

League of Women Voters Juneau, Education Position

Education – 1973-74 (Updated 2019 – Ctte: Mary Hakala, Marjorie Menzi, Andi Story, Dixie Weiss, Joy Lyon, Allan Schlicht, Annie Calkins, Helen Mehrkens, Peggy Cowan, chair)

The League of Women Voters Juneau (LWVJ) supports high quality public education for all. As an organization with a mission to enhance citizens' knowledge of and participation in our democracy, the LWVJ is especially concerned with education environments in which barriers to education are eliminated, where optimal conditions for education flourish and where students learn about our local, state, tribal and national history and government.

Preparation for citizenship is a responsibility of public education, therefore for a well-rounded education, the League of Women Voters Juneau gives priority to civics education, technology, professional development, libraries, special needs of students, accountability, safe schools, early learning, alternative programs, school finance, class size, and mitigation of adverse childhood experiences.

1. Civics Education

Civics education is especially important to the LWVJ. The goal of civics education is to understand the participatory responsibility of all citizens and the functioning of government in our democracy. Instruction on civil discourse should be included in civics instruction. The LWVJ supports efforts to increase civics education at all grade levels through classroom learning, out-of-classroom projects, and in partnership with local, state, and national organizations. Instruction in civics should use the resources of the capital city as a learning lab.

2. Well-Rounded Education

A well rounded education includes a wide variety of disciplines to prepare students for citizenship, careers and post-secondary experiences. All students should have access to a rich curriculum and educational experiences, regardless of race, gender or disability. The arts and world languages should not be viewed as add-ons to the curriculum, but should be considered basic components of education, especially for young students. Learning in and through the arts and multiple languages develops brain capacity and enhances the acquisition of mathematics, science, social studies (history, geography, political science and economics), and reading skills. The arts and world and indigenous languages should be taught K-12 in Juneau. Science, social studies and physical education instruction should start in the primary grades and be available to all students through high school. The basic Juneau School District (JSD) curricula should include current issues, problem-solving skills, ethical decision making, interpersonal communications and evaluating information sources, and provide opportunities to explore careers. Academic skills needed for success in today's careers should be integrated into career preparation experiences. Experiential and place-based learning opportunities should be available for all learners.

3. Technology

Technological literacy and access is important to success in today's world. Students should be afforded opportunities to learn current technological skills in order to be competitive in the modern world and global workplace . Responsible digital citizenship should be a component of technology instruction.

4. Professional Development

Teacher quality is the primary school-based determinant of student achievement. The League advocates a multifaceted professional development program, with equal access to professional development for all educators, as an effective means to promote quality education. Professional development should include inservices, conferences, professional learning team examination of student achievement, support for implementing new curriculum and materials, and coaching. Professional development should support specific needs of individual teachers in an on-going manner.

5. Libraries/ Media Centers

The League endorses the multimedia resource-center concept for the school library program as instrumental in furthering rich, individualized instruction. Students should learn how to critically evaluate a variety of resources. The League advocates employing librarians with professional backgrounds in libraries for each school, to effectively implement multimedia programs and media literacy. The League supports student and teacher access to resources at the state, city and university libraries.

6. Special Needs Students

The LWVJ advocates a multifaceted special education program to meet the needs of special needs children, those with learning or other disabilities and those with special academic gifts. Ensuring high levels of support for students to access core instruction as designed by the student's Individual Education Plan team is an important component of a special education program. LWVJ supports the government's and community's role in providing resources that allow schools to provide stability for foster and homeless students.

7. Accountability

The LWVJ advocates accountability in local education. Adoption of high standards of national caliber to guide the development of district-wide curriculum with high expectations for all students should be a priority with the Juneau Board of Education so that the curriculum will guide instruction in JSD.

The LWVJ supports meaningful student assessment programs that are multi dimensional and reflect student learning in a variety of formats and expressions. The LWVJ places a priority on early identification of student placement in special education or gifted programs. Assessments should be used to identify and support remedial help as needed by students. Achievement tests should provide information on student progress towards high expectations and allow students to compare their achievements with students across the state and country.

Children have to attend school in order to benefit from it. The JSD should partner with families, social service agencies and the court system to assure all students attend school regularly.

Teacher quality is critically important to student success. A high quality teacher evaluation system gives teachers a valid basis for self-evaluation and insures consistency in the evaluation program throughout the District.

8. Safe Schools

All students should feel safe in school, as well as when traveling to and from school. The LWVJ supports conducting on-going research-based anti-bullying curricula at all grade levels. The

school should team with the community in educating students about safety issues and conduct regular violence prevention/emergency training for personal safety within schools. Racism, sexism, sexual orientation biases are all unacceptable in schools and LWVJ supports JSD and community efforts to eliminate discrimination. The LWVJ urges schools to team with the community in educating students about safety issues, and to cooperate with interventions on serious local issues including the opioid crisis and suicide. K-12 students should have access to academic, career and a social/emotional counseling program that educates students about safety and well-being.

9. Early Learning

Access to quality and affordable childcare and preschool has been a concern for the Juneau community for many years. High quality childcare and pre-K programming is imperative to prepare students for Kindergarten. The LWVJ supports programs, services and policies at all levels of government for all who need it. The LWVJ believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential and supports the LWV AK position on *Childcare and Early Childhood Education*. The JSD offers an integrated special education and general population pre-K program. The LWVJ supports efforts by the JSD to offer voluntary pre-K programs to children whose school success can be improved by such programming and to advocate that voluntary pre-K programming be a part of the State's School Foundation Funding Program

10. Alternative Programs

The LWVJ supports effective options for meeting student and family educational needs and interests at all grade levels within the JSD. Parents and children should have choices in schooling in Juneau. LWVJ encourages collaborative efforts between JSD and community and other educational entities to build and sustain creative programs that engage students in both technical and career learning as well as high quality academics, as extensions or supplements to JSD offerings.

11. Classroom Loads

The League of Women Voters Juneau (LWVJ) recognizes the value of low pupil teacher ratios in K-12 classrooms. The National Education Policy Center's research review supports the benefits of smaller class sizes, especially in the primary grades.

12. Mitigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences

A high number of children are exposed to traumatic experiences that have the potential to impact brain development, social functioning and the ability to learn and engage in school. The League advocates efforts to improve student outcomes by meeting the needs of the whole child. This requires a deeper understanding of how childhood trauma impacts a child's ability to learn and thrive. Professional development should address the ongoing impacts of early childhood trauma and prolonged stress. LWV Juneau supports evidence-based programs and local solutions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the effects of adverse childhood experiences.

13. School Finance

Under the Alaska State Constitution, the State has the major responsibility for financing schools in Alaska. Local governments have the responsibility to meet required local effort and the

opportunity to fund schools beyond that, to a maximum set by state law.

The LWVJ strongly supports full funding of public schools at the local level. The LWVJ supports funding Juneau schools to the “cap”, the maximum allowed by state law, to ensure sufficient resources for an excellent education and the opportunity to access extracurricular and enrichment activities by every child. Local investment in schools is an essential component of school funding, directly connecting citizens and local schools. Monetary involvement sets a climate in which schools are responsive to local needs and priorities and the school district is held accountable for fiscal and educational decisions at the local level.

The LWVJ strongly supports optimum funding of public schools by the state. As per the state position, LWVJ unequivocally supports the Alaska Constitution that specifies that public funds are to be directed to public schools serving Alaska’s K-12 population. LWVJ opposes State funding for K-12 private or religious schools, whether through vouchers, tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts, or other mechanisms that result in diversion of state funds to schools other than public schools as established under state law.