



USD 497 NEWS

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Superintendent of Schools Plans Retirement

Lawrence Board of Education President Craig Grant announced Thursday that Superintendent of Schools Randy Weseman plans to retire at the end of the current school year, effective June 30, 2009. This is Weseman's ninth year as superintendent and his 33rd year with the Lawrence Public Schools, where he has served as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, curriculum director, assistant superintendent and since 2000, superintendent.

"We've been fortunate in the Lawrence Public Schools to benefit from the leadership of an administrator with a tremendous personal investment in this district. Randy Weseman got his start here, as a student teacher," said Grant. "This has been more than a job for Randy. He wasn't here to get his feet wet or to build his resume; he felt a calling to be here."

"It won't be an easy position to fill. This community shouldn't underestimate the degree of difficulty involved in leading one of the largest school districts in the state," Grant said. "I know that this school board is committed to doing our best to cast a wide net and find the best possible candidate for Lawrence."

Grant said that the school board will discuss launching a national search for Weseman's replacement when it meets in September.

Weseman joined the district in 1976 as a high school history, economics and government teacher. He taught social studies and coached football, basketball and track at Central Junior High from 1979-84 before joining the administrative ranks as an assistant principal at West Junior High. In 1990, Weseman became principal of South Junior High, and then joined the district administration in 1994 as division director of curriculum.

As an assistant superintendent, Weseman had oversight of educational programming (1995-99) and evaluation and planning (1999-2000) functions for the school district. The Lawrence Board of Education appointed him interim superintendent on July 1, 2000, upon the resignation of Kathleen Williams, who accepted a position in a Chicago suburb after two years at the helm in Lawrence. The Board voted to give Weseman the top job on October 23, 2000.

Weseman is the fifth superintendent to preside over consolidated Unified School District 497. Carl Knox served from 1962-84, followed by Dan Neuenswander (1984-1992), Al Azinger (1992-98) and Williams (1998-2000).

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Grant said that the Lawrence school district has earned national recognition for quality and celebrated many accomplishments during Weseman's eight years as superintendent. Grant mentions among the highlights:

- Completion of a comprehensive facilities study.
- Community support for a \$63 million school bond issue to improve facilities and technology in 2005 and a Local Option Budget election last spring.
- Opening Langston Hughes Elementary School (2000-01), construction of a new South Junior High School (2007-08), and creation of the Lawrence Virtual School (2003-04).
- Enhancement of curriculum through the use of technology, including a comprehensive Technology Plan for improved computer access and technology infrastructure.
- Focus on "Learning for All," including the development of pyramids of interventions for students requiring additional academic support.
- Expansion of district assessment program, through Measures of Academic Progress, to provide administrators, teachers, students and parents meaningful data about each student's personal academic growth.
- Development of a standards-based elementary report card to provide parents better information about their students' progress.
- Reduction of elementary class sizes.
- Implementation of eight full-day kindergarten programs.
- Expansion of English as a Second Language Services from three to six schools.
- Consolidation of early childhood education services at East Heights Family Center (2004-05).
- Enhancement of district safety and security measures, including implementation of a \$9 million Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant supporting security equipment purchases and expansion of after-school, extended-learning programs; mental health services and the school resource officer program.
- Improvement of administrator, teacher and support staff salaries and benefits.
- Development of mentoring support and instructional coaching professional development programs for new and experienced teachers.
- Reorganization of district administrative structure to improve effectiveness and gain efficiencies in the delivery of support services to schools and the public.
- Implementation of a districtwide health and wellness program.
- Development of a comprehensive energy management program, which has realized more than \$2 million in energy savings.
- Current plans to address quality, safety and equity through improved high school outdoor athletic facilities.

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A native of Dighton, Kansas, Weseman served in the United States Air Force and completed two tours of duty in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Kansas. He has two grown children: a son, Joel, who lives and works in New York City, and a daughter Leah, a first-grade teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School in Lawrence. He has three grandsons.

“I’ve always said that I would begin and end my career in public education in the Lawrence Public Schools,” said Weseman. “There is no better place to be.”

“We have an excellent team of professionals doing what they know in their hearts is best for kids,” Weseman said. “Our teachers and staff are simply the best.”

Weseman is an active public servant in the Lawrence community and has served on numerous boards, including The Shelter, Lawrence Sister Cities Advisory Board, Juvenile Justice Reform Planning Team, Horizon 2020, Leadership Lawrence, Friends of Hiratsuka (Japanese Sister City), Lawrence Education Achievement Partnership and Junior Achievement.

In addition, he is, or has previously served as, a member of the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Lawrence Economic Development Board, Salvation Army Advisory Board, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, United School Administrators, Phi Delta Kappa, Kansas Association of School Business Officials, Kansas University National Advisory Board, United School Administrators Board, and the KU Advisory Committee on Human Experimentation.

The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning presented its Gordon R. Alley Partnership Award to Weseman in 1999. He was selected as a German Fulbright Fellow for the 1998 Superintendent’s Fulbright Program and also received the Kansas Library Association’s Distinguished Service Award that year. He was the Lawrence Public Schools’ Educator of the Year in 1993 and was named a Japan/America Foundation MAJIS Fellow in 1990. In 1981, Weseman earned the Kansas Economic Education Grand Award from the Kansas Bankers Association.

“I’m committed to moving forward and making my last year with Lawrence Public Schools my best year with Lawrence Public Schools,” said Weseman. “I also will assist the school board in any way that I can in the coming months to effect a smooth transition in leadership.”

Lawrence Public Schools serve approximately 10,800 students in 15 elementary schools (K-6), four junior highs (7-9), two high schools (10-12), the Lawrence Virtual School and the East Heights Early Childhood Family Center. The district, which is the seventh largest in Kansas, also offers adult education services. The city’s second-largest employer next to the University of Kansas, Lawrence Public Schools employ approximately 1,750 teachers and educational support staff. The district received a Five-Star ranking and listing among the “Top Ten Best Small Metro School Districts in the U.S.” by *Expansion Management* magazine (December 2007).

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