School safety and security.
4. Mental Health issues of staff, students and parents.

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

Increase compensation. Explore ideas of alternative revenue generation to support bonuses and/or longevity pay.

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

An effective Board should delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Superintendent. In addition, the Board should always strive to have good and positive working relations with the Superintendent.

What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

An effective Board recognizes its role to approve and monitor the budget. With that being said, the Board should be well informed, engaged, and prepared to ensure that it meets community's educational priorities and vision.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

No

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address. \*

Marci Francisco	785.842.6402
Pastor Eric Galbreath	334.538.7975
Cathy White	785.841.5128

**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 13, 2023.**

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

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For more information about serving on the Lawrence Board of Education, please review the board's [Governance and Operating Procedures](#). *(Please limit each response to 300 words.)*

Email \*

rachelisathomas22@gmail.com

Date of Application \*

MM DD YYYY

06 / 13 / 2023

Full Name \*

Rachel I. Thomas

Address, City, State, and Zip Code \*

2417 MCKINLEY CT, Lawrence, 66047

Cell/Home Phone \*

913-683-1194

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

10 years

List Lawrence Public Schools activities in which you have participated, including offices held. \*

Former employee, 2018-2020

District site council member, 2019-2020;

Lawrence Public Schools Staff of Color, 2018-2020;

helped with two Lawrence Schools Foundations Breakfasts and volunteered on behalf of LSF at Taste of Lawrence.

List any other civic activities in which you have participated, including any offices held. \*

-Member of the Lawrence Latinx Youth Council, now the scholarship committee in Somos Lawrence; 2019-now. Have attended the last two years of high school scholarship awards ceremonies on behalf of our committee, and provided mentorship to college-bound Latinx students, select and provide a scholarship for college-bound students, advocate for Latinx students in the curriculum and in the state.

-KU Mentor, 2019-now. Provide professional mentorship and informational interviews to students at KU.

-Junior Achievement Teacher, 2018-2020. Taught the Junior Achievement Curriculum to first and second graders at Cordley and Broken Arrow Elementary Schools.

-Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lawrence, 2019-2020. Big sister for a year to an elementary student.

-University of Kansas Memorial Union Corporation Board Member, 2015-2017. Attended quarterly board meetings for the Union and helped manage the Unions budget, programming, policy and advising on Unions staffing.

-TEDxYouth Kansas City volunteer, 2015-2016. Programming and communications support for a TED Talk event in Kansas City dedicated to empowering youth in the area.

-Just Foods volunteer, 2013-2014. Provided communication support to Just Foods.

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

I believe in creating conditions for an empowering learning environment. I've worked in education on a local, state, and now national scale and deeply believe in equitable experiences for all students, regardless of background or ability. Simply, I'd like to do all I can to help students. I understand current national trends in education such as the push for high-quality instructional materials and the need to expand professional learning for educators as well as statewide and national political concerns for K-12 education. My professional career included two years at the Kansas Association of School Boards where I consistently worked with school and district staff and school board members. I learned the basics of board governance and statewide advocacy, and have experience with board policy and other school board and administrative practices.

Additionally, I believe I have a perspective that is currently missing from the school board. Hispanic or Latinx students is the highest marginalized population in the school district. Currently, there is no one who identifies as a member of that group on the school board and I think it's always wise, when possible, to have governing bodies that reflect the communities they serve.

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

The most important qualities for a successful school board member are patience, a collaborative spirit, and thoughtfulness. I work with school leaders every day, and consistently have to collaborate with different people towards what's best for students. My approach to collaboration is through thoughtfulness and active listening; I hear all perspectives, seek missing perspectives and take the time to consider the implications of my choices. As we all know, change in education can take time. I frequently approach my colleagues and fellow community members with positive patience, encouraging those around me to understand the small steps that are being taken toward change.

Describe your understanding of the role of a school board member with respect to working with 1) administrators, 2) staff, 3) students, and 4) parents. \*

Student success is the center of the work and should be at the forefront of a school board member's mind when making decisions and giving input. In addition to giving the most consideration to students when making decisions, a school board member should support and celebrate student achievement through advocating for students during the legislative session, celebrating students at board meetings and attending performances and milestone events, and empowering students to voice their thoughts.

In addition to empowering student voice, a school board member works to empower staff members to share their voices in school board meetings, committees, forums, and other feedback avenues. Since school board members often make decisions that impact staff members, a school board member listens and seeks input from staff.

Parents are a key component of student success. I know parents often reach out to school board members about various topics. A school board members can thoughtfully listen and help way-find if a parent should reach out to different school and district members to assist in their comment or concern. I believe school board members should hear parents' input and encourage them to participate in committees, board meetings, and other spaces.

A school board member and both district and school administrators work collaboratively on board committees and during school board meetings/functions. Administrators provide context to school board members to help them make budgetary, policy, and districtwide strategy decisions. School board members listen and ask questions to administrators and can provide feedback.

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

The diversity of the students and community! We have so many students from different backgrounds and perspectives in addition to the chance to learn from many different people and organizations across the community. There are many opportunities to learn about different cultures, work and disciplines, abilities, backgrounds and more. Lawrence is willing to help students and support schools.

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

Retaining and recruiting high-quality staff in tandem with the district's budget. The district has had to make cuts to the budget in the last five years to be fiscally sound and prioritize staff raises, with tremendously difficult cuts these last two years. While most of the budgetary cuts have been in service of trying to pay staff more, it has resulted in closing schools and cutting staff and staff support. The willingness to make sure there are funds available to retain staff through pay is there and it needs to continue. I think it's been a challenge for the district to consistently look at the impact of budget cuts on staff workload.

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

Per the Kansas Teacher Retention Initiative results for the last two years, the focus should be on paying staff more, strengthening our principals and school administrators, and ensuring quality professional development for our staff. As a board member, I would advise district administrators on the strategic vision and direction of our professional development, work with fellow board members and the policy committee to ensure districtwide policies support the growth and satisfaction of our staff, and commit to the continuation of budget-smart initiatives and decisions so staff can experience salary growth often.

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

No, I don't think a school board member should have a direct role in the day-to-day operations of the schools. A school board member advises the mission and vision of the district, oversees policy, and hires/fires the superintendent. I believe in providing feedback and would strive to be a trusted sounding board when needed. Also, I would seek input from our staff, students, and school communities when making decisions so that when I vote or discuss the high-level strategic vision of the district. So, I believe that a school board member's decisions can impact the day-to-day operations, but not that a school board member directs administrators or school staff involved in the day-to-day operations.

What should the board of education's work be in setting of school district budget priorities? \*

The school board should work alongside the Finance Officer, Superintendent, and other committees that advise the board on budget priorities such as the budget and program evaluation committee to maintain fiscal health and make district budget priorities that support the student experience and staff recruitment and retention. The board should listen to input from students, staff, parents and community members through the district's feedback methods when making budget priorities. Since the budget is one of the biggest responsibilities of the school board, I would seek to be informed of budgetary implications and advantages for our students and staff if I were a board member.

Do you or any members of your family have business contracts with USD 497? Are you or any members of your family employed by USD 497? \*

No.

Provide at least one Lawrence Public Schools reference (e.g., teacher, principal, PTA/PTO or site council officer, district staff) and \*  
at least two professional or community references, including telephone number or email address.

Rosina Aguirre - raguirre@usd497.org; 785-764-5867

Austin Harris - austin.l.harris1995@gmail.com; 913-634-3869.

Ceri Goulter - ceridwenization@gmail.com; 785-979-6092.

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**Application must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 13, 2023.**

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

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