



2020 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 USD 497 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.

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

Lawrence USD 497:

- Opposes amending Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution to alter or lessen the legislature's constitutional duty to provide suitable funding to public schools.
- Supports having school board members elected in non-partisan elections held in the spring.
- 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.

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.

Lawrence USD 497:

- Advocates for stable, reliable, adequate, and equitable funding of the current school finance formula, and encourages the legislature to adopt tax policy that will generate revenue sufficient to fully fund the school finance formula for current and future generations of Kansas students.
- Requests that special education services be fully funded at the required 92% of excess cost.
- 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.

The 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.

Lawrence USD 497:

- 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 Kansas Can vision, the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation 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.

The legislature should support recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers and support staff in all our schools.

Lawrence USD 497:

- Supports a long-term, sustained commitment to state funding for KPERS, and opposes making KPERS a non-contributory system.
- Supports reinstating the previous working after retirement laws to allow KPERS retired staff to continue working without penalty.

The legislature should prioritize policies that support student wellness and safety.

Lawrence USD 497 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:

- Anti-vaping initiatives, inclusion of and funding for scoliosis screenings, as well as dental, hearing, and vision screenings for students pre-K through 12.
- Raising the age for purchase and possession of tobacco and nicotine products to 21 (Tobacco 21 proposals).
- Returning the Communities that Care survey 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.
- 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.