The future is now

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

In recent years, Kansas public schools have been thrust into political and legal battles and even been used in the so-called culture wars.

What’s remarkable is that during this turmoil, Kansas teachers, parents and education advocates continue to perform the day-in day-out work that has produced a top-notch public school system.

And even more remarkable is that Kansas now has the opportunity to take a giant leap forward in improving public schools.

Three recent education initiatives show where Kansas schools stand, where they need to go and a draft proposal on how to get there.

The Kansas State Board of Education, after meeting for more than a year with Kansans from all walks of life across the state, has made it the board’s mission to “lead the world in the success of each and every student.” This is called the Kansans Can initiative.

School administrators and school board members met for about a year and recently unveiled a draft finance plan that seeks to ensure every student in our diverse state has an equal opportunity to pursue his or her dreams. This is called the Framework for a New School Finance Formula. That plan represents a starting point in the discussion on how best to finance schools.

And KASB has recently released research that shows Kansas students rank among the best in the country but funding problems in recent years have been accompanied by troubling downward trends in academics. This is the 2016 State Education Report Card.

Taken together, these reports show the status of Kansas public schools and where they need to go in the future so Kansas students are successful.

Here are some of the conclusions:

• Kansas ranks 10th in the nation in student outcomes, but 29th in per pupil funding, 38th in funding increases over six years and 41st in teacher salaries.

• Kansas schools should be funded at a level that provides every student an equal opportunity to be college and career ready and local districts should retain control over their schools to respond to local conditions.

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**General Election update**

Rob Gilligan, rgilligan@kasb.org

The November 8 General Election in Kansas will include all seats in the state Legislature as well as five seats on the Kansas State Board of Education. Below is a general overview of where things currently are heading into the fall and some interesting notes of changes.

The Kansas Senate has 40 districts that each represent roughly 70,500 people, based on the 2010 census. The current makeup of the Senate is 32 Republicans (27 conservative, 5 moderates) and eight Democrats. All 40 seats are up for election every four years. Of the 40 seats, eight incumbents did not run for re-election (including the Senate Vice President), and an additional six incumbents lost in the primary (including the Senate Majority Leader). In addition, both the Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Education committee will not be returning next January, meaning changes here as well. All 14 incumbents leaving the Senate are Republican. This means that at least 35 percent of the Senate will be new in 2017 (possibly more depending on General Election outcomes).

For the first time in recent memory the Democratic Party has fielded a candidate for all 40 Senate districts in the state (though the Democratic candidate in District 9 has withdrawn, and a write-in campaign has begun). Four of those districts, the 4th, 6th, 22nd and 29th have no Republican challenger and the Democratic incumbent will most likely return to the Senate for another four year term. The other 36 races will be decided during the election. When the dust settles, it is important to remember that most likely more than 50 percent of the current Senate will return, but there will be some changes in the leadership structure.

The Kansas House of Representatives is made up of 125 districts that represent roughly 22,600 people each, based on the 2010 census. The current makeup of the House is 97 Republicans and 28 Democrats. All 125 seats are up for election every two years. Twenty-six incumbents did not seek re-election: 23 Republicans and three Democrats (Rep. Annie Tietze-53rd resigned in May and Jim Gartner was selected by the Precinct Committee to finish her term this fall). In addition, eight Republican incumbents and one Democratic incumbent were defeated in the August primaries. This means there will be at least 35 new representatives in January 2017.

In 51 of the 125 Districts there is only one major party candidate on the ballot in November. A total of 19 Democrats and 32 Republicans are all but guaranteed election, barring unforeseen circumstances. Two major party candidates will face off in the general election in 74 (59.2 percent) of the 125 seats. Just as in the Senate, the House will have new leadership in 2017 with the retirements of Speaker Ray Merrick and Speaker Pro Tem Peggy Mast. The House Education committee will also see at least a new Vice-Chair as Rep. Jerry Lunn-R lost his primary race in August.

With the fall elections less than two months away, now is a great time to reach out to the candidates in your districts and learn more about them. Being informed and helping to inform others is the best way to advocate for strong support for education in Kansas.

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  - John Heim

The Kansas Association of School Boards is a not-for-profit organization located in Topeka, Kansas dedicated to serving members of governing boards for unified school districts, community colleges, area vocational-technical schools and cooperatives, interlocals and regional service centers. The association serves a membership base of close to 5,000 school board members and educational leaders.
KASB recently released the 2016-17 Fees Survey Report.

One of the key findings in the report is the fact that over the last fifteen years, the number of districts charging for participation in activities has tripled from approximately 5 percent in 2001-02 to 15 percent in 2015-16. During this same time, districts charging for admissions to athletic events increased from 73 percent to 83 percent and the percent of districts indicating that they offer camps, meals, and uniforms for extracurricular activities has decreased.

Per student participation fees increased from $22 for middle school and $25 for high school to $28 and $34 respectively. High school annual admission passes have gone from approximately $19 to $30, and middle school annual admission passes have gone from $18 to $26.

This all suggests that districts are increasingly likely to need to ask families for financial assistance to keep extracurricular activities going. This is particularly apparent when looking at activity budgets, as shown in the figure above. In 2002-03, General Fund Transfers made up approximately 50 percent of district activity budgets, compared to about 34 percent in 2015-16. At the same time, Gate Receipts went from accounting for 36 percent of district activity budgets on average to about 46 percent.

In addition, fees have increased for daycare, driver’s education, musical instruments, library and technology fees, per hour and per event facilities rental, shops and labs, textbooks and publications, uniforms, all-day kindergarten, and other miscellaneous items. For example, the chart shows the average fee amounts for shop and lab fees, which increased about $6 per student from 2002-03 to 2015-16.

You can find the report, data, and an interactive tool to explore local data at kasb research.org. If you have questions or require assistance, you can contact research@kasb.org.
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

KASB Board of Directors profiles

KASB Region 9
Gary Yost
Otis-Bison
USD 403

When he retired in 2005 after 40 years in the classroom, a local board member – who was also a friend – asked Gary Yost if he would consider running for his seat on the board.

I love kids and have always wanted all children to do the best that they are capable of achieving,” he said. “I thought that I could provide insight from the other side of the desk.”

One area of interest for Yost is in finding ways to pay teachers more by cutting costs at the district level.

“I am always looking for ways to make our district more efficient. If we can cut transportation, heating and electric costs we will have more money for staff wages. I know how hard most teachers work to see that their students do their best, and we all know that our teachers are way underpaid,” he said.

His service on the KASB Board of Directors in 2011 began in a similar way; he was asked to consider serving, this time by then-KASB President Frank Henderson, Jr.

“I was appointed to finish out an unexpired term, and at the end of that term I ran to fill the seat,” Yost said.

He appreciates KASB’s focus on leading the conversation in Kansas about issues relating to public schools, and the Association’s commitment to accuracy.

“KASB is the one source that gives the facts which allows others to make decisions based on facts not agendas,” he said.

Joining the KASB Board of Directors brought Yost a chance to continue learning and at the same time an opportunity to continue teaching, though in a slightly different way.

“It has given me much more insight about education issues that other schools face. We all have much in common as well as some great differences,” he said. “I hope...

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Region 11
Pam Robinson
Blue Valley
USD 229

Pam Robinson, Blue Valley USD 229 board member, has a deep history with public education. She was a classroom teacher for 15 years, then continued her involvement in education through volunteer work, serving on board and building advisory committees and PTO president for seven years before joining her local board of education.

“I believe very strongly in public education and running for the school board just seemed like a logical next step,” she said.

While initially hesitant to enter the politics of running a campaign, Robinson said the support of her family convinced her she had what it takes to get through that first campaign and election in 2003. She has proven she has what it takes many times over since then.

KASB’s governance structure provides for individual representation on the board of directors, nominating committee and legislative committee from the five largest school district members by enrollment. These districts are assigned a region number and the local boards appoint their representative to serve on the board of directors.

Robinson joined the KASB Board of Directors in June 2005 as Region 11 (Blue Valley USD 229) vice-president, but her interest and involvement in KASB began a few years earlier when she filled in for a fellow board member who could not attend the August 2003 legislative committee meeting.

“The first big lesson was to think about districts other than my own and try to walk in their shoes,” Robinson said. “Meeting and talking to board members from all across the state, I am amazed at how we have similar challenges. In the end we are all there to serve our communities and their students,” she said.

Robinson attended seminars and meetings, and with each interaction she said she became more convinced of the important role KASB had in supporting Kansas public education.

“The diversity of our districts makes us a strong association,” she said. “KASB brings us together and helps us become better board members, better districts and a better state. Some would like to pit us against each other, but I love finding the ways we are similar and can support each other,” she said.

After serving on the KASB Nominating Committee for Judy Lair’s nomination for president, Robinson said she was inspired to offer her name up for the honor of serving the Association. To continue gaining perspective, Robinson attended KASB seminars, traveling to Washington, D.C. for the NSBA Federal Relations Network meetings and in 2008 graduated from KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow program.

Robinson served as KASB president in 2009.

“While a member of the executive committee, my proudest moment at KASB was calling John Heim in 2010 to offer him the job as the executive director,” Robinson said. “I believed so very strongly in the mission of the Association, and I am honored by the opportunity to stay involved and continue to lead it into the future.”

She left the KASB Board of Directors in December 2010 after completing her past-president term, then was appointed in June 2016 for the future.”

She left the KASB Board of Directors in December 2010 after completing her past-president term, then was appointed in June 2016 for the future.”

Robinson’s service to her local district began as a parent representative on...

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Gary Yost profile
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that they have also learned about some of the pluses as well as the minuses of small schools.”

Yost is quick to add, “We think there are many more pluses than minuses, however.”

Otis-Bison USD has 223 students and is more central Kansas than Western Kansas, Yost said.

“We have been very advanced in our use of technology for many years,” Yost said, “Our tech coordinator is a past student and keeps us on the cutting edge. We have had one to one laptops with all students for several years, and we have a robotics class that the kids really love.”

One recent project gave high school students a chance to collaborate with others by turning an idea into a sellable product.

“The entrepreneur class researched and designed bread cutting boards, then the woods class made the boards, and the entrepreneur class successfully marketed the boards,” Yost said. “It was a great learning tool for all the students.”

Otis-Bison students are very successful in many areas, Yost said.

“We have had both boys and girl state champions in weightlifting, and that program has done much to build students pride and confidence in their abilities to improve,” he said.

The community and board take particular care when it comes to their facilities.

“We have upgraded our facilities every year, new windows, new bleachers, etc. Visitors comment on how nice our buildings look even though they are not new,” Yost said. “Our staff take great pride in making our buildings look great.”

As a local farmer, Yost is closely tied to the community. In the past he has served as choir director and vice-president of the men’s club for his local church and a board member for Farm Bureau. His local board service has included a term as vice-president, governmental relations chair and membership of the board’s negotiations team.

Yost’s service on the KASB Board means he can continue to bring new ideas and ways to improve back to his home district.

“I learn so much by having the opportunity to interact with students, staff, patrons and other board members from all over the state and nation,” he said.

Pam Robinson profile
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the district’s curriculum and instruction committee.

“This was the first committee I served on when my son was six months old, and he is now 24,” she said.

In the intervening years, and in addition to her volunteer work with the PTO, she has served on many committees and advisory boards – including technology, student services, facility planning finance, student activities, design and construction - some as a parent representative and some as a board representative. She currently serves on the Johnson County Library Board.

“Blue Valley was a great district when I came on the board in 2003,” Robinson said. “We hired a new superintendent in 2004 and that pushed us even further. Our strategic planning process and community conversations help us chart a course of even higher achievement.”

One outgrowth of that planning process was the Blue Valley Center for Advanced Professional Studies, a signature program for the district.

Robinson would find it hard to list just one thing she likes best about being a board member in the district of close to 23,000 students.

“Seeing the kids being excited about learning, handing the graduates their diplomas and watching them succeed in the world, working with and talking to parents and our community about our great district, I truly value it all,” she said.

“We recently had the opportunity to hire a new superintendent a few months ago,” she said, “I know he will lead us to new heights.”

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KASB re-brands insurance services to Risk Management

Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

KASB insurance services has changed its name and expanded what it has to offer.

The division is now called KASB Risk Management. Risk Management Director Rod Spangler said the name was changed so the Insurance Agency would better identify as a “strategic risk partner” with its members.

In the business operation of schools, there are tremendous risks, Spangler said. “KASB Risk Management's goal is to help our members identify and potentially reduce those risks. We offer risk solution products and services to reduce or eliminate their risk,” Spangler said.

“We added ‘Risk’ to our name because our members face a substantial volume of risks on the business side of school operations,” he said. While many “vendors” exist in this arena to assist schools with risk solutions, these solutions are typically centered on a product(s) solution. What is missing in this area is a lack of clarity and understanding about how actively managing your risks can actually better support student success, he said. Funding for potential risks can be a substantial drain on a district’s budget, while a rigorous review and understanding of those costs should bring about better use of the expenditure and those dollars can be better used inside the classroom supporting student success.

The division offers workers compensation insurance, property and casualty insurance, student accident insurance, a natural gas consortium called KJUMP and Section 125 & voluntary insurances.

In addition, starting Oct. 1, KASB Risk Management will offer health insurance consulting. “In the last three to five years, the greatest need in risk reduction is centered around health insurance because it is a substantial cost not only to the employer, but the employee as well,” Spangler said.

“While they have many solutions in Kansas for health insurance, what they don’t have is a true consultative approach to the issue,” he said.

Employee benefit cost is currently more than 15 percent of general operating budgets as of last year, up from 3 percent 10 years ago.

Spangler said KASB Risk Management’s health consulting will provide guidance to school entities so they can change the way they view and purchase health insurance and can understand the levers that impact rates. In addition, some KASB members do not have the staff to devote to risk management, while KASB Risk Management is uniquely positioned to provide that risk guidance and support, Spangler said.

KASB has 107 educational entities in its workers compensation pool; 65 in property and casualty and 177 in the gas consortium. KASB estimates school entities have saved $28 million in natural gas costs over 15 years by joining the consortium.

The re-branding into KASB Risk Management took effect July 1. Spangler said the division will continually monitor the impact of the name change. The ultimate goal is to create a brand that members know exists and provide strategic guidance to our members that will ultimately lead to the better use of funds, reduction of risk, and reallocation of funds to directly support Kansas student’s success, he said.

Leadership grants available to schools

Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

The Kansas Leadership Center is offering its Transformation Grants to school districts wishing to increase and improve leadership capacity in their communities.

The grants, offered at the $25,000 and $50,000 level, will allow recipients one year to place their members in any of KLC’s programs. The first level will cover the registration fees for 40 members to participate; the second level offers the opportunity to 80 members of the recipient organization.

“Nothing impacts the future of Kansas more than your ability to provide every student a great education,” says KLC Vice President Julia Fabris McBride. “The Kansas Leadership Center is making a special effort to encourage public school districts to apply for these Leadership Transformation Grants so that your administrators, board members, teachers and staff can build the leadership skills necessary to address problems and take advantage of opportunities in your schools and the broader community.

The application deadline is September 30. Go to http://kansasleadershipcenter.org/transformationgrant for more information. Small and mid-size school districts are encouraged to work with surrounding districts to apply for the grants together.

The Kansas Leadership Center is funded and supported by a core operating grant from the Kansas Health Foundation.

The future is now continued from page 1

• Kansas schools should move away from a one-size-fits-all system and focus on the success of each individual student in achieving high academic skills and employability and citizenship skills.

We urge parents, students, guardians, teachers, school staff, board members and legislators to use these reports to gather information and engage policymakers on school finance and other education issues.

While the U.S. presidential race is grabbing most of the headlines, Kansans must stay informed about their legislative, State Board of Education and judicial retention elections. These elections will have a major impact on our Kansas public school system and the future of Kansas. Just as it has taken hard work, resources and dedication to maintain our tradition of sound public schools, it will take a continued effort to get our schools where we want them to be tomorrow.
KASB Board hears advocacy reports, risk management expansion plans

by Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

KASB Board of Directors worked its way through a full agenda August 27, led by incoming president Amy Martin, Olathe USD 233.

The board met jointly with the KASB Legislative Committee to begin the meeting. Rob Gilligan, KASB governmental relations specialist, led off the advocacy report with a review of August primary election results and a look ahead to the November general election.

Lori Blake, Southeast of Saline USD 306 and KASB Region 5 vice-president, and Mark Tallman, KASB Associate Executive Director, reported on the KSDE Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teacher Shortage and possible implications. Blake and three Kansas school board members served on the task force: Margaret Nightengale, Ulysses USD 214, Pam Robinson, Blue Valley USD 229 and Betty Arnold, Wichita USD 259.

Rod Stewart, Washington County USD 108 and KASB past president, noted that the 52 recommendations in the task force’s final report were also reviewed by the KSDE Professional Standards Committee, an advisory committee he serves on for the state education department.

The advocacy report concluded with a discussion of the state budget and revenue outlook, presented by Tallman, along with a review of upcoming advocacy-related activities.

The legislative committee then moved to another room to meet for the remainder of the day.

First up on the regular agenda for the board of directors was a report from Rod Spangler, executive director of KASB Risk Management. Spangler provided an overview of the department’s renewed focus on providing support to KASB members in helping them manage risk. By rebranding to KASB Risk Management, the department can be more strategic in expanding into areas that will bring greater opportunities for members.

Spangler furnished an overview of areas for expansion for KASB Risk Management, including health insurance consulting.

“There is a whole lot that can be done in risk management by finding more appropriate, fiscally responsible products for our members,” Spangler said. “The better you operate your business, the more money you have for the classroom.”

Other reports included a review of executive staff goals by Dr. John Heim, KASB executive director and a report on KASB’s fiscal year and yearly audit presented by Randy Weseman, KASB assistant executive director for finance and operations.

Donna Whiteman, KASB assistant executive director for legal services and general counsel for the association, reported on the dissolution of the M.A. McGhehey Memorial Education Trust.

The fund was established after the death in 1984 of Dr. McGhehey, who served as executive director of the Association from 1961-1982. The trust was established to honor his commitment and contributions to public education with a specific purpose to provide educational benefits to students enrolled at the Kansas Regents’ four year colleges and universities or Washburn University of Topeka who were pursuing the study of educational law. Over the years the trust also expanded its mission to assist with the cost of research for graduate students working on a dissertation or thesis.

“Our petition to the court stated we believe the $17,000 remaining in the trust will better serve the spirit of the trust by distributing the funds among the seven regent universities and Washburn,” Whiteman said.

Whiteman noted that KASB consulted with surviving members of McGhehey’s family who were in complete agreement with the plan.

The board of directors also reviewed a facility master plan produced for the association by P1 Group, a KASB prestigious partner. The master plan was reviewed with the board by Dana Dunn, P1 Group representative.

The board received a written report from Frank Henderson, Jr., a board member from Seaman USD 345. Henderson is the Western Region representative on the NSBA Board of Directors and serves as an ex officio member on the KASB board. He was also recently selected by NSBA to help guide the newly-formed NSBA Equity Department, bringing a more centralized focus to equipping board members to meet the unique needs of students.

A review of the regional vice-president seats up for election in December rounded out the day for the KASB Board of Directors. Elections will be held on Sunday, Dec. 4 for Regions 1, 4, 5, 6 and 10.

The next meeting of the KASB Board of Directors will be November 6 in Topeka.

2016 Fall Education Summits

*09.27.16 Sublette Service Center*
*09.28.16 Oakley Service Center*
*09.29.16 Salina BiCentennial Center*
*10.04.16 Blue Valley USD 229 Ed Ctr*
*10.05.16 Girard Greenbush*
*10.06.16 Hutchinson ESSDACK*
Upcoming Workshops

*Season Pass Eligible

**Policy Webinar** 6:00 p.m. Sept 12
* **Becoming an Effective Supervisor** Sept 20 Hays
* **Becoming an Effective Supervisor** Sept 22 Topeka
* **Fall Summit** Sept 27 Sublette
* **Fall Summit** Sept 28 Oakley
* **Fall Summit** Sept 29 Salina
* **Fall Summit** Oct 4 Blue Valley
* **Fall Summit** Oct 5 Greenbush/Girard
* **Fall Summit** Oct 6 Hutchinson
* **Special Education Half-Day Workshops** Oct 11 Topeka
* School Finance/Aspiring Supts Oct 19 Topeka

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