KASB concludes Advocacy Meetings on finance, standards and negotiations

Over 400 school district leaders attended 24 KASB advocacy meetings in June focusing on three issues: school funding, academic standards and assessment, and board negotiations with teachers. The discussions and data gathered will be used to develop KASB’s legislative positions for 2014.

“Even though the 2013 Legislative Session just concluded, we need to begin working on our goals for next session,” said Mark Tallman, KASB associate executive director for advocacy. During the two-hour meetings, Tallman reviewed KASB’s program for educational improvement in Kansas called “First in Education, the Kansas Way.” The plan focuses on the goal of making Kansas the top achieving state in the nation for educational outcomes. It has three core principles: raising educational standards, providing suitable school finance, and strengthening local leadership.

The June advocacy meetings focused on gathering feedback and information that was compiled and will be shared with all members and the KASB Legislative Committee. The committee will meet July 13, to begin developing recommendations for new or amended KASB lobbying positions (see story on page four). Final action on KASB’s advocacy agenda takes place at the Delegate Assembly, December 8, in Wichita.

Copies of the handouts used at the advocacy meeting are available on the KASB website, and the compiled results will be released in the coming weeks.
Basing discussion on facts, not nostalgia

Mark Tallman from KASB has completed a 24-stop tour of the state designed to learn more about what our members think about improving education in Kansas. The Southwest Kansas leg of the tour included Hutchinson, and among other highlights, I was able to introduce Mark to my favorite BBQ joint. (He says he was impressed, but that may have been just because I bought.) Hutchinson High School happens to be my alma mater, and on my morning run I took a jaunt by my old school, invoking strong feelings of nostalgia.

Nostalgia is a seductive liar, according to George Ball, and how often do we see the truth of this? When I was in school, if you got in trouble at school, you got in trouble at home, too. When I was in school, we had high standards. When I was in school, if you got in trouble at school, you got in trouble at home, too. When I was in school, we had to work hard!

An exploration of the facts, as evidenced by my high school transcripts, reveals that I needed 17 credits to graduate in 1976. I took double the state requirements for that time in math: two credits. Science: two 2 credits. I could go on, but it’s a bit embarrassing. Check what your high school requires for graduation now, and do some research on what the requirements were in the mid-1970s. You may be surprised. It generally amounts to about an extra year of school.

Standards today are higher than they have ever been; yet it is not enough. Criticism of education continues and the response has been to raise standards more. The Common Core was developed to increase standards nationwide. Educators and politicians as diverse as Tony Bennett, Jeb Bush and Arne Duncan have endorsed it. We need to push nostalgia aside and not yearn for what was, but continue to strive for what could be. The Common Core is a tool to get us there.

Another commonly held nostalgic view is that education didn’t used to cost as much as it does now. We need to be more efficient! Again, the seductive lie: data tells a different story. On his legislative tour, Mark explained that in the late-1970s we spent 3.5 percent of our income on public education. That percentage rose during the 80s and 90s, but has now dropped to an all-time low of 3.1 percent. By comparison, we spent a much lower percentage of our income on housing, food and vehicles in 1980 than we do now. [See table below]

It is interesting that we spend more on basic needs like housing and transportation without complaint, but we spend less on education and hear a cacophony of cries for efficiency. Having said that, schools do need to be efficient, but more importantly, schools need to be effective. The goal needs to be improving results for students in the most efficient way possible. The discussion needs to be based on facts, not on the seductive lie of nostalgia.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of income (1980)</th>
<th>% of income</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Price</td>
<td>350%</td>
<td>590% (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Car</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>69% (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread/Hamburger (annualized)</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.5% (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Education</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.1% (2013)</td>
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</tbody>
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KASB Research releases enrollment forecast, other data available

KASB Research Specialist Jim Hays has released a new report forecasting statewide headcount enrollment through the 2017-18 school year. The report notes several population and demographic trends in Kansas, including the growing Hispanic enrollment and the increases in births to Kansas residents. For the first time in at least 45 years, kindergarten and first grade enrollments in Kansas this fall will each exceed 38,000 students.

By the fall of 2017, Kansas total school enrollment will reach totals not seen since the “Baby Boom” of the 1960s. This will reflect not only increases in total births, but also an increase in the historic average of about 90 percent of children enrolling in the public schools. Not since 2006 has public school first grade enrollment fallen below 91 percent; an indication that fewer students are opting for non-public schools in Kansas.

The full report is available as a “pdf” link on the KASB website, or can be emailed on request.

The KASB Research Department has also completed all of its customary databases on aspects of the 12-13 school year. All the salary related databases are complete, as well as financial subjects, fees charged to students, enrollment information, provisions of negotiated agreements, and many other topics.

Call Jim Hays at KASB, or email him at research@kasb.org, to receive these and other data files via email.
Inspiring Student Success

FROM THE KASB LEGAL DEPARTMENT

The skinny on school snack regulations from the USDA

For those still hankering for a few more calories after a guilt-free school lunch, be aware that a new federal government rule expands the reach of federal school nutrition legislation into your vending machines as well. This interim final rule sets forth additional requirements to implement amendments made by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (“HHFKA”) to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (“CNA”) and the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (“NSLA”) for schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (“NSLP”) and the School Breakfast Program (“SBP”).

This rule amends the NSLP and SBP regulations to be consistent with the HHFKA. The HHFKA required the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture to promulgate regulations to establish nutrition standards for foods sold in schools other than those foods provided under the CNA and the NSLA. The HHFKA specifies that such nutrition standards may apply to all foods sold (a) outside the school meal programs; (b) on the school campus; and (c) at any time during the school day. Furthermore, the HHFKA requires that these standards be consistent with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and that the Secretary consider authoritative scientific recommendations for nutrition standards; existing school nutrition standards, including voluntary standards for beverages and snack foods; current state and local standards; the practical application of the nutrition standards; and special exemptions for infrequent school-sponsored fundraisers (other than fundraising through vending machines, school stores, snack bars, à la carte sales in the cafeteria, and any other exclusions determined by the Secretary).

The standards for food and beverages in this interim final rule represent minimum standards districts are required to meet. If desired, local school districts have the discretion to establish their own standards for non-program foods sold to students so long as those standards are consistent with the Federal ones. This rule also requires schools participating in the NSLP to make free, potable water available to kids at lunch and breakfast service locations.

A copy of the USDA’s 232 page document showcasing the new nutrition standards is available online at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/ allfoods_interimfinal.pdf. USDA also has abbreviated guidance documents and technical assistance publications available at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ Governance/Legislation/allfoods.htm. We recommend someone on the district’s staff, whether it is a food service director or other administrator, become familiar with the new rule to ensure a smooth transition into compliance with no loss of federal funding dollars.

In essence, when the rule takes effect in the 2014-2015 school year, school vending machines will be void of high calorie, low nutritional value snacks like mini doughnuts, cookies, candy bars, fried potato chips, and full-calorie sodas. As of the fall of 2014, all food sold in schools must be a whole grain-rich product; be mainly a fruit, vegetable, dairy, or protein food; be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable; or contain 10 percent of the daily value of one of the nutrients of public health concern in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (such as calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber). Such foods must also meet specified nutritional and portion size requirements.

However, note that these new standards do not apply to sales of food during non-school hours, on weekends, and at off-campus fundraising events, so it may be business as usual at your basketball concession stand so long as only food items meeting nutrition requirements are sold during times when the concession stand and school are both operating. The standards also provide a special exemption for infrequent fundraisers that may not meet the nutrition standards. It will be up to the Kansas State Department of Education to come forward with the frequencies with which these fundraising activities may take place.

Keep in mind that total implementation of this rule is not required immediately, as full implementation is not expected until July 1, 2014. In fact, the USDA will be seeking public comments on the rule until October 28, 2013, at which time the rule may be tweaked. Therefore, feel free to provide input on the new rule from your district’s perspective and any helpful, real-world suggestions for its amendment at www.regulations.gov.

Apply now: convention presenter, candidacy for president-elect designee

The 2013 KASB Convention is scheduled for December 6-8, 2013, in Wichita at the Hyatt Regency and Century II Convention Center.

The KASB Annual Convention attracts over 450 attendees from public education. Some will be new to school board service, while others will be experienced board members and administrators. Our convention attendees are looking for solid, practical skills and approaches they can take back and successfully apply in their districts—and they definitely appreciate opportunities for interactive learning experiences and discussion. They are also looking for new and innovative perspectives that will help resolve old issues. Find the form on the KASB website under Events/Registration.

The KASB Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for the office of president-elect designee. Continued high-quality leadership of the association depends on the true dedication put forth by someone who is truly interested in our future and the education of youth in Kansas. Find the application and more information in the News&Notes section of the KASB website. Applications must be postmarked by August 28, 2013.
KASB Legislative Committee to meet July 13 at KASB office in Topeka

The 2013 KASB Legislative Committee will hold its first meeting of the year on July 13 in Topeka. The committee is chaired by the Immediate Past President of the association, Dennis Depew, Neodesha USD 461. Members were appointed by President Frank Henderson, Jr., Seaman USD 345. A member is appointed from each of KASB’s 10 geographic regions, plus a member from the five largest member school districts by enrollment.

The purpose of the Legislative Committee is to make recommendations to the KASB Delegate Assembly regarding association positions on public policy issues. These positions and resolutions, which are adopted for one year, and permanent policy statements. Current KASB resolutions and policies are available on the KASB website.

Last year, the committee developed and the Delegate Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “First in Education, the Kansas Way.” Although it was adopted for one year only, it was anticipated that the basic goals of that resolution will continue to guide KASB for several years. This year’s committee must decide whether to recommend continuing that concept, and what changes, if any, to recommend for next year.

The July 13 meeting will focus on (1) introducing committee members, (2) background information on the First in Education plan, (3) studying the results of the KASB Advocacy Meetings held across the state in June, and (4) determining what additional information or issues the committee wants to consider at its next meeting on August 24. Preliminary recommendations will be shared with KASB in September and October, and discussed at Fall Regional Meetings. The committee will meet to develop its final report on November 2. The KASB Delegate Assembly will meet December 8 in Wichita to consider the committee recommendations.

KASB staff is currently compiling results of surveys conducted at the June Advocacy Meetings. Discussions focused on three topics: the future of state and local education funding; state academic standards and assessments; and board negotiations with teachers. A report will be distributed when completed.