



## USD 497 News Release

Julie Boyle, Executive Director of Communications  
110 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044  
785-330-1662 / [jboyle@usd497.org](mailto:jboyle@usd497.org)

**November 11, 2024**

### **Board Will Work with Same State Association Involved with Summer Interim Search**

The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday interviewed two finalists interested in assisting with its search for a long-term superintendent - a national executive search firm, McPherson and Jacobson; and the Kansas Association of School Boards. It chose to work with KASB, the same organization that assisted the board with its interim superintendent search last summer.

The board voted to hire KASB at a cost not to exceed \$11,500. McPherson and Jacobson's quote for a similar five-phase search process was \$29,525. The board's vote was 6-0. Past President Shannon Kimball left the room during the interviews and discussion and did not vote. Kimball recused herself due to a personal conflict of interest; she serves as a KASB governmental relations specialist.

Board members said that KASB's existing relationship with the board, strong knowledge of our district and state, and lower cost tipped the scales in its favor. "We will be lower than anyone else you talk to, partly because we are a member service," said Dr. Britton Hart, KASB leadership lead. The board approved in March its annual renewal of its KASB membership and a season pass at a total cost of \$16,640.34.

Board members said that they also preferred KASB's description of its community engagement process. "It was more hands-on," said Bob Byers.

"If we ask people's opinion, we want them to see that we used it," said Hart, who added, "We want to see you thrive and be successful."

Board President Kelly Jones, who led the interim search for the board, said, "We had a very positive experience with (KASB) this summer."

Vice President GR Gordon-Ross agreed. "KASB served invaluable during the interim superintendent search and brought in candidates from outside of Kansas, proving that they have that reach," he said.

The board interviewed three finalists as part of its interim superintendent search – an internal candidate and two external candidates from Des Moines, Iowa, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. It unanimously hired Swift, a 36-year educator and educational leadership consultant, who formerly served as superintendent of the Ann Arbor public schools for over a decade. Swift is currently serving a one-year contract, effective August 30, 2024-June 30, 2025. Jones has publicly invited Swift to apply for the long-term position.

**MORE**

## **Page 2 – November 11, Board Meeting**

KASB said that it has contacts in all regions of the state as well as with school board associations in other states that would assist with the search. The two-person team that will work directly with our board, though, will consist of Hart and Dr. Michelle Hubbard, KASB leadership field specialist. Hart has been involved with public education for 25 years, including as a high school principal in Emporia. Hubbard could not attend the meeting because she was receiving the Kansas Superintendent of the Year Award in Washington, D.C. She was appointed superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District in 2021 after serving five years as its deputy and associate superintendent.

McPherson and Jacobson introduced a team of three interested in working directly with the board. Two joined the meeting online – Dr. Steve Joel, a former Lincoln, Nebraska schools superintendent, who has 41 years in education, including 37 as a superintendent; and Dr. Debra White, a retired Georgia Department of Education district effectiveness specialist and former assistant superintendent in Atlanta with 30 years of experience in education.

The third member of the team, Dr. Tom Trigg, attended the meeting. He is the former superintendent of the Blue Valley Public Schools located just east of Lawrence in Johnson County. Trigg's 49 years in education include most recently leading Highland Park ISD in Texas.

"We very, very much want to work with you," said Trigg. "I would be excited to find the very best superintendent for the kids in Lawrence."

Trigg touted Lawrence Public Schools' national reputation and a series of fine superintendents as top reasons candidates would want to come to Lawrence, as well as the attractiveness of a college town and what it offers candidates and their families.

The board worked with McPherson and Jacobson on its 2016 Superintendent Search.

When asked about our district's top three "selling points," Hart cited our focus on equity and strategic plan's focus on learning, kids, and safety; our district's uniqueness in Kansas as a two-high school town, and being a district that thrives on innovation and success.

The board's goal is to name a superintendent in March to begin their service July 1, 2025.

###