



USD 497 2023 Legislative Priorities

Universal public education is the bedrock of our democracy and is a fundamental right that does and should provide for each child the opportunity to reach that child's potential. Lawrence Public Schools recognizes the importance of making and supporting significant shifts in mindset and practice to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students. Children, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and/or other minoritized identities, should be able to access freely the resources and supports necessary to reach their fullest potential. Lawrence Public Schools is committed to continuous academic growth and high achievement for students of all races, backgrounds, and abilities so that students graduate on time prepared for success in college and careers.

To protect that fundamental right and achieve these goals, Lawrence Public Schools urges legislators to prioritize the following policies:

- Fully fund special education at the required 92% of excess cost. See K.S.A 72-3422
- Solve the teacher recruitment and retention crisis by increasing school district funding (specifically base state aid per pupil) to provide sufficient funds to allow districts to close the 25% educator pay gap and to pay competitive wages to support staff.
- Value the instructional expertise of educators and the governance expertise of district leaders by prioritizing and protecting local control. Reject calls to proscribe management and teaching practices and procedures in statute. Flexibility at the district level to respond to local circumstances and implement best practices based on those circumstances is essential to achieving the educational outcomes our educational leaders expect and our students and families deserve.

Read on below for further details on these priorities as well as other issues crucial to the success of all students in our schools.

Support of Equitable and Adequate Funding

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Requests that special education services be fully funded at the required 92% of excess cost.
- Advocates for stable, reliable, adequate, and equitable funding of the current school finance formula, as approved by the *Gannon* court, and encourages the legislature to adopt tax policy that will generate revenue sufficient to fully fund the school finance formula, including adjustments for inflation, for current and future generations of Kansas students.
- Supports increased funding for school- and community-based mental health services, including funding for additional school counselors, social workers, and psychologists to address the social and emotional needs of the entire student population.
- Supports expanding funding for universal preschool and before and after-school programs.
- Supports at-risk funding necessary to meet the diverse needs of students.



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Support for High-Quality Learning Opportunities

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Supports efforts of the State Board to revise high school graduation requirements to better reflect student preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, including more “real world” experience, while continuing to allow local flexibility and support for fine arts programs.
- Requests the legislature to provide adequate support to allow more personalized educational experiences for each student including Individual Plans of Study, Work-Based Learning, and Career and Technical Education.
- Supports access to affordable broadband service for all Kansas students, families, and schools.
- Supports efforts to expand access to postsecondary education in high school with clear expectations for Kansas Board of Regents schools to work collaboratively with local boards of education to increase post-secondary success.
- Urges the legislature to study state transportation aid to include students living less than 2.5 miles from their assigned school.

Support for Additional Student and Staff Social-Emotional Needs

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Advocates for increased support and community partnerships to meet the mental health needs of students and staff.
- Supports the improvement of collaboration across agencies and with the Legislature to support educational outcomes for the growing numbers of students in foster care and juvenile detention, and homeless.
- Supports local authority to administer nonacademic tests, questionnaires, surveys, and exams and prioritize student safety if a student is experiencing suicidal ideations.
- Supports the incorporation of the science of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) into federal, state, and local policies and programs.
- Urges the legislature to review and eliminate the use of Native American mascots, imagery, and names by educational institutions and sports teams, unless used by a tribal school or educational institution.

Support of Effective School Operations

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Supports having school board members elected in non-partisan elections held in the spring.



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- Supports the role of an independent judiciary in enforcing constitutional provisions and opposes either changing the selection process for judges or limiting the ability of the courts to enforce these provisions, which would weaken the separation of powers in Kansas.

Support of State and Local Boards' Constitutional Authority

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Supports the general supervision of public schools under the State Board of Education, including setting standards for accreditation, learning standards, graduation, and licensure.
- Supports continued management of public schools under local boards of education, including setting curriculum, staffing, financial management, and policies so that such schools can progress and meet State Board standards.
- Supports the district's development and implementation of system-wide equity and justice strategies.
- Believes that a district's curriculum should be established by the local board of education, not by state statute.
- Supports the continued implementation of the State Board of Education's Kansans Can vision, the KESA process, and the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.
- Supports maximizing local flexibility in using funds, including repeal or modification of the "65 percent for instruction" statutory goal that excludes services and activities that support student learning from inclusion as instructional expenses.

Support for Recruitment and Retention of Highly Qualified, Diverse Staff

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Urges the legislature to acknowledge that the educator recruitment and retention crisis is primarily attributable to staff pay and to the lack of respect and support for educators expressed by state and community leaders and parents.
- Supports an increase in base state aid per pupil to close the 25% educator pay gap and to pay competitive wages to support staff.
- Urges the legislature to support school districts in exploring new and innovative ways to recruit and address staff shortages, especially in difficult to fill areas such as special education, including the expansion of the Grow Your Own programs across the state, including incentives for GYO graduates who take positions at "hard-to-staff" schools. In addition, increase and fund pathways for individuals employed in school districts.
- Supports a long-term, sustained commitment to state funding for KPERS, including changes to make KPERS a more attractive retirement program to support recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff.
- Supports reinstating the previous working after retirement laws to allow KPERS retired staff to continue working without penalty.



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Support of Inclusion, Wellness, and Safety Policies

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Supports the encouragement of government policies and enactment of legislation that requires bias and equity analysis of policy decisions and legislation at all levels.
- Supports equal rights and equity of opportunity to all persons regardless of race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity. We support programs that celebrate diversity and honor the achievements of all Kansans.
- Supports Red Flag laws and firearm safety proposals such as closing the background check loophole. Schools cannot carry the burden of student safety on their own; community policies must address the presence of and access to deadly weapons within the community.
- Supports the following policies to improve student wellness and safety and to support the school district's work in these areas so that students are ready and able to access teaching and learning:
 - o State funding for vision, dental, and other school-based health screenings for students in Pre-K through 12.
 - o KanCare (Medicaid) expansion under the Affordable Care Act.
 - o Anti-vaping initiatives and raising the age for purchase and possession of tobacco and nicotine products to 21 (Tobacco 21 proposals).
 - o Returning the Communities that Care and other student surveys and health and safety screening tools to opt-out rather than opt-in so that the district can have more complete and accurate data to direct health, wellness, and student safety initiatives.