Now that the Legislature has approved repealing the school finance formula and replacing it with a temporary, so-called block grant plan, the question has become what happens when that plan expires.

A possible answer recently started to emerge as legislators began considering Senate Bill 294. The proposal would provide a base amount of funds per student and also additional dollars based on population density and poverty. Perhaps the most distinct aspect of the plan is that it also provides funding based on a “Success Index,” that attempts to measure student progress after high school graduation.

As proposed, the legislation would start as a pilot project next school year in the state’s six innovative school districts and then expand over the next two years to replace the block grant education bill that was signed into law by Gov. Sam Brownback.

The Senate Education Committee held a hearing on SB 294 and planned to work on it for possible votes this session.

KASB is neutral on the bill, offering support for some concepts in the bill while opposing other parts of the bill. KASB’s testimony and other background documents on the bill can be accessed at kasb.org.

Of the six innovative school districts, three testified in support of the proposal and three were neutral.

Marysville USD 364, Concordia USD 333 and Hugoton USD 210 supported the bill although leaders of the districts said they did have some concerns.

“I think the concepts in the bill are worth exploring further,” said Marysville USD 364 Superintendent Bill Mullins.

Generally those who supported the bill or were neutral applauded the portion of the bill that focuses on providing funding based on the success of students, but they also opposed specific measures, such as requiring districts to use general accounting principles, which they said would add to their expenses, and a proposal to set up a new bond review board that would be in charge of deciding how much state aid a district would get if it approved a bond issue.

The educators also urged the committee to allow for flexibility or the ability to opt-in or opt-out of the pilot project, especially if there were unforeseen problems with the legislation.

Neutral districts were McPherson USD 418, Kansas City USD 500 and Blue Valley USD 229.

Dave Trabert, head of the Kansas Policy Institute, testified against the plan, saying the funding levels were unrelated to research on the actual cost of providing an adequate education. He also said judging success of high school graduates two years out of school would be too late for students who were struggling in early grades.

Former Kansas State Board of Education member Walt Chappell also testified against the bill.

Legislators start looking at new school finance plan that includes ‘Success Index’

KASB national leadership roles

KASB Past President Frank Henderson, Seaman USD 345, was elected Western Region Director for the National School Boards Association Board of Directors. The election was held at the NSBA Delegate Assembly in Nashville, TN March 20, 2015.

Henderson will be filling the spot held by Judy Lair, Woodson USD 366, since 2008.

The NSBA Western Region consists of nine states: Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma. The Western Region is one of five regions that make up the National School Boards Association, with three directors being elected from each region.

Henderson currently serves on the KASB Board of Directors as immediate past president. He has been active at the local, state and national level of school board service and was endorsed by the NSBA Western Region Nominating Committee at their annual meeting in Omaha back in September. Henderson also serves on the NSBA National Black Council’s Board of Directors.

Dr. John Heim, KASB executive director, is currently serving as chair of NSBA’s Leadership Development and Partnerships committees, and is chair-elect of NSBA’s Executive Directors’ Liaison Committee.
KASB expands member access to pre-bid contracts and vendors

The KASB Board of Directors has approved a working relationship with AEPA (Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies), giving members of KASB greater access to pre-bid contracts and vendors. KASB explored the option following statewide discussions on increasing the buying power of school districts through cooperative efforts. Using this process will reduce bureaucracy, administrative time and foremost, save taxpayer dollars.

“This will save our members the burden of working through this process on their own,” said Randy Weseman, assistant executive director for operations. “All AEPA contracts meet current Kansas bid requirements. When a district needs to purchase for a bond or capital improvement project or for general equipment and supplies, the AEPA streamlined process brings wider access at very competitive prices.”

AEPA is a national cooperative of education purchasing professionals. Currently, AEPA consists of 26 member states who craft contracts and bids tailored to meet each state’s specific legal requirements. The awarded contracts are available statewide and facilitated by one cooperative member agency acting as the contract administrator.

KASB will work with AEPA’s vendors and AEPA’s state representative, Greenbush, the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center in Girard. “KASB is pleased to expand this powerful purchasing tool statewide and give all our members new opportunities for savings,” Weseman said.

Another advantage of offering cooperative purchasing to all KASB members is the chance to expand the selection of what is available. It takes a “critical mass” of need before soliciting a bid is even really productive, Weseman said. Opening this process up to a wider network of public agencies improves everyone’s opportunity for savings and will help identify new goods and services that can be competitively bid.

How it works

Contact KASB Operations Director Randy Weseman, 785-273-3600 rweseman@kasb.org to discuss your needs and timeline. From that point a contact with the procurement agent and vendors will be established. The district will then visit directly with partner vendors about specific equipment.

More information is available at www.kasb.org/aepa.

Topeka USD 501 receives American School Board Journal’s Magna Award

The Topeka Public Schools Board of Education is pleased to announce that, for the second year in a row, the American School Board Journal has awarded the school district with the prestigious Magna Award. This award highlights the best practices of school district leadership. Topeka Public Schools was one of only five similarly-sized schools in the nation to receive this honor.

Topeka USD 501 earned a First Place Prize for its partnership with Westar Energy that has resulted in the construction of the Westar Energy Education Station substation at the Kanza Education and Science Park, job shadowing, scholarship and internship opportunities for students, the Corporate Bigs program, and curriculum development, among many other projects. Topeka Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Julie Ford said, “Westar has been a wonderful industry partner. They have worked with our district to integrate STEM skills in our curriculum and have created a learning tool for our schools and the community.”

Topeka USD 501’s Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Larry Robbins, is also pleased the partnership is receiving the Magna Award. “We at Topeka Public Schools recognize the importance of forming business partnerships and greatly appreciate the value those partnerships bring to our educational mission. This national recognition certainly validates our approach to enhancing learning opportunities for TPS students through strategic alliances with business partners,” he said.

Westar Energy President and CEO Mark Ruelle said: “A few years ago leaders at Topeka Public Schools and Westar started talking about how we might work together. What kinds of programs can complement classroom lessons and bring them to life? The district has shown great leadership and a willingness to innovate. We’ve accomplished more than I thought possible, and we’re still growing together.”
Opaa! Food Management Company and Iola USD 257 have partnered to improve the food service program for the students of Iola, Kansas. Iola Superintendent Jack Koehn said, “Before Opaa! came to Iola, we were operating a very expensive and unsatisfying food service program. We were spending a large amount of money to supplement food service that would be better spent in classrooms.” To date Opaa! has reduced USD 257 food service expenses by 27 percent. “The savings have been huge for us” says Koehn. “We no longer have to use funds intended for the classroom to support food service.”

Opaa! provides recipe-based scratch prepared meals for breakfast, lunches, and special events. Students are offered several breakfast and lunch choices daily so students always find meals they want to eat. “Our kids like the food and menu variety. Most importantly, they are eating.” Koehn adds.

Opaa! operates in compliance with the Federal Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act requirements and KSDE guidelines to assist the school district with compliance requirements. The Opaa! support staff provide recipes, menu development, dietary analysis, and training support which is beyond the reach of most self-operated programs. “We simply do not have the expertise or resources that Opaa! brings to us. We couldn’t do this on our own.” says Koehn.

When asked what advice Superintendent Koehn has for other school districts, he advises, “If your food service program is not self-supported or you simply aren’t satisfied with food quality and choice, then give Opaa! a look. I think you will like what you see.”

Opaa! Food Management Company offers a free feasibility study for school districts to determine if managed food service is a good option for your school district. For more information, call Steve Adams at 913-777-1948 or Greg Frost at 816-210-9359. Or you may email Steve or Greg at sadams@opaafood.com or gfrost@opaafood.com.

OPAA! is a KASB prestigious partner and preferred provider. To learn more, contact Randy Weseman, KASB assistant executive director/operations at rweseman@kasb.org or call 800-432-2471.

The support you need, when you need it

KASB membership is your gateway to accessing the information, training, services and support you need to accomplish your very important mission at the local level. Many of these services, such as the Legal Assistance Fund, our insurance programs and natural gas purchasing consortium - KJUMP - save districts thousands of dollars. KASB’s presence in these markets keeps prices competitive, and districts and organizations using our programs often realized major savings. These dollars can be reinvested in teachers, technology or other local priorities.

We are uniquely equipped to be the voice - your voice - for public education. As our state continues to grapple with preparing our students for a successful future, raising academic standards and funding public education, the importance of KASB’s role as a credible and vocal advocate at the state level is clear. We remain committed to a public education system governed by a locally-elected board of education.

Here are a few highlights from our year - so far!

- KASB emerged as a leader in conversations about the Rose Capacities in August 2014 with a summit in Topeka and Regional Meetings in the Fall.
- In December 2014 our Delegate Assembly set legislative priorities that continue to guide our advocacy initiatives through this 2015 Legislative Session.
- KASB members and staff provide input and counsel on a wide array of initiatives, from school accreditation changes to school finance plans to policies relating to special education regulations...to name only a few!
- In January 2015 we announced consensus among KASB, KNEA, USA Kansas and KSSA on proposed legislative changes to the professional negotiations act.
- Over two-thirds of our members adopted a resolution provided by KASB opposing legislative changes to local elections.
- KASB’s Legal Assistance Fund members have access to highly-skilled attorneys specializing in all areas of public education law, including special education, personnel and professional negotiations.
- We expanded coverage of education-related issues through daily news briefs.
- Weekly webinars provide timely, critical information to hundreds of members on legislative and policy issues.
- Leadership Services redesigned our board development training to better reflect the needs of local boards and have continued to expand these services.
- We now offer consultation and assistance with operations and facility management, including capital improvement planning/bond issues.
- We expanded collaboration with regional service centers to provide “multiple measures” workshops and evaluation training.
- Our increased number of partnerships and working relationships with key businesses gives our members greater access to new cost-saving products and services.
- In June, we will welcome a new tenant, USA-Kansas!

And it’s only March! We look forward to continuing to meet your needs through the remainder of this fiscal year, and are already well into planning for 2015-16!
WORKSHOPS
LEARN. GROW. COLLABORATE.
April, May & June 2015
Seven Locations Across Kansas!

April 28 Manhattan
April 29 Oakley
April 30 Sublette
May 6 Clearwater
May 7 Girard/Greenbush
May 30 Hays
June 20 KASB Topeka