

Thank you for your service: Pamela Lewis – an innovative leader and chief cheerleader

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Innovation flourishes under leadership that is both strategic and deeply human. Pamela Lewis, Associate Superintendent of Leadership and Learning for the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD), exemplifies this balance with uncommon clarity. A systems-minded leader with a deep commitment to people, Pamela advances bold ideas while cultivating the relationships that allow those ideas to take root and endure.

Complimentary to her work is an intentional and evolving partnership between SMSD and the K-State College of Education – one that functions not merely as collaboration, but as a true educator pipeline. From recruitment to preparation to early-career support, Pamela has helped align collaborative efforts as a PDS partner leader to create a fertile environment for innovation, shared learning and sustained research in the years ahead.

Nowhere is this more evident than in her contributions to reimagining recruitment pathways. Relying on the K-State College of Education as a pilot, Pamela fostered authentic connections by inviting SMSD educators who were former K-State students – affectionately known as *EdCats* – to return and engage with current teacher candidates. These exchanges reframed recruitment as a narrative of belonging and professional possibility. Pamela further strengthened this pathway by visiting college classrooms to demystify the interview process, replacing uncertainty with clarity and confidence. Importantly, she offered practice interviews to *EdCats* regardless of their interest in SMSD, underscoring her belief that strong preparation benefits the profession as a whole.

Pamela's collaborative intentionality has also influenced student teaching and clinical experiences through a research-informed lens. In partnership with the College of Education's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, she helped develop a forward-thinking Innovative Professional Development School (iPDS) observation protocol. By intentionally including assistant principals, cooperating teachers and instructional coaches, the model ensures richer feedback, stronger collaboration and more comprehensive support for teacher candidates. The protocol's significance has been amplified through presentations at NASUP and publication in NASUP's professional journal, positioning the SMSD–K-State partnership as a model for the field.

Equally important is Pamela's commitment to visibility and professional affirmation. By amplifying *EdCats*' classroom experiences through district and social media channels, she strengthens institutional partnerships while celebrating emerging educators. Her strategic placement of elementary education teacher candidates at Apache Innovative School further reflects this commitment, offering candidates an immersive experience in a setting that models innovation, inquiry and future-focused practice.

At the systems level, Pamela serves on the Johnson County Advisory Team to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, where she provides thoughtful, actionable feedback on the performance of K-State College of Education graduates. Her insights directly inform program refinement and candidate competencies, reinforcing a continuous feedback loop that supports both district needs and university preparation. This work ensures the pipeline between SMSD and K-State remains dynamic, responsive and grounded in evidence.

And yet, for all of her strategic leadership, Pamela remains equally known for something less quantifiable but no less powerful: joy. She is the leader who shows up – sometimes with pom-poms in hand and SMSD high school drumlines behind her – to lead clap-outs for first-year teachers after their first week of professional development. Picture teachers from across



the district with posters and mascots, lining the sidewalk as new teachers exit their onboarding to welcoming posters, mascots and cheers. These moments, embraced across the district, send a message that resonates far beyond the applause: You are valued. You belong. Your work matters.

Through innovation, advocacy and an unwavering belief in people, Pamela Lewis continues to shape systems, strengthen partnerships and elevate the profession. Her leadership offers a compelling reminder that the future of education is built not only through strategy and research, but through relationships – and through leaders willing to cheer loudly for those they serve.

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