



# Lawrence Public Schools USD 497

## 2019 Legislative Priorities

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

### **The Kansas Constitution and our state's election laws must support effective school operations.**

- Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution should not be amended to alter or lessen the legislature's constitutional duty to provide suitable funding to public schools.
- School board members should be elected as part of non-partisan elections held in the spring.
- USD 497 supports the role of an independent judiciary in enforcing constitutional provisions and opposes 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.

### **Kansas tax policy and the school finance formula must work to together to fully support an equitable and adequate system of financial support for public education.**

- Provide stable, reliable, adequate, and equitable funding of the current school finance formula, and adopt inflationary adjustments to that formula at the beginning of this year's legislative session so that budget decisions for FY 2019-20 can be made well before the start of the fiscal year on July 1.
- Fully fund special education services at the required 92% of excess cost.
- Increase 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.
- Expand funding for universal preschool and before and after school programs.
- Commercial properties should be appraised at their highest and best use, considering the three proven methods of valuation – cost minus depreciation, sales comparison, and income.

### **The Kansas Legislature should protect and maintain the spheres of authority designated to the State Board of Education and locally elected school boards as set forth in the Kansas Constitution**

- A district's curriculum should be established by the local board of education, not by state statute.
- USD 497 supports the continued implementation of the State Board of Education's Kansas Can vision, the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation process, and the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.
- Maximize local flexibility in the use of funds, including the 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.

### **The Kansas Legislature should support recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers and educational support staff in all our schools**

- State funding should enable competitive compensation critical to recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and building respect for the teaching profession.
- USD 497 supports a long-term, sustained commitment to state funding for KPERS, and opposes making KPERS a non-contributory system.
- Reinstate the previous working after retirement laws to allow KPERS retired staff to continue working without penalty.