Hundreds of public education officials from across the state gathered during the 97th Annual Conference of the Kansas Association of School Boards to discuss and learn about education issues.

Held in Overland Park at the Sheraton Hotel and Overland Park Convention Center, the conference featured dozens of breakout sessions, access to approximately 80 vendors, and programs led by nationally-known speakers.

The conference was held during challenging times for public schools. State funding of public schools is in peril because of severe revenue shortfalls, some policymakers and school officials seem to be at odds, and schools are grappling with continuous changes in social media and technology.

But through the noise of politics and rhetoric, one theme emerged — as Amy Martin, who was elected President-Elect Designee, said, “Public schools really are the cornerstones of our communities.”

And Randy Watson, superintendent of McPherson USD 418, who will take over as state education commissioner on July 1, said that despite the uncertainty, Kansas education’s best days are ahead.

The consensus reached by many was Kansas has great schools; great schools require increasing financial resources and better-paid teachers; and local control is important to quality governance of schools.

To achieve these goals, speakers at the conference reiterated it is integral to raise support for public schools from the grassroots and do a better job of communicating the story of public education.

That was the idea behind “Meeting All Kids Needs,” where two bus loads of attendees toured nearby schools, talking to students, teachers and principals, and watching classrooms in action.

The tours showed the relentless efforts under way to produce successful students, the Kansas Way.

For example, just a decade ago, Wyandotte High School was a failing, urban school with 11 percent of its students scoring proficient on state reading exams. Now, with the school board, administrators, teachers and parents moving in one direction, that figure is up to 70 percent, and the school is bursting with an increasing enrollment.

Thirty different languages are spoken by students at the school; some students have come here directly from refugee camps. But about half of the students at Wyandotte High School are graduating with college credit or a technical certificate. In just a few years, that will be 100 percent of students.

“This is a marathon,” said WHS Principal Mary Stewart. “Not a sprint.”

Many of those future students will come from nearby New Chelsea Elementary where there are 700 children, 100 percent of which receive free or reduced lunch. Despite the challenges, the school continues to progress. In the school’s atrium are written these words in tall letters: “Literacy is not optional. It is a civil right.”

Martin elected President-Elect Designee

Amy Martin, a member of the Olathe USD 223 school board, was elected President-Elect Designee by the Kansas Association of School Boards Delegate Assembly on Sunday during KASB’s 97th Annual Conference in Overland Park.

Martin will start serving her term as President-Elect on July 1, 2015 and assume the Presidency on July 1, 2016.

Speaking to the Delegate Assembly, Martin said one of the most pressing needs of supporters of public education was to advocate on behalf of local schools in the face of well-funded detractors who are wanting to reduce school funding and implement private school vouchers.

“Public schools really are the cornerstones of our communities,” Martin said.

In nominating Martin, who was unopposed, school board members C. Patrick Woods of Topeka USD 501 and Margaret Nightengale, president of the Ulysses USD 214 board, described Martin as a dynamic school leader.

...continued on page 2
KASB approves platform for 2015 session

The KASB Delegate Assembly on Sunday approved a legislative platform that covers many issues that are expected to be hotly debated during the 2015 Kansas Legislative Session, which starts Jan. 12. The report and summary can be found at www.kasb.org under News&Notes.

In general, the recommendations emphasize that local school boards are in the best position to help effective educators accomplish the No. 1 goal of public education in Kansas — producing successful students.

The recommendations include:
— Increasing student education standards;
— Changes in teacher evaluation and licensing aimed at increasing the effectiveness of educators;
— Accountability measures to better assess student and school performance;
— Funding schools at base per student amount as previously approved by the Legislature and the statutory level for special education, capital outlay and bond interest;
— Broadening of the tax base and possible revision of current tax policies if deemed inadequate to producing the necessary funding;
— Keeping school board elections non-partisan and in April;
— Keeping the current process of selection of judges to maintain an independent judiciary.

In addition, the report approved during KASB’s 97th Annual Conference held in Overland Park, includes support of the Rose Capacities of general student knowledge; the Kansas State Board of Education’s Kansas College and Career Ready Standards of student preparation; and the Kansas Board of Regents’ Foresight 2020 goals of student and economic achievement.

The KASB platform was put together after months of discussion and deliberation by the association’s Legislative Committee.

Martin elected

Nightengale said Martin became a strong public school advocate when she found that a parochial school couldn’t meet the needs of her oldest daughter but the public school did. Now her oldest daughter will soon receive a master’s degree.

In addition to serving on the Olathe school board, Martin has held a number of positions with KASB in addition to serving on numerous local, regional and national education-related boards. She also has been a leader in local community and professional areas. She and her husband, Derek, have three college-age daughters.

Martin earned a bachelor of science degree from Creighton University and worked for many years as a programmer and systems analyst. In 1996, she left the workforce to stay at home with her children and over the years developed a passion for photography, which has developed into a successful portrait business.

Martin said KASB must continue to be the most trusted voice for education in Kansas. She said supporters of public education must improve communicating and networking in order to build support for schools.

Below: KASB President Rod Stewart (left) and KASB Past-President Frank Henderson, Jr. (right) listen as Amy Martin gives her nomination speech for president-elect designee.
KASB adds three to Prestigious Partners

Three new members of KASB’s Prestigious Partners Program were recently approved by the KASB Board of Directors. KASB carefully vets each partner prior to recommending them for the program.

“Each of our prestigious partners supports KASB’s work with school boards by giving members access to products or services that help meet their needs in a cost-effective manner and improve efficiency,” said Randy Weseman, KASB’s assistant executive director of operations.

The new members are Piper Jaffray & Co., Opaa! and k12itc. They join American Fidelity Assurance and Trane on the KASB Prestigious Partners list.

New Workshop on Social Media Added

Whether you are a novice or ready to take it to the next level, it's time for you to Leverage the Power of Social Media.

Searching for social media solutions for your district? Trying to figure out the pro’s and con’s of Facebook vs. Twitter? Or maybe you know you need to jump in and get started in your personal or school’s social media journey, but just aren’t sure how to get started. Join us Feb. 3, 2015 in Topeka for a full day workshop facilitated by Inman USD 448 Superintendent Kevin Case @InmanSuperC.

Who should attend?

Board members, administrators, school staff, community members! Individuals and teams! Put together a diverse team of stakeholders and dedicate some time to developing your social media vision, policies, procedures and presence.

Come prepared for a fast day of interactive fun and learning! Make sure you bring your camera, phone, computer and tablet. This event will be interactive and focused on doing, so watch for details in your mailbox and online!
Governmental Relations Workshop

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Watch www.ksba.org and member e-mails for more information!

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Northwest K-5 Ed Service Center
Osawatomie, Kansas

Evaluation Workshop
Wednesday, January 14, 2015
KASB Office
Topeka, Kansas

Practicum in Negotiations
Friday, January 16, 2015
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