

An Open Letter
From Concerned Citizens of Kansas City, Kansas
To the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools Board of Education
February 21, 2018

Dear KCK Board of Education,

Our students deserve to be taught in buildings adapted to the 21st Century. In 2016, the taxpayers of Kansas City, Kansas overwhelmingly voted for a \$235 Million bond referendum. That vote was our community support for the plan presented by the board and staff to improve and modernize all our schools and in a few cases to build brand new school buildings. We are glad to see that the district stuck to its plan and well over \$14 Million in projects were completed on schedule in 2017. And we want to see all \$235 Million in school improvements successfully completed. To do that, to stay in compliance with the bond and the plan presented to the community, our school district plans to finish projects costing over \$65 Million in 2018. It's a lot to ask, but the board and the staff had been putting in their best effort, until this January.

We are concerned that the Board of Education may be jeopardizing that work by over-managing the staff and second guessing its own decisions. For example, the acquisition of a piece of property was board-approved last December, but instead of letting the staff carry out that mandate and get on with acquisition followed by construction of a building to benefit our students, this newly constituted board of education has delayed that purchase, possibly scuttled that purchase, and put all of the bond projects behind schedule. Thus, the board required staff to spend an inordinate amount of time preparing new reports on information already provided and answering questions that have already been answered. If the work is delayed, then the bonds are defaulted. If there is a default, then we cannot complete all the projects. Why is the board delaying this work instead of educating our children and completing the school improvements on schedule?

What is causing this extra work and delay? Reading between the lines, maybe there is a concern about maintaining adequate minority and local subcontractor participation. That would be a legitimate oversight issue. However, it does not justify undermining all of the staff efforts and all of the potential for district improvements that the bond funding provides. As elected public servants, board members are supposed to make sure the school district operates in the best interests of the students and the community. According to the National School Boards Association, an effective board has a collaborative relationship with staff and the community. The community is doing its part. We believe the staff is doing its part. But we are concerned that the board is not doing its part: it is not cultivating a collaborative relationship with us or with the staff, and it is not sticking to policy and letting the staff do its work.

We are asking the KCK Public Schools board not to jeopardize our school bond, or the school improvements that it represents. Please repair the working relationship with district staff. Please focus on our students, both now and in the future: their success is key to the prosperity of Kansas City, Kansas.

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This letter can be printed, photocopied and signed. It can be scanned and emailed to the president of the Board of Education, Brenda Jones at brenda.jones@kckps.org. A copy could also be emailed to the Superintendent of the KCK Public Schools, Dr. Cynthia Lane at cindy.lane@kckps.org, and the Chief of Public Affairs, David Smith at david.smith@kckps.org. It can also be mailed or delivered to the District Central Office, 2010 North 59th Street, Kansas City, KS 66104.

On social media, it is [#EffectiveKCKSchoolBoard](#).