

## **USD #253, 1991**

### **SCHOOL FACILITIES, 1991**

In 1983-4 the LWVE studied the current and future adequacy and location of facilities of USD #253. Using the LWVUS publication Know Your School as a guide, the committee surveyed school principals and administrators. Other information was obtained from meetings of the Board of Education of USD #253, 1980 census data and Plan 2000, the Emporia-Lyon County Comprehensive Plan. This consensus was updated in February 1991.

League members agree that additional classroom space at the elementary level is the first priority. Changing boundary lines rarely solves long-term problems of overcrowding; but if radical shifts in the population occur, boundaries should be evaluated. The transition should permit each student to stay in one school throughout the elementary years. If school population trends continue upward, there will be a need for one or more elementary buildings. Using population density as a guide, new buildings should be located in the centers of neighborhoods. It is ideal if students do not have to cross major arterial streets; but if that is impossible, safe access should be provided.

Although the middle school makes efficient use of available space, the situation is not ideal. Some classrooms are overcrowded; playground space is inadequate; the intervening highway is a safety hazard as many children must cross it between classes. The district should monitor middle school facilities and begin developing plans for future improvements.

The LWVE supports adequate physical education facilities.

The LWVE opposed the following as solutions for overcrowding; sacrificing libraries, music rooms and other special instruction rooms to free classroom space; split shifts' year-round school; raising pupil-teacher ratios; limiting enrollment; and the use of mobile classrooms.

Future buildings should allow for expansion, flexibility and functional classrooms. They should include air conditioning, specialized areas for subjects such as music, art, science, special teachers and teachers lounges. A specialist in school architecture should be consulted when designing school buildings.

The League favors closed noon hours for middle school and high school.

Efforts should be made to provide safe shelters during tornado alerts, especially in our grade schools. Smoke detectors should be placed in all classrooms and other strategic areas.

**SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND BOARD OF EDUCATION:**

1. The League supports continued enforcement of the open meetings law, publication of agenda for Board meetings and dissemination of information about activities of the Board by the media.
2. The League opposed formation of permanent Citizen's Advisory Board because it is unnecessary in a community the size of Emporia; however, for special situations, a temporary citizens' advisory committee might be useful.
3. The League recommends the following legal requirements for a Board of Education member: 1) at least 21 years of age, 2) a resident of USD #253, 3) a resident of the district at least six months. There should be no educational requirements. The League believes that all areas of the district should be represented by electing a prescribed number from districts and the remainder of board members-at-large.
4. A good Board of Education member should have shown a prior interest in the community and young people, should be well-informed, a person of integrity who is able to listen and who gets along well with others. A variety of backgrounds in the make-up of the total board would be desirable.
5. The superintendent should inform the Board of Education of complaints that he has received so that they may be aware of problems in the school system.
6. In addition to the legal requirements, the superintendent should be a good administrator and fiscal manager who is foresighted, innovative, diplomatic, interested in the children and youth, able to work well with the public and the staff so that two-way communication is fostered.
7. The League supports and encourages all efforts by the Board of Education to coordinate its work with and cooperate with other local governmental agencies and bodies in areas which affect youth.
8. Salaries of administrative personnel are inadequate. They should be kept in line with teachers' salaries, however.

### **SCHOOL FINANCE:**

More money needs to be provided for schools. New sources of tax revenue for school purposes are needed. State limitations should be monitored.

### **THE TEACHING STAFF:**

Ways must be found to create an environment where teachers can freely discuss problems and ideas with administrators, are encouraged to be innovative, are paid an equitable salary, and where class sizes are small enough so that conscientious teachers do not feel depressed, frustrated, and overwhelmed.

The community shares the responsibility for creating an environment where teachers feel comfortable. Better housing and recreational facilities must be provided. Teachers must be welcomed and integrated into the community, not made to feel like outsiders. Community pride in teachers, community concern, and a positive community attitude are vital.

The League supports:

1. Continued improvement of teacher salaries with greater rewards for the career teacher and other incentives to stay.
2. Efforts reduce the pupil-teacher ratio and to five teachers additional relief through the use of teacher aides and other paraprofessionals.
3. Cooperation between principals and teachers to promote effective, creative and innovative teaching methods.
4. Special orientation for new teachers to ease transition into USD #253.
5. Efforts to hire teachers with a variety of backgrounds (geographical, educational, socioeconomic, ethnic) and with broad academic preparation.

**THE SCHOOL PROGRAM:**

1. The public school system should meet the needs of the youth in our community.
2. All high school students need to be made more aware of the wide variety of jobs available today but not at the expense of a liberal education.
3. There is a continued need for adult education programs through the public schools
4. The League supports a teacher-advisor program at the high school which promotes parent participation and pairs students with a teacher-advisor in one of their areas of interest.
5. The League supports extra-curricular activities as long as they do not detract from the education of students. In the interest of conserving energy and funds, intramural sports should be encouraged over intermural sports.