



Tuesday, September 30: Message to LHS School Community

Hello Lawrence High School Staff and Community,

As you know, Lawrence High School experienced a small fire, which was contained within the confines of the Girls Locker Room, at approximately 11:15 on Monday morning, September 30. The purpose of this communication is to follow-up with our LHS community to share additional information and next steps.

Review of Incident

Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical (LDCFM) responded to the school's fire alarm and discovered moderate smoke from a fire that had already been extinguished by the sprinkler system prior to their arrival. LDCFM Fire Investigation unit conducted an origin and cause investigation and determined the fire originated at a paper towel dispenser that extended to a combustible trash receptacle below. Lawrence Police Department officers assisted fire investigators leading to the arrest of two LHS students. While we cannot share details about individual students' involvement, we want our community to know that both law enforcement and the district take these matters very seriously, and in addition to appropriate criminal processes, we will be implementing disciplinary consequences in line with our policies.

Students, teachers, support staff, and administrators did a phenomenal job yesterday of following emergency protocols, evacuating the building very quickly, reorganizing lunches and the afternoon schedule, and attending to the details of the emergency process to keep all our students safe. Thanks to the LHS team's efforts, our students remained safe and supported throughout this situation.

Improving Our Work to Communicate

We are always working to improve our emergency processes at schools, including refining communication with parents; our aim is always to reduce concerns or confusion. We understand that during a crisis situation, families may be receiving real time text messages from their students, or seeing unverified reports on social media, even before school officials are able to validate and distribute factual information. Know that our first priority will always be safety, and during a crisis, we are working to communicate directly with school staff to ensure our information to parents follows swiftly and accurately.

This morning, an after action meeting was convened with the building administrative team, superintendent, and designated district administrators. We are sharing highlights of the opportunities for improvement, as well as celebrations.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- More timely communication to families that the building was evacuated, explanation for the cause for disruption to the school day, and updates as additional information is verified and available.
- In the case that the pace of activity in the building is too brisk for school personnel to be able to send updates, we will ensure communication is provided at the district level.
- During these situations, we will ensure that ParentSquare is set to issue **alerts** (instead of posts), **instantly distributing to recipients, regardless of personalized notification settings**
- ParentSquare is the communications distribution platform that sends district and school messages. Please note: **this platform defaults to parent/guardian email transmission for those who are not actively using the ParentSquare mobile app). Parents are not required to have the ParentSquare app or 'opt in' to receive school communication.**
- We will continue conversations with the Building Leadership Team, PTO, students, and staff on emergency management protocols and school communications, and district responsiveness to feedback from all families and staff members.

Celebrations:

- No student or staff injuries reported.
- Quick reporting of the fire by students to staff resulted in an immediate implementation of safety and evacuation protocols; all students were evacuated within approximately 4 minutes.
- Students remained calm throughout the situation.
- Timely and effective response by Lawrence Fire Department and USD 497 Facilities & Operations team.
- Outdoor supervision of more than 1,400 students for an extended period of time until LDCFM deemed the building safe for re-entry (*note: the Girls Locker Room remains closed*).
- Lunch service provided for students and schedule modifications made to continue learning until dismissal.
- Accommodations provided for students and staff members that required medication, and/or excused check-outs per parent/guardian request.

Lawrence Public Schools remains committed to prioritizing the safety of our students and staff and is using yesterday's event and response as an opportunity to seek and implement improvements of our school-to-home communications with all our families. We thank our parents and community for their understanding and continued partnership as we work together to ensure the well-being of all students.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools

Sincerely,



Dr. Quentin Rials
Principal
Lawrence High School