



## USD 497 2022 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 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.*

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

Lawrence Public Schools:

- 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 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.
- Supports at-risk funding necessary to meet the diverse needs of students.

### **Support for High-Quality Learning Opportunities**

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Supports recovery from the COVID pandemic by securing federal funding to address unfinished learning and other student and staff needs.
- Supports efforts of the State Board to consider revising high school graduation requirements to better reflect student preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, including more “real world” experience.
- 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.



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### **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 or homeless.
- 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.

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

Lawrence 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.

### **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 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.
- 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.



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### **The legislature should support recruitment and retention of highly qualified diverse teachers, administrators, and support staff**

Lawrence Public Schools:

- Urges the legislature to support school districts in exploring new and innovative ways to recruit and address staff shortages 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.

### **The legislature should prioritize policies that support student inclusion, wellness, and safety**

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 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:
  - State funding for vision, dental, and other school-based health screenings for students in Pre-K through 12.
  - KanCare (Medicaid) expansion under the Affordable Care Act.
  - Anti-vaping initiatives and 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.