BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

2027 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

These legislative priorities guide the district's advocacy for students, educators, and the community.

ESTABLISH A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL FINANCE FORMULA

After nearly two decades of litigation over its constitutionality, the crux of the Supreme Court-approved formula should remain intact. We support re-authorizing the current formula with minor revisions:

- **Restructure At-Risk Funding** to a reimbursement model to reflect actual costs of interventions, which should include integrated and evidence-based MTSS-related activities and services.
- **Improve Identification of At-Risk Children** by looking beyond the free-and-reduced lunch qualifier to prioritize evidence-based factors that ensure children who need help get it. This includes children who: • have been affected by abuse or trauma • reside in foster homes • are raised in homes where English is not the primary language • suffer from non-IEP qualifying disabilities • face family or housing instability • lack adequate transportation • experience transiency • live at or below __% of the federal poverty line.
- **Maintain COLA adjustments** for equitable resource distribution.
- **Provide enhancements to combat threats to students' safety and well-being,** including for building security; thwarting external and internal threats of violence and harassment; and for suicide prevention.
- **Simplify Special Education funding** by fully incorporating SPED funding into the formula. We propose eliminating the piecemeal approach of preliminary calculations in favor of a more efficient universal **92% reimbursement** of excess costs.

KEY TERMS

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) — A coherent continuum of evidence-based, system-wide practices designed to support a rapid response to academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each student to achieve high standards.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) — An adjustment in the formula to promote fairness in areas with higher costs of living.

FUND SPECIAL EDUCATION AS STATUTORILY REQUIRED

School districts must offer a **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** to all school-aged children in their districts. To achieve that, some children require Special Education services, as set forth in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), created jointly with the parents, the student, teachers, administrators, and specialists, using data-informed metrics under dictates of federal law. Although Congress did not provide mandatory funding, **Kansas guarantees districts will be reimbursed for 92% of these excess costs**.

In 2026, however, Blue Valley was **forced to transfer $18.9 million** from the general fund to cover the state's unfulfilled portion of Special Education expenses. Next year, the amount is projected to **increase to over $20 million**. And since 2011, Blue Valley has transferred general operating funds **exceeding $124 million to cover the state's shortfall**. Thus, the district's ability to provide a constitutionally compliant education for all students has now been compromised.

Meeting the 92% statutory threshold will help **avoid devastating cuts**, **prevent increases in current class-size standards**, **sidestep reductions in force**; allow districts the opportunity to **lower local property tax rates**; and move the state toward providing all students with **a constitutionally adequate public education**.

BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

SUPPORT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED STAFF

By establishing a fair and equitable school finance formula and funding Special Education as statutorily required, the state will be helping to attract and retain talented educators. The state should also take steps to improve working conditions and districts' ability to offer competitive pay, benefits, and retirement options:

- **Revise and improve KPERS** (Kansas Public Employees Retirement System), specifically **KPERS 3**, to be competitive with surrounding states.
- Work cooperatively with districts to **strongly advocate for federal funding**.
- Provide **funding for extraordinary Professional Learning needs** (*e.g.*, Artificial Intelligence education).
- Address the **biggest financial issues** facing our employees by reforming our state's **healthcare system** and loosening the **working-after-retirement provisions** for Kansas-licensed employees.

SUPPORT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS

Over time, cities, counties, and the state have shifted more and more of their responsibility for many community services to school districts — with no corresponding increase in school funding. Examples include on-campus public safety, community-service coordination for families, and mental-health supports (suicide is the second leading cause of death of young people in Kansas and the United States).. This has depleted available funds for lowering class sizes, offering competitive salaries, and meeting the current educational needs of students, such as for career and technical education.

Districts need funding for the following priorities, outside and separate from the education budget:

- **Safety and security infrastructure** (*e.g.*, impact-resistant glass, security cameras, appropriate door locks, secure entries, emergency communication systems) and **personnel** (*e.g.*, SROs, social workers).
- **Student mental-health and well-being** supports, including access to social workers, mental-health interventionists, and community resources, all of which are vital to adequately ensure safe and healthy learning environments and prevent crises and threats to students' well-being.

BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS' LONG-STANDING PRIORITIES

The district's long-standing priorities reflect the principles that have consistently guided Blue Valley Schools' approach to serving students and the community.

- Support **Local Control** of Education Systems
- Enhance Student **Well-being and Mental Health**
- Support **Academic Rigor** and **Local Curriculum Decisions**
- Support **Early Education**
- **Oppose Unfunded** State Mandates
- Broaden **Classroom Resources**
- **Oppose Tax Credits, Vouchers, and Other Public Funding** for Private Schools

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BLUE VALLEY'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

- Visit bluevalleyk12.org/legislative or scan the QR code.
- Contact the Board of Education at boe@bluevalleyk12.org.
- Contact Superintendent Dr. Gillian Chapman, at gkchapman@bluevalleyk12.org.

Approved by the Blue Valley Board of Education.

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