

# Blue Valley USD #229 Board of Education 2021

Response ID:11 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

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### 1. Candidate Name

Andrew Van Der Laan

### 2. Candidate for Board Seat #

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### 3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 12601 Buena Vista Street

City/State/Zip : Leawood, KS 66209

### 4. Phone Number

913-735-7343

### 5. Email Address

andrew@vdlforbvsd.com

### 6. Campaign Website

www.vdlforbvsd.com

## 2. Candidate Background

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### 7. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

For the last 12 years, I've been self-employed as an executive leadership coach and business consultant here in the KC metro area.

### 8. If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held.

n/a

### 9. Other recent political/community experience (50 words or less)

1. Member of two BVSD Board of Education committees - Health & Wellbeing and BVLEAG
2. Various PTO roles at elementary and middle school
3. Coterie Theatre Board, 2016-Present; President, 2021-22
4. Scoutmaster for a Scouts BSA Troop in Stilwell, 2018-Present
5. American Legion Boys State staff, 1993-Present

## 3. Issues and Policy

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### 10. As a candidate, what are your top three education policy issues? (100 words or less)

- 1) Experiential Learning: Prioritize outside of the classroom and hands on education through more programs like CAPS, BV Career Ready, and others.
- 2) Mental Health: For many students, mental health issues have emerged or worsened during the pandemic, and the district should offer increased counseling and mental health services to address this.

3) Overall Education Quality and Competitiveness: The state of our school district impacts the local economy - property values, business revenues, job prospects, and much more. High quality education drives economic growth, and gives students more and brighter future prospects.

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**11. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled the current K-12 education funding formula is both equitable and adequate. The Court, however, has retained jurisdiction over the case to assure funding is maintained. What are your thoughts on the formula and additional funding that has been added? (100 words or less)**

I appreciate the Legislature's difficult work to fully fund schools, and I am also thankful for the local control afforded by both the Local Option Budget and the weighting within the per capita system (for example, to recognize the challenges for special education). Both of those factors allow our school board the flexibility to meet the needs of our community. Ultimately, the funding decisions are out of the Board's hands; whether or not the legislature provides adequate funding, the district must continue to be good stewards of taxpayer resources and stay focused on student achievement.

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**12. The K-12 education system requires accountability measures for student performance, which have sometimes been a source of debate. Please describe the accountability measures you support and believe are accurately reflective of student achievement. (100 words or less)**

No single metric can capture academic achievement for all students; educators, administrators, and board members therefore need to look at multiple key performance indicators to assess the success of our schools. Those should include graduation rate, GPA, qualitative teacher evaluations, IEP and 504 plan adherence, state assessments (MAP testing), other standardized test scores (AP, ACT/SAT), percentage of graduates who return for their second year of college, and screening tests (e.g. the new Acadience screener for reading). And this list would be much larger if we also added social-emotional health, civic engagement, and other elements of building successful adults.

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**13. Kansas is experiencing low unemployment rates and employers are struggling to find qualified workers, especially in technical and skilled trades. How do you see the school district helping to meet the business community's future workforce needs through technical education and training? (100 words or less)**

It is vital to provide access to comprehensive education for all students through programs that prepare students for a wide array of future career paths, including technical and skilled trades. The CAPS program is an example of this commitment to a diverse education with a focus on specific pre-professional training. Additionally, the Blue Valley Career Ready program partners with JCCC and the Overland Park Fire Department to provide degrees in several technical fields, such as fire science and construction management. Support for these programs and others like them provides training for students who want a direct path to the workforce.

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**14. Other than funding, what do you see as the greatest challenge facing the school district? (100 words or less)**

Lack of communication between the district and our staff, students, families, and taxpayers is the primary challenge we must address. In the most recent patron assessment from 2017-18, 73% of respondents listed "Friends and Neighbors" as their primary source of information about the district. We saw the negative effects of this community-wide game of Telephone during the pandemic, and even before with the concern about changes to middle school electives. The district must provide transparent and effective communication to all stakeholders about the great work that Blue Valley Schools do for our community.

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**15. Why are you seeking this public office? (100 words or less)**

I believe that strong public schools are the backbone of our community, and that we all need to do our part to help them succeed. Ever since we moved our family to Blue Valley, I've dedicated hours and hours to helping young people, and I'm looking forward to serving the District in a bigger capacity. I have been very fortunate to work with a lot of amazing youth organizations, but nothing makes more of an impact on a child than a great school.

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**16. What makes you uniquely qualified to serve on the Board and most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (100 words or less)**

For the last three decades, my volunteer service has been dedicated to creating opportunities for young people to thrive. Through my work with American Legion Boys' State, Boy Scouts of America, the Coterie Theatre, and here in the District with board committees and PTO roles, I have put my time and energy where it matters most - with our students.

Additionally, my 20+ years of finance and operations experience have prepared me to both support district administrators and challenge them with tough questions. I have worked in world class organizations, and will bring those same high standards to the Board.