



2022 SMSD LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND PLATFORM

SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2022

During the 2019 school year, the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) created a strategic plan to guide the district's work for the next five years. This plan will ensure that each student has a personalized learning plan that will prepare them for college and careers, with the interpersonal skills they need for life success. The district will advocate for legislative policies that support our students, employees, and district, as part of our efforts to achieve these objectives. We recognize, however, that the school district boundaries are not the limits of our support. The Shawnee Mission School District joins other districts across the state in supporting constitutionally suitable funding of public education that meets the needs of our students, our community, our economy, and our state.

COVID-19, Health, Safety and Social and Emotional Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create challenges across our state, and school districts have felt some of the most severe impacts. Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, local boards of education have worked hard to balance the health and well-being of students, staff, and community members, with the need to continue to educate all students well. This crisis has highlighted the diverse character of our state, as local boards have responded to varying levels of illness in their communities, a range of willingness to implement and sustain public health measures to mitigate the spread of the virus, and the expressed wishes of various members of the local community.

As the state continues the recovery process from the pandemic (including the dispensing of vaccines and other public health measures), it will be critically important for the Legislature to:

- Maintain the authority of local boards of education to make decisions around the health and well-being of students and staff, in collaboration with local and state public health authorities;
- Provide financial aid to districts to cover on-going health-related costs (Personal Protective Equipment, childcare, vaccines, air quality, additional nursing support, testing, etc.), along with support for additional state-wide public health capacity;



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Preserve funding for districts impacted by a temporary drop in student count (including maintaining comparable funding levels for students participating in-person and virtually without burdensome restrictions.)
- Ensure that educators remain a high priority for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Social-emotional growth continues to be a priority for communities and citizens across the state of Kansas, and is one of five measured outcomes in the Kansans Can Vision for Education. The objectives of the SMSD Strategic Plan emphasize the need for students to develop personal resilience and the interpersonal skills to become engaged, empathetic members of the local and global community.

SMSD supports policies and funding that support the social-emotional growth of students, along with their physical well-being, and will advocate to:

- Support Medicaid expansion, which will increase health insurance coverage for a significant number of families in our community, promoting family access to health care, repeal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program restrictions, access and maximize usage of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, all of which will increase the opportunities for students to be successful in school.
- Support increased funding and increased access to mental health and behavioral health services for students and families, including support for suicide prevention services and programs.
- Support flexibility of local school boards to implement policies, professional development, and programs to address the recommendations of the Bullying and Dyslexia task forces.
- Support efforts to keep our schools safe from gun violence, including financial support for threat assessment programs in schools, security upgrades, effective emergency planning assistance, and responsible firearm storage.
- Support existing KSHSAA policy as it pertains to student participation in school-sponsored sporting activities.



School Finance

The legislative responsibility to provide suitable funding for public schools across the state of Kansas is a constitutional mandate, a moral imperative, and an essential component of the future growth and prosperity of the State of Kansas. To achieve this objective, SMSD will advocate to:

- Protect the authority of the Kansas Constitution, which ensures suitable provisions for the equitable and adequate finance of public education for all students in Kansas.
- Maintain a stable school finance formula, by fully funding the law approved by the Kansas Supreme Court, including funding required inflationary increases, and by removing sunsets contained in the law. School funding must provide every student the opportunity to be college and career ready, be financially sustainable, promote efficiency, accountability, and greater local funding flexibility, target students at-risk with supports for teachers and students, and ensure educational excellence for all students in Kansas.
- Amend current law to permanently implement high-density at-risk funding for both school districts and individual school buildings, in order to provide necessary support for schools with significant populations of at-risk students.
- In order for districts to be able to plan effectively, protect at-risk funding from the impact of enrollment changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support special education services and state funding at the required 92% of excess costs and mitigate the wide variance in reimbursements.
- Support fully funding local, state, and federal mandates.
- Support greater opportunities for communities to utilize operational and capital funds at the local level, with full equalization.
- Support policies and actions to recruit and retain educators and support staff including fully funding KPERS, returning to a KPERS Tier 2 structure and the associated benefits therein for employees hired after January 2015, and restoring statewide due process.



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Support property tax appraisal procedures that ensure adequate property tax revenue collection at the local and state level. Property tax valuation stability maintains current commercial and residential burdens to fund public schools and other governmental services. The proposed redesign of commercial property valuation has the very high potential in Johnson County to either reduce local property tax revenues to the public school system or shift an unfair burden of property taxes of as much as an estimated \$90 million in property taxes from businesses and corporations to our local home owners and taxpayers.

Support for Rigorous Academic Standards for All Students

One of the objectives of the SMSD Strategic Plan is that every student will achieve academic success through a challenging, relevant personalized learning plan. SMSD supports legislation and policies which support all students in achieving academic success, and will advocate to:

- Support rigorous academic standards to prepare students to meet or exceed the Rose Standards in preparation for success in a globally-competitive workforce.
- Expand funding for early learning programs to recognize and address academic and social needs as quickly as possible for all kids, particularly children at-risk.
- Support funding for a state assessment system that provides timely and meaningful feedback to students, supports their growth toward college and career readiness, and can be used to meet state and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements.
- Support broad local board authority to manage curriculum within state guidance and standards.

Support for Public School

Strong public schools, grounded in our state constitution, have been the foundation for the success of the state of Kansas, and are crucial to the future well-being of our democracy, in Kansas and across the nation. SMSD supports policies that maintain local non-partisan democratic control over public education in Kansas, and rejects policies that would divert public resources to non-public entities. To support these principles, SMSD will:

- Support legislation to repeal or reduce the private education tuition tax credit program, and oppose vouchers, or similar programs.



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Oppose any efforts to divert public, taxpayer funds to private education savings accounts (as attempted in 2021 HB 2119).
- Support the authority of the State Board of Education and locally-elected school boards to adequately measure student achievement and educational success as granted by state statute in accordance with the Kansas Constitution and in conjunction with legislative oversight. We oppose grading schools and districts based solely on standardized tests or other static measures because that approach does not accurately reflect student performance, but rather is an indicator of poverty and other factors outside of schools.
- Support maintaining non-partisan school board elections.
- Support the sole authority of locally-elected school boards to approve charter schools, as granted by state statute in accordance with the Kansas Constitution, and require charter schools to operate with the same requirements as public schools.