



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Johnson County School Districts Band Together to Challenge Kansas Public School Funding Deficiencies

May 20, 2026 ~ Four Johnson County school districts signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the Kansas Public School Funding Coalition, a unified and strategic effort to address the Kansas Legislature's continued failure to adequately fund public education and meet its legal obligation for special education funding.

The participating school districts who represent more than 83,000 students – Blue Valley Schools, De Soto School District, Olathe Public Schools and Shawnee Mission School District – have reached a tipping point after years of absorbing the escalating financial burden caused by the state's failure to meet its legal funding obligations. As a result, the Coalition initiated a process to secure legal counsel to pursue litigation against the State of Kansas.

For more than 15 years, the State of Kansas has not met its own law to fully fund special education at 92 percent of excess costs. Despite longstanding legal requirements, the Legislature and state elected officials have consistently and deliberately chosen to shift those costs onto school districts and local taxpayers rather than fulfill their legal obligation.

The state Legislature's ongoing choice to underfund special education is pushing Kansas school districts to a financial breaking point, and **students, teachers and support staff** in the public system are paying the price.

Kansas school districts are legally required to provide special education services to students based on their individual needs, regardless of whether the state fulfills its funding responsibility. The result of the state's underfunding is a growing financial crisis that is forcing districts to redirect resources away from general education classrooms, staff recruitment, retention and compensation, student programs, and operational needs simply to cover the state's shortfall. In the 2024-25 school year alone, these four school districts spent more than \$119 million in local effort to cover the state's shortfall.

Enough is enough and something must change. Public school districts can no longer sustain the financial burden required to cover the state's shortfall.

The Coalition has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for legal services focused on:



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- Monitoring and advising on Kansas school funding and K-12 education budget issues;
 - Evaluating when litigation against the State of Kansas should be pursued;
 - Identifying strategic opportunities for collaboration with other districts or organizations pursuing similar objectives; and
 - Developing a litigation strategy aimed at securing adequate and equitable funding for both special and general education for all Kansas public schools.

To be clear, the Coalition's efforts are not about reducing support for students receiving special education services, nor placing an undue target on any one student group. Students receiving special education services are a valued and essential part of our schools and community, and the participating districts remain fully committed to providing the services, programs and support they deserve.

This effort is about accountability and doing right by Kansas students.

Kansas lawmakers and state elected officials have had well over a decade to meet their legal obligation to fully fund special education. Instead, they have repeatedly chosen to underfund public schools while local districts, educators, and taxpayers shoulder the burden. Participating districts have exhausted every opportunity to work collaboratively with the Legislature and state elected officials to resolve this issue, including meeting individually with lawmakers, providing written and in-person testimony, and engaging through established advocacy channels. The time for waiting on the Legislature to do the right thing has passed, and the time for accountability is now.

The State of Kansas must meet its constitutional and statutory responsibilities to adequately fund public education. Kansas students, educators, and communities can no longer afford the consequences of continued inaction. Our students deserve better.

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