



PARENTS IN JOHNSON COUNTY, STATEWIDE WANT EDUCATION OPTIONS

New poll shows bi-partisan support for educational savings accounts (ESAs) goes beyond students that aren't getting academic needs met

As the debate in America over school choice policies intensifies, the Kansas Legislature is sure to face important decisions that could impact parents and students across The Sunflower State. Parents and voters from across the political spectrum are demonstrating strong support for accountability for academic outcomes and more opportunities for students.

A [new poll](#) shows that 72% of Johnson County voters support taxpayer-funded accounts for families of students with unmet academic needs. There is 83% support among Republican voters, 69% among Independents, and 60% support from Democrat voters in Johnson County. The polling was completed in December 2023 by SurveyUSA on behalf of Policy Institute.

Despite record-setting funding in Kansas, one-third of students are below grade level in reading and math. In Johnson County, the average spend per student is \$16,214, yet 33% of high school students are below grade level in math and 24% are behind in reading.

“Many Kansans are understandably proud of their public schools, but one system cannot fit each student equally well. Kansans from all walks of life, political parties, and regions of the state have come to expect choices in how their children are educated. It's not enough to base school assignments on zip code. It's unjust, and our children deserve better,” says James Franko, president of Kansas Policy Institute.

KPI's poll is not just a one-off as national support for educational options continues to grow. EdChoice released a [national poll](#) showing that 68% of adults nationwide support ESAs. American Federation for Children says, “Overall, 76 percent of voters polled say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports school choice, including 77 percent of Democrats, 86 percent of Republicans, and 67 percent of Independents.”

Franko says of the polling, “States with robust educational choice see the greatest gains in academic achievement, social integration, and parental satisfaction. We need to give each Kansas kid a fighting chance with the same kind of educational choice.”

“Student success must be the focus. Too many of our students walk away from the system without the math and reading skills required to pursue their dreams. We see the policy solutions that are working in other states.”

Besides school choice, the poll also covered other questions related to K12 education. For instance, Kansas state law requires school boards to conduct needs assessments in each school as

part of their budget process each year to identify barriers preventing kids from being proficient. Many times, districts do not include school board members in this process, or do not conduct the assessment at all. In Johnson County, 78% want school districts to face consequences if their needs assessment process is not completed in accordance with the law.

Franko says, “Parents in Johnson County and across the state just want to know that their children will be prepared to succeed in the future. We have school choice in Kansas for the families who can afford it. It's long-passed time for the money each family pays in taxes to follow their child to the right educational environment. For most, that will be a high-performing public school. For others, it will be something different that gives them a fighting chance to flourish.”

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