

School Board Election Tool Kit

With over 90,000 kids in our state food insecure, we must work together to ensure all Kansas kids can thrive. Access to nutritious meals is essential for academic success, improved concentration, and overall physical and mental well-being. It's also a way to level the playing field for students who may not have equal access to food resources.

School boards have the power to reduce hunger in Kansas communities.

In Kansas, school board members get elected through nonpartisan elections, which means candidates don't run under a political party affiliation. Elections occur every two years, and voters elect either three or four school board members who serve four-year terms. The school board is responsible for setting policies and overseeing the operations of the school district, including hiring the superintendent and approving the district's budget, and they also play a vital role in ensuring all students have access to healthy, affordable meals during the school day through the policies they approve.

School board members set the meal rate, the meal debt policy, and determine the federal programs their school participates in. They have the power to truly prioritize the needs of students, create a better future for our youth, and ensure they have the resources necessary for success. A vote for school board can also be a vote to end hunger.

Fast Facts on Childhood Hunger in Kansas

- 1 in 7 Kansas kids are food insecure.
- 48% of Kansas students receive free or reduced meals.
- In fiscal year 2023, the monthly average of children on SNAP was 83,463.

Actions You Can Take Right Now

Advocacy and outreach are key to adding power to your vote this November. Here are some immediate steps you and your community members, friends, and family can take to support Kansas kids' consistent access to school meals. If you need support, a member of the Kansas Appleseed staff can help with each step listed below, provide talking points specific to your district, and help in any way needed. The steps below are general guidelines, outreach can and should be crafted so the approach works best for you and your local district.

Finding out about local candidate platforms may seem more difficult than state-wide and national elections, but there are many ways to get informed. A couple of great options include:

- Attend candidate forums or debates in your area to ask questions and hear from candidates about the issues.
- Grab a coffee or connecting in person with candidates is a great way to ask them more detailed questions about the issues.
- Research candidates' platforms and stances on the issues. Candidate surveys, newspaper or radio interviews, and campaign social media pages are the most common ways candidates publish their views.
- Attend school board meetings to learn more about issues that your local school district is facing and hear from current board members, staff members, and administrators.

Here are some questions you can ask your local candidates:

- 1 in 7 Kansas kids don't know where their next meal is coming from. What is your plan to address childhood hunger?
- What steps would you take to ensure that all eligible students can access free school meals without stigma or discrimination?
- What is your stance on providing free school meals to students in the district?
- School districts have several options to help reduce childhood food insecurity. What initiatives do you support and why?
 - Examples of options: subsidizing reduced-priced meals for eligible students, and community eligibility provision, a program that allows some high-poverty schools to provide free breakfast and lunch for all students.
- What policies do you support when it comes to collecting unpaid school meal debt?

Some Ways You Can Advocate for Kansas Kids

- Email Kansas Appleseed's newest report to your local school board candidates with some dates and times that you'd be free to meet with them. You can find the report at https://www.kansasappleseed.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/final_meal_debt_report.pdf?emci=2bd04778-2948-ee11-a3f1-00224832eb73&emdi=dcf9803f-4f68-ee11-9937-00224832eb73&ceid=13751606
- Share specific county food insecurity data with candidates. You can find your county information at <https://bit.ly/SNAPshots22>.
- Share relevant articles amongst your family, friends, and community circles and encourage them to vote:
 - <https://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/dion-lefler/article280361939.html>
 - <https://www.kwch.com/2023/10/12/kansas-families-school-meal-debt-balloons-past-year-now-past-20m/>
 - <https://www.kcur.org/education/2023-10-15/kansas-students-face-worsening-school-meal-debt-after-end-of-free-meal-program-they-cant-learn>

When our elected officials understand the importance of ensuring all students have access to healthy meals during the school day, we can work towards eliminating the negative effects of food insecurity for our communities together. Only then can we truly prioritize the needs of students, create a better future for our youth, and ensure they have the resources necessary for success.

For More Information:

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