



Lawrence Public Schools - USD 497

2018 Legislative Priorities

Universal public education, a foundation of our democracy, is a fundamental right that does and should provide for each child the opportunity to reach his/her potential. Lawrence USD 497 is committed to policies that promote continuous academic growth for students of all races and backgrounds.

Kansas public education is governed by locally elected, non-partisan boards of education, citizens from varied backgrounds serving school districts without pay and with accountability to district voters. USD 497 supports this system of local control by school boards.

School Finance/Tax Reform

- Lawrence USD 497 advocates for full and fair funding of the school finance framework adopted in 2017 that meets the constitutional requirements of equity and adequacy, and tax policy based on a balanced and sustainable mix of sales, income, and property tax revenues.
- Lawrence USD 497 supports special education services and funding at the required 92% of excess cost and mitigate the wide variance in reimbursements.
- Lawrence USD 497 supports increased funding and increased access to behavioral health services.
- Lawrence USD 497 supports expanding funding for early learning programs to recognize and address academic and social needs as quickly as possible for all kids, particularly children at-risk.
- Lawrence USD 497 opposes amending Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution to alter or lessen the legislature's day to provide suitable funding to public schools.

Governance

- As the constitutional authority charged with the management of local schools, the school board is accountable to district patrons through the electoral process, and must be the final authority on local management decisions for expenditures, personnel, and programs.
- School districts and inter-locals should be authorized to provide virtual schools and programs meeting the same accountability requirements as traditional schools.

Elections

- School board members should be elected as part of non-partisan elections held in the spring.
- Lawrence USD 497 opposes legislation that limits qualified individuals from serving on local school boards. Existing conflict of interest policies suffice to ensure accountability.

Curriculum

- A district's curriculum should be established by the local board of education, not by state statute, as long as the district meets state accreditation requirements.
- Whenever costs are incurred by local school districts that can be attributed to actions of any agency acting under state authority, those costs should be reimbursed to the school district by the state. New curriculum and program requirements should not be imposed unless the change has received an independent cost study and additional funding is provided by the state.

Personnel

- Lawrence USD 497 supports evaluation of personnel as a local responsibility, focused on improving instruction and student achievement and based on multiple measures of performance.

Standards and Accountability

- Lawrence USD 497 supports the implementation of the State board of Education’s Kansans Can vision, and the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, with continued emphasis on career and technical education, an outcomes-based accreditation system for Kansas school districts, and meaningful support for districts not meeting accreditation standards.
- High school graduation proficiencies should be established by local boards of education. The establishment of “proficiency” standards by the State Board should be guidelines not requirements.

KPERS

- Lawrence USD 497 supports a long-term, sustained commitment to state funding for KPERS.
- Lawrence USD 497 opposes making KPERS a non-contributory system. The Legislature should consider changes in the KPERS system to reduce the need for state general fund support, providing that benefits remain appropriate to attract and retain qualified employees.
- Lawrence USD 497 supports reinstating the previous working after retirement laws to allow KPERS retired staff to continue working without penalty.

Independent Judiciary

- Lawrence USD 497 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.

Student Data

- Lawrence USD 497 supports revising the Student Data Privacy Act to allow districts to administer surveys such as the Youth Behavior Risk Survey to assess health and wellbeing and to monitor student perceptions of safety in schools.