

East Lawrence Neighborhood Association

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February 28, 2023

Dr. Anthony Lewis
Superintendent, Lawrence Public Schools USD 497, via e-mail

Dear Dr. Lewis,

As Superintendent, it is your job to look at our school system as a whole, to see that it is serving all students across the district. As a neighborhood association, it is our job to see that the School District serves the students and families in our neighborhood. For us, that has meant zealous advocacy for the attendance centers in our neighborhood to remain viable, to remain open, and for them to provide high quality educational services to our young people.

We appreciate that through vision and innovation, your goals and ours are being met at East Lawrence's two flagship schools, New York Elementary and Liberty Memorial Middle School. In an emerging environment where "school choice" is being promoted by Kansas lawmakers, New York and Liberty Memorial can be the beacons which draw more families into Lawrence Public Schools, and the models for future innovations. The presence of these two centers of innovation will help East Lawrence and adjacent neighborhoods to remain attractive to families interested in quality educational opportunities.

We are pleased that the School Board approved the Montessori transition at New York, which is now well underway. We are also pleased that the School Board has signaled support for the repurposing of Liberty Memorial as a middle school with a magnet theme or themes. The Board provided the gift of time to make sure that all of the details are well considered and congruent with community values.

As the planning process moves forward for Liberty Memorial, we hope that residents of adjacent neighborhoods, particularly parents and students, will have a seat at the table. We hope that serious consideration will be given to magnet themes which are compatible with the Montessori education being provided at New York, so that students can seamlessly matriculate from New York to Liberty Memorial, just as they have done for generations. This would work best if Liberty Memorial remained a three grade-level school. We look forward to productive ongoing discussions.

Sincerely,

Barry M. Shalinsky
President, on behalf of the ELNA Board

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Copies:
USD 497 Board Members

Dr. Anne Hawks, Principal