

Brownback's school finance plan gives the term "bleeding Kansas" new meaning

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Governor Sam Brownback's school finance plan gives the term 'bleeding Kansas' a new meaning. To put it in school terms: The Brownback plan does not meet standards.

Brownback's claim that our schools will be 'held harmless' is deceptive because the harm has already occurred. Brownback is institutionalizing the massive cuts our schools have experienced, thus keeping our funding at this level of harm. KNEA teachers want to undo the harm.

Under the Brownback plan, school funding will be permanently locked in at an inadequately low level despite increasing state revenue. There will be no adjustments for increases due to inflation. If there's any change in a school's demographics, Brownback is saying: too bad. As educators, we know that one size does not fit all. It doesn't cost the same to educate every child, but every child needs to be educated.

While his plan does not include new cuts, schools can bleed to death as inflation eats up funding or raise local property taxes just to stay alive.

For our students and teachers, this means no relief to the overcrowded classrooms, the lack of school supplies and support staff. It means a continuation of stressful worry about the capacity to meet students' needs.

Financially, KNEA's vision is a balanced approach to taxation that is equitable across income levels and across the state. No students should face a shortage of opportunities based on wealth or zip code. A comprehensive, high-quality education for every Kansan is the responsibility of the state.