BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

2027 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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

ESTABLISH FAIR AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL FINANCE FORMULA

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

THE ASK:

- **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.
- **Expand At-Risk funding** and **improve identification of at-risk children** to include a reimbursement model to reflect actual costs of interventions, which should include integrated and evidence-based MTSS-related activities and services. Include students beyond qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch and 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 or temporary housing; receive English language support; perform below grade level on state assessments; and live at or below 100% of the federal poverty line.
- **Provide weighting to the Base State Aid Per Pupil to combat threats to students' and staff safety and well-being**, including for building security; thwarting external and internal threats of violence and harassment; and for suicide prevention.
- **Maintain Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)** for equitable resource distribution.

KEY TERM

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 Kansas student to achieve high standards.

FUND SPECIAL EDUCATION AS STATUTORILY REQUIRED

BACKGROUND: School districts must offer a **Free 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 Program (IEP), created jointly with the parents/guardians, the student, teachers, administrators and specialists, using data-informed metrics as required by federal law. Although Congress did not provide mandatory funding, **Kansas statute dictates that 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.

THE ASK: Meet the 92% of excess costs statutory threshold.

- 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

BACKGROUND: 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.

THE ASK:

- **Revise and improve KPERS** (Kansas Public Employees Retirement System), specifically **KPERS 3**, to be competitive with surrounding states.
- Provide **funding for professional learning needs** (e.g., literacy).
- Address the **biggest financial issues** facing our employees by reforming our state's **health care system**.
- Loosen the **working-after-retirement provisions** for Kansas-licensed employees.

SUPPORT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND: Over time, cities, counties and the state have shifted 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. **Provide base state aid enhancements to lower class sizes, offer competitive salaries and meet the current educational needs of students, such as for career and technical education**.

THE ASK: 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 and staff mental-health and well-being** supports, including access to social workers, mental-health interventionists and community resources, all of which are vital to ensuring safe and healthy learning environments and preventing crises and threats to students' and staff members' 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.

- Oppose tax credits, vouchers and other public funding for private schools
- 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

LEARN MORE ABOUT BLUE VALLEY'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Approved by the Blue Valley Board of Education, these legislative priorities and positions guide the district's advocacy for students, educators and the community.

- 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.

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