KASB Legislative Committee begins work on 2014 legislative positions

The KASB Legislative Committee met for the first time July 13 to begin developing the association’s 2014 legislative positions, policies and resolutions. These will ultimately be voted on by the Delegate Assembly, scheduled for Sunday, December 8, in Wichita.

The committee is comprised of a representative from each KASB region. Members were appointed by Frank Henderson, Jr., Seaman USD 345, president of KASB, and the committee is chaired by Dennis Depew, Neodesha USD 461, KASB’s immediate past president.

During Saturday’s meeting, committee members learned about the diversity of Kansas school districts, including enrollment, square miles, budget authority, salaries and socio-economic status. This allowed members to gain a better understanding of some of the challenges of creating legislative policies that can be supported by all members.

Much of the meeting revolved around reviewing the association’s current legislative priorities and discussing changes or revisions. The committee also heard a report on findings from the 24 June Advocacy Tour meetings. Over 400 members attended the meetings and discussed three issues: common core, school finance and collective bargaining.

One of the key issues under discussion is the association’s position on collective bargaining. The committee discussed ways to gather more feedback from members prior to its next meeting, scheduled for August 24, in Topeka.

A list of Legislative Committee members and their email addresses can be found on the KASB website under the Advocacy/Research tab. Members are encouraged to contact their region’s representative or KASB staff to voice their opinions and suggestions as KASB prepares for the upcoming legislative session.

State Board seeks $673 million school funding increase

The Kansas State Board of Education voted at its July meeting to ask for $670 million more than the budget already approved by the Kansas Legislature for Fiscal Year 2014-15. That would amount to a 20 percent increase. Almost all of the request would be to fund at levels previously approved by the Legislature, but which have been reduced or eliminated due first to the economic recession and then to steep state income tax cuts.

This fall, the Kansas Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the state’s appeal of a special court ruling that ordered funding of the statutory amount of base state aid per pupil, local option budget state aid, and capital outlay state aid. These three programs alone would require an estimated $571.6 million.

Here are the programs requested for increase by the State Board:

- Increase general state aid by $433.3 million, which would increase Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) from $3,852 to $4,492, the level approved by the 2008 Legislature but never funded. This would increase general state aid by 23 percent.
- Increase supplemental general state aid for local option budgets by $113 million to fund the statutory formula. This would increase supplemental general aid by 33.3 percent. Because the shortfall in LOB aid requires districts make up the difference by raising local mill levies or reducing their LOB percentage, almost all of this increase would reduce local property taxes, rather than increase school spending.
- Increase special education state aid by $72.2 million to its statutory level of 92 percent of “excess cost,” an increase of 16.9 percent. The 92 percent target was approved by the Legislature after the Montoy school finance lawsuit in 2006.
- Add $25.2 million to restore funding of capital outlay state aid. This program was created in response to the Montoy decision, but funding was eliminated in 2009. Funding state aid in this program would allow qualifying districts to either increase spending or reduce their capital outlay mill levy.
- Add $8.5 million to restore funding for professional...
From the Executive Director

“It’s not you, it’s me”

“It’s not you, it’s me.... You’re giving me the ‘It’s not you, it’s me’ routine? I invented ‘It’s not you, it’s me.’ Nobody tells me it’s them, not me. If it’s anybody, it’s me.”

“Alright, George, it’s you.” “You’re darn right it’s me.”

A classic exchange in a classic series, George Castanza’s girlfriend has just broken up with him using the dreaded its not you its me line. It’s funny in Seinfeld, cliché in real life, and has come to imply the opposite even when uttered in all sincerity.

Some long-time allies, friends, and supporters of education had some its not you its me moments during the long spring of 2013. Those moments sprang out of disagreements over longstanding positions and quickly became emotional battles. Conflict can yield stronger bonds, or destruction, depending upon how leaders choose to work through it. The calm after the storm should give us all time for self-reflection and learning about how to grow and get better.

At KASB, we are using this time to learn about what our members think about issues that we believe will be important in the coming spring. The KASB advocacy staff went on a learning (and eating) tour of Kansas and collected data from over 400 board members, administrators, teachers, politicians, and community members in 24 different locations. The next task for staff and board leaders will be to take what we learned and craft positions that represent our membership and are best for all Kansas students.

Saturday (tomorrow as I write this) the KASB Legislative Committee will spend a day learning about the issues important to Kansas board members and begin developing positions for the upcoming Legislative Session. It is easy from our members and school leaders to put off thinking about difficult issues until they come up, but now is the time to get involved, reflect on your own, and get involved in shaping education policy for Kansas.

We will be reporting the preliminary work of the committee, as soon as it is available. Take the time to review what we have done, and let us know what you think. Contact Mark Tallman, Tom Krebs, me, or any of the Legislative Committee members if you have input to the process. Don’t wait until December and say, “where did THAT come from?” Get involved now!

Who can forget the final episode of Seinfeld, where George, Kramer, Elaine, and Jerry are convicted of callous indifference to everything that is decent in society. The selfish foursomes were guilty of only being concerned for themselves and sentenced to a year in jail, let’s not allow this to happen to us. Instead, lets learn, improve, grow, and get better.

State Board seeks school funding increase
continued from page 1

development state aid
as required by state law.
Districts are required
to provide teacher
professional development,
but funding has been
eliminated.

- Add $3.0 million to fully
fund the teacher mentor
program, another
program that had funding
eliminated in recent years.

- Add $375,000 to fund
the statutory amount
for teachers who
receive National Board
Certification. Local
boards are required to
provide stipends for these
teachers, but state funding
to reimburse districts, as
required by law, has been
eliminated.

Finally, the State Board is
requesting $18.3 million to begin
a five year phase-in of funding for
All-Day Kindergarten.

Voting in favor of the
budget request were Kathy
Busch, R-Wichita, Jim
McNiece, R-Wichita; Carolyn
Campbell, D-Topeka; Deena
Horst, R-Salina; Jana Shaver,
R-Independence; Janet Waugh,
D-Kansas City and Sally Cauble,
R-Liberal, who made the original
motion. Voting against were:
Ken Willard, R-Hutchinson; John
Bacon, R-Olathe; and Steve
Roberts, R-Overland Park.

Other items at the July
meeting included:

Licensure Review: The board
spent a lot of time on this issue,
particularly with questions over
specific cases with which they
were familiar. Commissioner
Diane DeBacker noted less
than ½ of 1 percent actually are
appealed.

Kansas Educator Code
of Conduct: Staff shared its
recommendation for a revised

code, as the one in place had
been relegated to an inactive
status.

Kansas Learning Network:
The board heard an update on
KLN’s impact on the schools
identified last year as either
Priority or Focus, which was
a part of the waiver Kansas
received from No Child Left
Behind mandates. Staff reported
the switch from relying on an
outside organization for operating
the initiative to one where the
work was being done by Kansas
entities has gone well with that
organization now only providing
consulting services.

Assessments: An update
on assessments drew many
questions, including ones on
technology issues, data collection
and privacy concerns, and time
lines. One of the issues staff
addressed was the charges of
critics the technology necessary
to deliver assessment were
going to be unreliable and/or
prohibitively expensive. The
board was also informed KU’s
Center for Educational Testing
(CETE) would still be delivering
the assessments, not just ones
it had written, as in the past. Dr.
DeBacker told the board it would
be given recommendations for
a new assessment program no
later than November.

Communication Committee
Report: Mr. McNiece and
Mrs. Cauble presented a plan
to build a positive image for
public education in Kansas,
to communicate the role and
significance of the State Board
as established in the Kansas
Constitution, and to be proactive
and provide positive leadership
on topics and issues related to
education in the state.

Board Member Reports:
Several board members gave
very positive comments on the
KASB Summer Advocacy
meeting they attended,
particularly Mrs. Cauble who
attended about 1/3 of them in
representing her district.
Guidelines for effective teams: communication, trust and teamwork

Deputy Executive Director for Leadership Services Dr. Doug Moeckel and Director of Leadership Services Dr. Brian Jordan have been working this past year with boards helping them concentrate on establishing a vision while focusing on continuous improvement. Many discussions evolved around communication, trust, and teamwork. One dilemma has been the assumption that everyone has experienced or been on a high performing team at some point in their lives. From our perspective being part of a team was easy and fun.

Author Peter Senge, in his book, “The Fifth Discipline” stated: When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative. It becomes quite clear that, for many, their experience as part of truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest. Some spend the rest of their lives looking for ways to recapture that spirit. (Senge 1990:13)

Based on Senge’s insight and our assumption, we thought it would be good to share some keys to working as a team. The following ideas should help you and your board become a more effective team.

- Be flexible and respect the partnership created by a team -- strive for the “win-win.”
- Have fun and care about the team and the outcomes, it is an honor to be elected to your board. Enjoy the time you spend serving the students in your district.

As mentioned earlier, communication and trust are critical ingredients for team building. The power of reflection can help enhance the board’s understanding of teamwork. The following questions should help you and your board reflect on the current practices of the board.

Do we:

- Conceal weaknesses and mistakes from each other?
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback?
- Jump to conclusions about the intention of others?
- Fail to tap into one another’s skills and experiences?
- Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect?
- Hold grudges?
- Dread meetings and avoid spending time together?

If the answer is yes to this list of questions, it is an indicator that troubles are brewing. When difficulties arise, leaders address the issues. The team is too important to the success of the district to ever “underperform.” High performing teams understand that conflict is dealt with openly and is considered important to decision-making and personal growth. All members should feel their unique personalities are appreciated and well utilized and can benefit the success of the team. Norms for working together have been developed and seen as standards for everyone to follow.

In conclusion, it is important that board members clearly understand when the team has met with success and all should share in this equally and proudly. The impact of your role on the lives of the students in your district should never be underestimated. You are all members of the most important team in any district. The success of your team determines the success of the district.

KASB adds Sechrist to Western Kansas leadership team

Gary Sechrist, former Lyons USD 405 superintendent, joined KASB as leadership services field specialist. Sechrist’s primary focus will be on providing services to district in Western Kansas. “I hope to provide the services that are wanted and needed by the boards and superintendents KASB serves. I will customize KASB services to their needs,” said Sechrist. “I plan on visiting every district west of Interstate 1-35 this year.”

Prior to his superintendency at Lyons USD 405 he served as principal at Lyons High School and Kingman USD 331. He started his education career as art instructor in Hays USD 489. In 2010 Sechrist was named the Kansas Association of School Administrator’s “Superintendent of Promise.” He is also a past principal and teacher of the year.

“I look forward to serving the districts and superintendents wherever needed,” said Sechrist.

Call Gary at 620-680-0871 or email gsechrist@kbas.org to find out more about how he can provide assistance to your district and staff today.
Board Leadership Workshop
August 7, 2013 • 8:30 am - 3:15 pm • KASB Office • Topeka

Topics:
- The Board President as a Leader
- Leadership Teams Impact on Student Achievement
- Legal Trouble Spots
- Advocacy, What Your Board Can Do Now and Later
- Superintendent Evaluation
- Policy and the Board

Students succeed when the district is led by a strong board/superintendent team.

KASB has the knowledge and the tools to take your leadership team to the next level.

Cost is $150 per participant. For more information or to register visit the KASB website or call 800-432-2471.