The Kansas State Board of Education met in its new boardroom in the Landon Building Nov. 12 and 13. Two significant agenda items dominated each of the two days.

Results of the Spring 2013 assessments were released publically at 3:00 p.m. Nov. 12 just as the State Board was receiving them. The scores in both math and reading fell, but graduation rates rose both for all students as well as all the sub-groups. KSDE staff posited that the 2013 tests had many items on them that were based on standards that may have not been taught, either at all or possibly another grade. No particular percentage was settled on, but greater than 50 percent could not be ruled out.

The fall off of the last two years puts the reading scores back in the 2008-09 range and the math scores back in the 2007 range. Scores on both tests were climbing in the mid-2000s when school funding started to increase.

On Wednesday, the board received recommendations for assessments starting in the 2014-15 school year. For grades three thru eight, students would take the Smarter Balanced Assessment currently being developed. For high school students - by the end of their junior year there would be a choice, either Smarter Balanced or a USDE approved assessment, like the ACT or SAT. There was significant discussion about the money necessary to implement the new tests as well as the role of KU’s Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation. No decision was reached, but Commissioner Diane DeBacker has stated earlier she expected the assessment decision to be finalized in December to be ready for the start of the 2014 Legislative Session.

As a result, staff was asked to nail down with CETE costs depending on what work it was asked to do.

The assessment discussion led the board into the next agenda item, an update on the waiver under which Kansas has been exempted from certain ESEA requirements. KSDE staff explained the waiver was good for two years, so a new one will be submitted this January. The waiver was amended such that there would be no double testing of those students taking the Smarter Balanced field test, and the use of student growth measures used to inform personnel decisions would be pushed back to 2016-17. The board was also shown what the new performance levels would look like compared to the old.

State department officials are meeting in December with federal officials to discuss Kansas’ current “high-risk” conditional assessment. It’s also possible for Congress to make progress on reauthorizing ESEA, but knowledgeable observers believe any work on it will be put off until after the 2014 elections if it is not taken up in January or February.

Other agenda items included:

- A visit from the five schools, three high schools and two elementary schools, that were recognized as US Department of Education Blue Ribbon schools. Different factors are used to select them and include building level, improved scores, high scores and free/reduced lunch rates. The schools were Campus High School, Haysville USD 261; Chapman High School, Chapman USD 473; Mission Trail Elementary School, Blue Valley USD 229; Neosho Heights Elementary School; Oswego USD 504, and West Franklin High School, West Franklin USD 287;
- Received the annual report from the Kansas State High School Activities Association;
- Heard from a Pittsburg State University delegation that described the efforts of its Woods Department that designed and built much of the décor and furnishings in the new boardroom; and
- Received first quarter reports from the Kansas Schools of the Deaf and Blind.

Find minutes, agendas for upcoming meetings and more State Board information online at: www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=54.
Three months ago I announced that we are going to the Super Bowl! Many of you expressed doubt about my prediction, even to the point of questioning my sanity. Now the Chiefs are 9-0, maybe 10-0 by the time you read this. How do you like me now? Of course the premise of the previous column was to make the point about getting better every year, and every day. We know about the Chiefs, so how has KASB been doing at getting better?

When I started in this position over three years ago now, I travelled the state and asked our members how we were doing. The response I got was that we have great services, especially in the advocacy and legal departments. If we were the Chiefs, these programs would be our strong defense. (Does that make Tallman the KASB Tamba?)

The questions I got were about our leadership programs. What were we doing to help improve district leadership teams, to help improve student achievement? The first step in answering this question was to ask the board if we are committed to this service. The answer was a resounding yes as the board set a new mission for KASB of focusing on Service, Advocacy, and Student Achievement.

This is the equivalent of ownership telling the team's GM we want to focus on the offense too, and that is what we did. As a long-time Denver-hater it is hard for me to acknowledge this, but when Denver added Peyton Manning and Wes Welker to their offense, production improved. The stats tell the story. Best offense in the NFL. At KASB, the stats tell the story as well.

In the 2010 school year, the KASB Leadership Department did 12 superintendent searches, no strategic plans, 21 onsite board trainings, and one McREL Leadership Training. Compare that with the past 12 months: KASB has done 21 superintendent searches (up 9), seven strategic plans (up 7), 88 onsite board trainings (up an astounding 67) and provided seven MCREL Leadership Trainings. Over the past three years, forty districts have trained their entire leadership team in the McREL Leadership Model and two of the state’s largest districts have started training their staff. One hundred one districts have been trained by KASB staff on using the McREL evaluation system for teachers, principals, and/or superintendents. The improvement is Peytonesque.

My Chiefs don’t have Denver’s offense, but KASB has added a great offensive team to an already tough defense. This will help us serve you better. If you are looking to improve your student achievement, you would be remiss in not contacting our Leadership Services team to see how they can help.

It also bears mentioning that KASB’s Insurance Services team is performing at high levels. To extend the metaphor, they might be the special teams of our team. In the past year, KASB Worker’s Comp gave a refund back to past members and added 17 members to the pool (21 percent growth). Our property and casualty insurance has taken off, increasing membership by growing from zero three years ago to 17 districts now, and we keep giving new quotes. If you are looking to improve your coverage and possibly save some money in the process, give them a call.

The Chiefs may not make it to the Super Bowl, but they are getting better every day. At KASB, there is no Super Bowl, but every day your districts are under the same microscope as championship teams. We aim to help you avoid distractions, stay focused, and to get better every day. We do this by getting better ourselves.

KASB staff news and notes

KASB Marketing Specialist Eric Meyer has accepted a position as public relations director for Rebound Physical Therapy in Topeka. Eric’s last day with KASB was Nov. 20. We thank Eric for his two and a half years with the association, and wish him the best in his new job!

Beginning in early November the KASB legal department gained a new legal secretary - Jan Martin. Jan comes to KASB from the activities department at Seaman USD 345.

As you’ve called and visited the KASB office the last month or so you’ve probably become acquainted with the new voices/faces at the front desk. Nancy Hutzell takes care of manning phones and the front desk in the mornings. Shaneice McNabney covers afternoons.

You might remember our former reception Tudi Brichacek retired. She wanted to say thanks to everyone for their cards, thoughts and well-wishes.
Navigating the digital world: Issues with e-mail newsletters and more

“I sent that email out last week and you are on the list I sent it to!” Have you ever been told this and not received that email? As much as we love what technology has done for our lives when it’s working smoothly, we can get frustrated when it’s not. With communication today being technology related there are many ways to get to where you want to be and no one right way to make it happen. With all these ways to communicate we, at KASB, strive to provide a culture of collaboration and service. Email communication is a popular, efficient means of getting information out in a timely, convenient manner. We send out emails about the services we offer on a regular basis. When we send out the various publications via email and don’t hear back from you we assume you received it. The only way we know that you didn’t get it is if you tell us - and we want to thank the people who have!

We send out several publications each month designed for specific people. Our Clerk News is meant for school board clerks and is sent out once a month. It contains state and federal deadlines, policy changes and updates, upcoming seminar dates and monthly reminders designed to assist clerks and treasurers in meeting the challenges of their office. Our School Board Review is sent out twice a month and features the latest association news, state and federal education news, legislative updates and upcoming KASB seminar dates. A link to the electronic School Board Review can always be found in the bi-weekly Association News emails. The Research Bulletin is a newsletter produced by the KASB research specialist and provides districts with a variety of data collected from our surveys. It is posted online and mentioned in the Association News emails. A synopsis of the Bulletin can also be found in the School Board Review.

In order to deliver these publications we use a program designed specifically for sending out bulk email so that it isn’t seen by firewalls as suspicious. It is recommended that the servers delivering our newsletter be whitelisted. If you are not receiving our publications that you signed up to receive please get the information below to your IT department. They can add it to your district email application so you can receive your information. The Delivery IPs are:

72.26.195.64/27
74.63.47.96/27
173.231.138.192/27
173.231.139.0/24
173.231.176.0/21
173.231.184.0/21
205.201.128.0/20
198.2.128.0/18

Application IPs can be listed in the outbound whitelist and those are:

184.173.139.88/29
74.86.17.104/29
184.173.96.192/29
184.173.175.192/29
184.173.182.72/29
184.172.40.8/29
205.201.128.0/20

If your IT people have any questions please have them contact me here at KASB (ktibbs@kasb.org). I will be more than happy to help ensure our systems are communicating properly. We strive to keep our information relevant, timely and useful. We are here to help!

KLFA continues commitment to advocate for public education

Kansas Learning First Alliance (KLFA) met October 24 at KASB to continue its work for public education. The meeting began with a legislative update from Karen Godfrey (KNEA), Tom Krebs (KASB), and Cheryl Semmel (USA) that highlighted the need to get accurate information about education to legislators and communities to counteract the misinformation being spread. There is a concerted effort to undermine the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards and adequate funding for all public schools. It is critical legislators and community members visit schools and see the great work being done. A number of powerful resources for advocating for public schools and current initiatives were shared: Protect Kansas Schools, KCCRS Toolkit, and FHSU Docking Institute for Public Policy.

Several members gathered prior to the official start time for a quick tutorial setting up a Twitter account, so everyone was ready to experiment with the power of social media later in the meeting. Social media can connect KLFA members to students and the broader world, and information can be shared quickly and effectively. Members shared tips on how to make these tools work as we advocate for strong public education. Google Moderator was introduced as a tool to facilitate online conversations.

Members furthered the conversation in small collaborative groups. They focused on how to share KLFA resources and how to involve members of organizations and communities in supporting schools. Some districts are using appealing posts of students engaged in KCCRS lessons to inform the public, and some districts are holding events to provide information. The wrap-up conversation acknowledged the usefulness of social media, but also stressed the value of other avenues: PSAs, radio, in-person presentations, and brochures in community offices. Leaders of all of our organizations will be getting emails encouraging them to use the KLFA video and talking points.

A generous $250 contribution from KASL to the KLFA Educational Foundation was announced. The Foundation is a 501(3) and can accept tax deductible gifts.

Future meeting dates are Jan. 9 at the KNEA building, April 9, and May 15 (webinar).

Learn more about the Kansas Learning First Alliance online at www.klf.org. They will also be presenting a breakout session at the 2013 KASB Convention in Wichita on Saturday, December 7. Their session will focus on how to become part of the school improvement conversation.
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>McREL Superintendent Evaluation Workshop (a.m.) - Eudora</td>
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<td>McREL Central Office Evaluation Workshop (p.m.) - Eudora</td>
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<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>McREL Superintendent Evaluation Workshop (a.m.) - Greenbush</td>
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<td>McREL Central Office Evaluation Workshop (p.m.) - Greenbush</td>
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<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Early Bird Seminar - Meeting All Kids Needs - Wichita</td>
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<td>Early Bird Seminar - Winter School Law Conference - Wichita</td>
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<td>Early Bird Seminar - KSSA Day w/KASB - Wichita</td>
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<td>Dec. 6-8</td>
<td>KASB Convention - Wichita</td>
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<td>Jan. 9</td>
<td>Negotiations Seminar 2 - Hays</td>
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<td>Jan. 16-17</td>
<td>Governmental Relations Seminar - Topeka</td>
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<td>Jan. 17</td>
<td>Practicum in Negotiations Seminar - Topeka</td>
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<td>Feb. 27</td>
<td>Clerks Seminar - Topeka</td>
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Watch www.kasb.org or more information!