State Board moves ahead on science standards

The Kansas State Board of Education voted 8-2 to approve new science standards. The vote came after three hours of public comment on Common Core reading and math standards and the proposed science standards.

The action follows a Legislative Session marked by efforts to block, defund or delay these standards, including a bill aimed at delaying the new science standards until next April. That bill was passed by the Senate on the final day of the session but was rejected by the House.

The State Board vote is unlikely to end the debate, however. Legislators and organizations opposing the Common Core have vowed to continue efforts next session and into the 2014 elections. All 125 State Representative and five of 10 State Board positions will be on the ballot.

A bit of background

The Common Core academic standards are reading and math standards developed under the leadership of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (which represents the counterparts of the Kansas Education Commissioner). The purpose was to allow states to join in a common framework for K-12 student expectations. States were allowed some leeway in adopting the standards. Kansas adopted modified Common Core standards as the state’s Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.

One of the main criticisms of the Common Core is that it is a federal initiative. States are not required to adopt the Common Core, but the Obama Administration has encouraged states to do so by making it a factor in Race to the Top grant funding and No Child Left Behind waivers, and by funding development of new tests based on the Common Core standards. Kansas is not participating in the Race to the Top, but has received an NCLB waiver and is a member of the Smarter Balanced Test consortium with other states.

The Next Generation Science Standards approved are not part of the Common Core process, but Kansas participated with 25 other states in developing the standards. Much of the controversy over the science standards appears to focus on the treatment of evolution and climate change.

The debate continues

At the May State Board meeting, a number of Common Core opponents spoke at the Citizens’ Open Forum. KASB appeared as a supporter of the Common Core as part of the NCLB waiver. School superintendents and other supporters promoted a large contingent in defense of both the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards.

Another big group of opponents appeared, making clear that opponents are working to strengthen organized efforts against the Common Core and related assessment issues. A number of legislators on both sides of the issues also attended or spoke. If opposition to the Common Core continues to grow, it is an issue local board members and other school leaders will have to face with their staff, parents and community.

This has been a discussion at the KASB Summer Advocacy Meetings across the state this June. The meetings run through the end of June. Please visit www.kasb.org to see dates and locations and to register.

For additional information and background about this issue, please see The Tallman Education Report at http://tallmankasb.blogspot.com.

Passing of the gavel

Left: Dennis Depew. Right: Frank Henderson, Jr. See story on page three for more.
Graduation rates rising in Kansas and the nation

Kansas students graduate at higher rates than the national average and most other states in the region, according to two recently released national reports. The graduation rate for both Kansas and the nation is on the increase.

The good news about Kansas public schools comes from two well-respected research sources: the "2012 Digest of Education Statistics," published by the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education), and "Diplomas Count," published by Education Week and the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

Both report the percentage of students graduating high school within four years has increased significantly over the past decade. However, the two studies come up with somewhat different results, with the "Digest" usually several percentage points higher.

According to the "Digest," the Kansas four-year graduation rate rose from 77.1 percent in 2000, when Kansas ranked 17th in the nation, to 83.0 percent in 2010, ranking eighth. "Diplomas Count" shows the Kansas graduation rate rising from 73.5 percent in 2000 to 80 percent in 2010, and the state ranking increasing from 17th to 12th.

The national graduation rate increased by about the same amount, with the U.S. average in 2010 reaching about where Kansas was in 2000 in both reports.

Although these new reports do not go past 2010, a study by the U.S. Department of Education last fall put the Kansas graduation rate at 83 percent in 2011. That report used a new uniform methodology for all states, but does not provide comparable data for previous years.

The "Digest" also reports the percentage of population aged 18-24 with a high school diploma, based on a three year average. For 2008-10, this report shows Kansas with an 85.1 percent completion rate, up from 78.3 percent in 2000. However, Kansas' ranking in this area dropped slightly, from 17th to 19th. The national average increased from 74.7 percent to 83.1 percent.

Graduation rates in Kansas began spiking upward after the Legislature approved significant funding increases following the Montoy school finance decision in 2005, directing more money to "at risk" students who are less likely to graduate. The national graduation rate increased at about the same rate, but so did education funding in other states. In fact, between 2000 and 2011, national spending per pupil was not only higher than Kansas, but increased slightly more. Kansas per pupil spending increased 50.9 percent, and the U.S. average increased 52.8 percent.

Each of the 10 states with a higher average of the four high school completion rates listed above spent more than Kansas in 2011. The 10 states have an average completion rate of 84.4 percent, 1.2 percent higher than Kansas, but spent an average of $12,779, or 35 percent more than Kansas.

More information on this topic can be found in the Tallman Education Report online at http://tallmankasb.blogspot.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average Graduation Rate 2010-11</th>
<th>Current Spending Per Pupil, 2011</th>
<th>Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Meals</th>
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<td>88.4%</td>
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<td>87.2%</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top 10 Average</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Average</td>
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<td>48.1%</td>
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Association leader recognized, board members in the spotlight

The College of Education at Kansas State University is recognizing the top administrator of the Kansas Association of School Boards with one of its most prestigious awards. John Heim, executive director of the association, is the recipient of the 2013 Dan and Cheryl Yunk Award from the college. Named for the Yunks, who were both exemplary teachers and administrators throughout their careers in the Manhattan-Ogden school system, the award recognizes the importance of educational administrators in establishing environments that promote student learning.

School Board Member C. Patrick Woods, Topeka USD 501, has been named a “Top 50 Kansans You Should Know” by “Ingrams”, Kansas City’s Business Magazine.

School Board Member Keith Ostrander, Jefferson County North USD 339, completed his final board meeting in June, 2013. Mr. Ostrander served on the board for 31 years, with 13 years as board president. When asked what he was most proud of, he said “It’s the people I’ve had the privilege to meet and be around; the students, teachers, administrators, board members and others. It’s been the people, not the material things.”

Have good news you want to share? Send it to KASB, attention Andrea Hartzell at ahartzell@kasb.org.
KASB Board of Directors meets June 15, approves budget

The KASB Board of Directors met June 15, 2013, in Topeka. This was the final meeting for Dennis Depew, Neodesha USD 461, as president of the association. Frank Henderson, Jr., Seaman USD 345, will begin his term as president starting July 1, with Depew serving as past president. Rod Stewart, Washington County USD 108, will assume his duties as president-elect of the association on July 1. The official passing of the gavel ceremony took place immediately following the regular board meeting.

Board action items included adoption of the 2013-14 association budget and approval to repair the front and portions of the back parking lot on the KASB property. The Board approved the KASB Workers Compensation Fund, Inc., contract and authorized staff to create a new logo for the association.

The Board also approved appointments to the Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. Board of Trustees. This included reappointment of Mike Munson, Arkansas City USD 470; Marcia Giessel, Ft. Larned USD 495; Ed Becker, Girard USD 248; and Carolyn Gaston, Geary Co. USD 475 and approval of new members Lonny Hardwick, Vermillion USD 380 and Marilyn Noone, Wallace Co. USD 241.

Brian Jordan, KASB director of leadership services, presented an orientation for board members on the changes in professional staff evaluation as a part of the ESEA NCLB Waiver. KASB has endorsed the McREL evaluation process, and is currently working with more than 90 districts in the state on training.

Don Shimkus, Region 6 vice president, gave an overview of the KASB region he represents. This includes the school districts in Butler, Cowley, Sedgwick and Sumner Counties with the exception of Wichita USD 259. Barb Fuller, Wichita USD 259, represents that district on the board of directors.

The annual KASB Employee Recognition Banquet was held Saturday evening following the passing of the gavel ceremony. This year’s honorees included Sheryl Fincham, five years of service, currently the bookkeeper; Andrea Hartzell, 15 years, currently the communications specialist; and Kathy Tallman, 20 years, currently serving as the executive director’s executive assistant.

The next KASB Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2013.

FROM THE KASB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A Nation of Kings, or Wimps?

I just finished reading (listening to actually - I spend a lot of time behind the wheel) “The Boy Kings of Texas: A Memoir,” by Domingo Martinez. It is a fabulous book about a young man’s struggle to build a better life than the one he experiences in the barrio of Brownsville, Texas, without losing his family and culture.

Young Domingo doesn’t fit in his environment and uses a sarcastic mouth and sharp wit to cope. The most poignant moment in the story is when he takes a severe beating from his cocaine-fueled uncle. Martinez recalls that his uncle was channeling the rage of his entire family, incensed by Domingo’s desire to “be better than them.” The culture is such that if an individual tries to make himself better, it is considered an insult to all of those around him: as if the person was saying “if you need to be better, then I must be bad.”

Recently, a friend shared an article from “Psychology Today” called “A Nation of Wimps.” The author of this article described how some parents seem obsessed with making life easier for their kids by removing any chance of failure. A statement from a young man who says, “I wish my parents had some hobby other than me,” best sums up the article.

The article describes extreme examples of parents getting a Section 504 accommodation for seventh grader who “has difficulty with Gestalt-thinking.” Wow. A 13-year-old who cannot see the big picture! He described how over-protective parents can be found everywhere from the playground to college campuses. I was surprised the first time a college president told me that as a superintendent I wasn’t alone in getting phone calls from angry parents. (I’m trying to imagine my mother complaining to KU Chancellor Archie Dykes about the fact that I got a ‘C’ on a Freshman English paper.)

So what does this “Psychology Today” article have to do with a book about trying to break the cycle of poverty? Both describe the extremes an average teacher deals with everyday in the classroom. Our classrooms, schools and districts need strategies for meeting the needs of both extremes and everything in the middle. All of these parents want what is best for their children; the problem is in their execution. Districts that want to be successful need to understand how to work with all kinds of students, and to create a successful learning experience for all.
Whole Board Training and Professional Staff Development opportunities in your district

Why participate?
- On-site training enables more individuals to attend.
- Several districts in an area may join together to save costs.
- This reduces time constraints and travel time for board members.
- Individualized instruction is customized to meet local needs.
- Handout information is provided to participants.
- Follow-up activities are available upon request.
- Practical suggestions and guidelines are offered to address local issues.

A few topic ideas:
- Roles and responsibilities of the board and the superintendent
- Teamwork
- Job descriptions for the board and superintendent
- Board self-evaluations
- Goal setting & strategic planning
- Board-Superintendent relations
- Crisis planning
- Demographics
- Legal rights and responsibilities
- Policy issues
- Sexual harassment
- Special education

Contact KASB Leadership or Legal Services staff today to schedule your training! Call 800.432.2471, email legal@kasb.org or edservices@kasb.org.