

**Joint Statement from Old West Lawrence and Pinkney Neighborhood Associations
Regarding Proposals to Close Urban Schools**

Remarks Presented at USD497 School Board Meeting January 24, 2022

Good evening, my name is Maren Bradley. I am the Vice President of the Old West Lawrence Neighborhood association, and this is Shane Heiman, President of the Pinkney Neighborhood Association. We come here tonight, representing Old West and Pinkney Neighborhood Associations together, to speak about our concerns in closing Pinckney and other urban core schools in favor of a mega-elementary school located several miles from many of these existing schools.

Hopefully, you know that Pinckney School currently serves the neighborhoods of Pinkney and Old West Lawrence. What you may not realize is what our neighborhoods and city contribute back to this school:

- Firstly, Pinkney Neighborhood hosts many campaigns to support both the school and families that attend the school, including a recent fall donation drive for the school and holiday collection to support families in dire need.
- Secondly, in 2013, the Pinckney PTO partnered with VanGo, Old West Lawrence, and the city of Lawrence to rehabilitate and provide ongoing maintenance to the Pinckney tunnel that runs underneath 6th Street which allows for safe passage to school every morning for the multitude of walkers and bikers. The tunnel features murals unique to the school's presence in our community.
- Thirdly, after school, parents and community members run the 100% volunteer Pinckney Pacers running program which serves as both expanded access to fitness and childcare, to which members of the Boys and Girls Club, including children bussed in from other schools, are also invited to attend.
- And finally, beginning last year, the city government has spent countless hours and dollars working with Old West to implement programs to improve pedestrian conditions throughout the neighborhood to increase safety for our children who walk and bike to school, many of them without adults.

The population of Pinckney School grew 13% from 2012 to 2018. This is not a neighborhood school in decline. This is a school completely renovated in 2018 with taxpayer money, ready to welcome next year what is seeming to be one of its largest Kindergarten classes in the last decade or more. Included in the renovations to Pinckney School were showers, clothes washing equipment, and a pantry to help address the needs of the numerous low income students that attend the school. Moving schools out of neighborhoods like ours and farther from the homes of families most in need of this type of hands-on support, will leave them more at risk, impacting both the education of children and the stability of the community.

We welcome a discussion about what magnet, STEAM, fine arts, and Montessori options can contribute, but the 6 weeks you have given us to respond is not enough time to assess these options, and you cannot shuttle the most vulnerable children around to temporary solutions in the meantime. The short-term nature of this problem is not worth disposing of our core values, and we think you are vastly underestimating the short-term cost of making these changes anyway. We absolutely insist tonight that you do not close our urban schools.