



Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

2020-2021 Legislative & Advocacy Priorities

Preamble

A major pillar in a successful Kentucky is a strong public school system. In addition to preparing our children for post-secondary training and careers, public schools develop children to be healthy, productive, contributing members of society. Our economic prosperity depends, in part, on our investment in our public schools as our children represent our future. The Kentucky Association of School Superintendents presents these legislative priorities to help chart a path to a better Kentucky through stronger public schools.

Who we are

The Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS) is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to responding to the unique needs of Kentucky's 171 public school district superintendents in their pursuit of successful schools and academic excellence for the children of Kentucky.

Established in 1949, KASS advocates for public policies that positively impact the education process and therefore benefit all of Kentucky's children. KASS is led by a full-time executive director, Dr. Jim Flynn, and its policy priorities are set by its five-member Executive Committee and its 18-member Board of Directors.

Besides school district superintendents, our members include other educators, including assistant superintendents, chief officers, certain college and university faculty members and directors of the state's education cooperatives.

KASS Advocacy Priorities

Adequate and Equitable Funding for Public Education is our top priority for this session.

Public School funding from the state must be adequate and equitable if we are to succeed, especially in a global pandemic. The lack of adequate and equitable funding impacts all students especially our most vulnerable and at-risk students and is most visibly notable in the areas of full-day kindergarten, preschool, and transportation. We ask the General Assembly to:

- Increase funding allocated through Base SEEK, to restore equity across communities.
- Prioritize funding the Learning & Results Services (LARS) programs that directly serve our students such as: preschool; family resource and youth service centers (FRYSCs); instructional resources; state agency children; gifted and talented; and extended school services (ESS);
- Continue support for school safety by fully funding the implementation of the School Safety and Resiliency Act (SB1 of 2019);
- Ensure professional educators receive high quality training and development to enhance their efficacy with students;
- Continue to equalize local nickel taxes levied by school boards for facility improvements;
- Increase the SEEK add-on rate for exceptional children to address the growth in this population;
- Support the HANDS program and services for our students in foster care provided by the Department for Community Based Services, to help us serve special needs among students;
- Continue to appropriate the full actuarially determined contributions to the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), and the full amount needed for school employee health insurance.

- Consider tax reforms to generate the needed revenue to adequately fund public education, including a full review of all tax expenditure exemptions & exonerations.
- Provide adequate funding to the Kentucky Department of Education to support schools and districts, including modernizing funding for the Kentucky School for the Deaf and Kentucky School for the Blind.

Though education is a state responsibility by Constitution, the burden of education funding is shifting from the state to local districts – which have limited means of raising much-needed revenue. (For more information, see the [SEEK Overview Reports](#) from the [Council for Better Education](#)). We ask the General Assembly to provide more flexibility for local school boards in their ability to implement or raise taxes to support their students.

Bottomline, Kentucky needs to make a stronger investment in its public schools. It's an economic, workforce, and community development investment that will improve the quality of lives for all Kentuckians now and into the future.

For details, contact us or visit www.kysupts.org/advocacy

How to reach us

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The Five P's

While the budget is our top priority for this short legislative session, there are several other areas that need to be addressed, and for which we will be advocating. We call them the “Five P’s.” They are:

1. Professional Educator Recruitment, Retention, & Development

Kentucky’s educational policies must ensure that we can attract and retain the best and brightest teachers, administrators, and staff to serve our schools. Research shows that the number one factor influencing student learning achievement and success is the quality of professional educators. Improving the instructional and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, superintendents and other education professionals is critically important to our educational progress.

2. Pension Reform

A sound pension system is critical to the goal of attracting and retaining high quality educators.

3. Privatization

Public Education must be fully funded. Privatization efforts divert funds from the public school system at a time when schools are struggling with underfunding. Privatization proposals tend to shift funding from rural areas to the population centers and too often leave our most disadvantaged students further behind.

4. Principal Selection and Purview

Superintendents must be given authority to hire principals in consultation with SBDM Councils. School boards and superintendents must have a greater voice regarding curriculum and instruction. We advocate for a better balance of authority in these critical areas while maintaining a strong voice for teachers and parents.

5. Protecting Our Students and Schools

In addition to enhancing school safety by fully funding the School Safety and Resiliency Act (SB1 of 2019), we implore the General Assembly to improve the legal liability protections for school boards, districts and their employees. Every dollar spent in a courtroom is a dollar not spent educating students in a classroom. We also must ensure that a child being enrolled in homeschool has not received a truancy summons and that adults providing K-12 educational instruction in the homeschool setting meet minimum educational and safety requirements. Finally, we strongly advocate for reforms to protect students and others from any form of bias, including race-based, gender-based, or any other form of discrimination. Given current events, it is especially critical that we foster a culture of anti-racism and work together to further racial equality within all facets of society, including in our public schools.