



House K-12 Education Budget Committee
Proponent Testimony (Written Only) KSDE Budget Request
January 28, 2025
Submitted by: Dr. Tonya Merrigan, Superintendent
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Thank you for the opportunity to submit these written comments in support of **the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) budget proposal**. We support this budget, continued funding for SPED excess costs, as well as the Governor’s request for an appropriation of \$500,000 to pay for AP tests for all students.

Blue Valley has a student population of more than 22,400 and consistently ranks in the top tier of high performing schools, both in the state and in the nation. (See "Quick Facts" at the end of testimony.)

The primary goal of the Blue Valley district is **to ensure every student attending our schools has the educational programming and opportunities, delivered by quality educators, to allow them to thrive long after they leave our doors**. We embrace every student who walks through our doors and always work to provide them with the tools to succeed.

This is especially true of our commitment to our students with a special education individual education plan (IEP). More than 19%, or 1 in 5, of Blue Valley students receive SPED services. While Blue Valley’s total enrollment has increased by less than 1% since 2020, we have experienced 10% growth in disability IEPs since 2020.

The Blue Valley School District recoups 62% of its special education excess costs when state law prescribes a 92% rate. Last year, this resulted in \$13.7M diverted from our general funds to cover these costs. We appreciate the legislature’s commitment to SPED funding in the budget approved during the 2024 session. We are already seeing a positive impact of the funding on our SPED programs. It is our understanding that the legislature would need to continue to fund SPED at this level for the next four years to achieve the prescribed 92% rate.

As a final thought, we want to express our appreciation to this committee for its work toward improved student learning in Kansas. We are committed to continuing to work with the committee toward that end.

USD 229 Blue Valley Schools: Quick Facts

K-12 Student Enrollment	21,767	ACT District Composite Average*	22.9
Early Childhood—grade 12 Enrollment	22,450	ACT Statewide Average	19.2
Average Daily Attendance	94.4%	SAT District Average	1357
Graduation Rate	96.7%	SAT Statewide Average	1256
Teacher's with Master's Degree or Higher	76%	*with 91.6 % of graduates taking the ACT	