



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2023

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.

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 and learning materials within state guidance and standards. • 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.)

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.
- Support special education services and state funding at the required 92% of excess costs and mitigate the wide variance in reimbursements. The statutory funding formula has not been fully funded since 2009. Shawnee Mission fully pays for the required, and additional, special education services for our students. We pay for it, but the district does not receive funding. Each year, we are forced to shift funding from other areas of need to fill the budget hole that state funding does not fill. The federal and state governments require the provision of special education services, but for Shawnee Mission, we have to reduce other services to pay for special education. In addition, unreimbursed special education costs impact ALL students, as students with an IEP are general education students first, and spend most of their time in the general education classroom.
- 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. The current high density at-risk formula component expires at the end of the 2023-24 school year and must be renewed during the 2023 legislative session.
- 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.
- 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.



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Health, Safety and Social and Emotional Well-Being

SMSD supports policies and funding that maintain and strengthen district capacity to provide a healthy and safe learning environment. 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, and a legal requirement.

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:

- 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;
- 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) 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.

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:



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- Support legislation to repeal or reduce the private education tuition tax credit program, and oppose vouchers, or similar programs, and oppose any efforts to divert public, taxpayer funds to private education savings accounts.
- 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.
- The provisions of open enrollment the legislature passed during 2022 will allow any student to move to any school district if the receiving school district has an open spot. There are no significant limitations, exclusions, or exceptions in the law. The impacts of this law, proffered as “school choice,” has so many unknown impacts, the 2022 legislature delayed implementation of the law until the 2024-25 school year. During the interim period, the state should examine and potentially amend the law to address these deficiencies:
 - The policy does not appear to serve a public policy goal that is not already available. Shawnee Mission, as most other districts, has an out-of-district transfer policy and local districts should continue to set district policy.
 - The annual administrative burden and cost of building and grade level assessments each year impact already-strained resources.
 - Unified School Districts are set by geography to build and support local community interests, taxes, and voting authority for all residents. Expanding a public policy allowing any student to attend any school district anywhere in the state diminishes the connection a citizen has to the location where they pay taxes and have a vote in locally-elected school boards. Transfer students will have no representation and no tax burden, and the cost of their education will be paid by taxpayers in the receiving district.
 - This policy change will allow families with children in special education to pick districts to serve their children and the



receiving districts will be responsible for transportation as well as the cost of all additional services. In fact, a USD may not know if an incoming student has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and no ability to prepare for the additional needs and costs.