

MainPAC Candidate Survey

2021 Kansas Elections

Q1-5.

Candidate Name: Andrew Van Der Laan
Candidate Email: andrew@vdlforbvsd.com
Candidate Phone: (913) 735-7343
Office Sought: School Board Member
Office County: Johnson
Office City: n/a
Office District: 4

Candidate Rating: 94%

Q6. Political discourse in Kansas could be characterized as siloed and divisive. How do you intend to engage citizens and colleagues in potentially difficult conversations? (Available points: 1)

- A. If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided. (1)
- B. If elected I will be loyal to the ideology associated with my party affiliation.

Candidate Answer: If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided.

Candidate Comment: I have volunteered for both generally liberal organizations (Coterie Theatre) and generally conservative organizations (Scouting, The American Legion), and I take pride in being able to listen to and engage with perspectives regardless of where they fall on the political spectrum.

Q7. Which of the following statements best aligns with your stance on local elected officials making decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions? For information about Home Rule please see https://www.lkm.org/page/Home_Rule. (Available points: 2)

- A. Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule. (2)
- B. Local elected officials should have limited authority in decision making for their communities. (1)
- C. Local elected officials should not have authority in decision making for their communities. Decisions should be made by the state.

Candidate Answer: Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule.

Candidate Comment: Home Rule is particularly crucial for school boards because the services they provide are often not available anywhere else - the county, state, and various NGOs can't fill in for public schools. School boards must have the freedom to represent their patrons and taxpayers without state interference.

Q8. Do you support allocating additional resources specifically for implementing/expanding mental health programs?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Yes (1)
- B. No

Candidate Answer: Yes

Candidate Comment: Teen suicides have been rising, and only recently have suicide rates dropped by about a third and suicide related ER visits decreased by 16%. Credit is due to student organizations like Zero Reasons Why and Sources of Strength, as well as increased mental health programming at the county and school district levels. And we need to recognize that suicide rates don't capture anxiety, depression, and other mental health crises. Mental health MUST needs more resources, especially for school age kids.

Q9. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about transparency in local government?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances. (1)
- B. Transparency is important, but should be secondary to efficiency.
- C. There are some times when transparency is important, but there are other issues the public doesn't have the capacity to understand and transparency becomes less important.
- D. The people vote for a candidate because they trust them, so transparency is not as important for elected officials as for other public leaders.

Candidate Answer: Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances.

Candidate Comment: Every resident of the district deserves to know how and why decisions are being made, and how tax and bond dollars are spent. Public board meetings, town halls, community forums, the district website, email newsletters, and direct constituent access all need to be part of an effective communication and transparency effort.

Q10. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about access to health care? (Available points: 2)

- A. Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care. (2)
- B. Local government in my area is currently meeting the community's access needs. (1)
- C. Local government has no role in health care.

Candidate Answer: Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care.

Candidate Comment: Per my mental health response above, the impact of local resources on a public health crisis can be immediate and meaningful. Access to health care is critically important for all residents in the school district, and especially for young students receiving vision and hearing screenings. The school district has to preserve school nurses and counselors regardless of state funding challenges.

Q11. To what degree do you believe that diversity in representation at all levels of government is critical to effective governing? (Available points: 1)

- A. Extremely Important (1)
- B. Neutral
- C. Not important

Candidate Answer: Extremely Important

Candidate Comment: I have always believed that that involving more viewpoints in a discussion leads to better decisions, and diversity in government is a natural extension of that. And diversity for our school board should encompass more than just ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity - in a perfect world, we would see a diversity of representation that included different ages, professional backgrounds, sexualities, economic circumstances, and lived experiences.

Q12. Professional public entity staff are expected to bring expertise, research, and accuracy to assist elected officials in their work. These may include health professionals, legal experts, research librarians, school administrators and the like. Regarding these professionals, which of the following is generally most true? (Available points: 1)

- A. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **support** the professionals who work in public service (1)
- B. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **scrutinize** the professionals who work in public service
- C. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **stay distant** from the professionals who work in public spaces
- D. It is the role of elected leaders to **closely manage** the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Answer: It is the role of locally elected leaders to support the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Comment: A member of any board needs to think carefully about when and how to intervene with operational leaders, and this is no less true for school board. Board members are there to support the mission of the school district, and with the exception of rare cases, this means supporting the professionals in administrative and operating roles. I will add that scrutiny may also be necessary at times, for example during a budgeting process; the board best provides support not by rubber stamping but by asking hard questions.

Q13. Which of the following most closely aligns with your view of the role of local government in each of these policy issues? (Available points: 6)

- A. Very Relevant (2)
- B. Somewhat Relevant (1)
- C. Irrelevant
- D. Not Applicable

Issue: Climate Change

Candidate Answer: Somewhat Relevant

Candidate Comment: Schools should address climate change by doing what they do best - educating students. This might be in the classroom, or via experiential learning like composting in the cafeteria. However, as a former sustainability professional, this issue demands collaborative action from all levels of government and the private sector.

Issue: Gun Safety

Candidate Answer: Very Relevant

Candidate Comment: Schools need to have the ability to restrict or prohibit firearms on their campuses, if only because it's an important part of local control.

Issue: Voting Access

Candidate Answer: Very Relevant

Candidate Comment: Students grow up to be voters, and we must ensure they have access to exercise that most fundamental obligation of a citizen.

Q14. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about K - 12 schools? (Available points: 1)

- A. Public money should only be used to support public schools. (1)
- B. Public money should be used to support all schools, regardless of their public or private status.

Candidate Answer: Public money should only be used to support public schools.

Candidate Comment: I oppose vouchers and the flow of public money to private schools. Private schools are held to lower standards and are dramatically less transparent than public schools, and taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent.

Q15. In light of the current political landscape, what is your stance on the role your personal religious beliefs should play in policy decisions? (Available points: 1)

- A. If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes. (1)
- B. My personal religious beliefs are important to me therefore my religious beliefs will be the driving factor in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Answer: If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Comment: It would be unfair to blindly impose my religious beliefs (or frankly, any of my other beliefs) on the 22,000+ students in the district.

Q16. How do you understand the role (the duties, responsibilities, and scope) of the position you are seeking?

Candidate Answer: The Board of Education has four major responsibilities - setting policy and procedures (including budgeting and some curriculum), selecting a superintendent, supporting the district's mission and evaluating progress, and planning for the future. Everything else should be left to the professionals who are trained administrators and educators.

Q17. You will have to publicly account for your political contributions. To date, how much money have you collected or has been pledged to your campaign?

Candidate Answer: \$2,750

Q18. How many donors does your answer above reflect?

Candidate Answer: 19

Q19. From which other organizations have you received endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: n/a

Q20. From which other organizations are you seeking endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: I'm not actively seeking any endorsements, but will respond to all surveys that I receive.

Q21. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this survey? Please do that here.

Candidate Answer: District patrons and taxpayers deserve someone who will listen to all perspectives, and they try their hardest to do what's right for ALL students.

END SURVEY