What’s past is prologue for the Legislature.

During the regular session that ended last week, legislators passed a two-year school funding plan but paying for it is still up in the air since legislators left approval of a state budget for the wrap-up session.

A conference committee cobbled together a plan to move school board elections from the spring of odd-numbered years to the fall of even-numbered years but that issue was also held back for the April 29 start of the wrap-up session.

Three more issues KASB has been closely involved with will also likely dominate debate in the final days of the session.

Those include bills that would set up rules governing the use of emergency safety interventions with students; legislation dealing with working after retirement; and changes to the Professional Negotiations Act.

School Funding

Earlier this session, the Legislature repealed the school finance formula and approved a two-year, block grant plan that essentially provides flat operating budgets.

But the Legislature has yet to approve an appropriations bill in the face of an approximately $600 million revenue shortfall.

Gov. Sam Brownback has proposed bridging the shortfall through a combination of cigarette and liquor tax increases, revenue transfers from the highway department, and numerous other adjustments. He has also stated he would be okay with an increase in the state sales tax.

On April 20, officials will provide an updated estimate of expected revenues for the remainder of the current fiscal year and the next two fiscal years, giving legislators the final figures needed to put together a spending plan during the wrap-up session.

With school finance making up half of the state budget, a final plan will have an enormous impact on school funding.

Adding to the uncertainty over school finance is the long-running lawsuit filed by school districts alleging the state has inadequately funded public education. Plaintiff districts have asked a three-judge panel to block implementation of the block grant plan, saying it continues to under-fund schools and cuts equalization assistance to low-wealth districts.

Moving Elections

In addition to moving school board elections to fall of even-numbered years, included in the elections conference committee bill - House Bill 2104 - are two other measures that supporters of moving elections are hoping will help them gain support.

Those include a bill that would eliminate the requirement that Kansas hold a presidential preference primary and a bill that says candidates can only be removed from a general election ballot if they die, suffer a medical hardship or move to another state.

KASB urges advocates for schools to contact their legislators and urge them to vote against any proposal to change the way school board members are elected. KASB expects that any vote on this issue will be close.

KASB columns/blogs offer insights into Kansas education

While the Legislature is on break, the Kansas Association of School Boards wanted to take a moment to bring to your attention our KASB News Briefs, which we deliver regularly to Kansas members, media and legislators Monday through Friday via email and sometimes with special breaking news alerts. And we especially wanted to highlight our blogs/columns, which can be used - free of charge - to engage your readers on important public school matters that are being debated now in Kansas.

John Heim, executive director of KASB, writes a blog called “I’m From Kansas,” which covers current education issues, placing them in perspective through his personal experiences as a life-long Kansan and professional experiences as an educator. Here is a link to Heim’s blogs.

Mark Tallman, KASB’s associate executive director of advocacy conducts a weekly Webinar on Fridays on the status of education legislation. Archives of those Webinars and supporting documents are here.

Both of these writers, with decades of working in the trenches of Kansas education, produce quality, well-researched articles that we believe would be helpful to your readers.
No one likes filling out forms. I recently had to fill out an internet form to get Peaches into doggy day care. Based upon the questions being asked, Peaches could use the same form to apply for a career at the FBI.

It made me cranky until I was able to justify in my mind that these questions were not really about my sweet little Peach, but were to protect her from encountering a bad dog at day care. The data provides context for the environment in which Peaches will spend time.

Every year, KASB asks member district clerks to fill out forms. We collect data on all manner of subjects and a database is only as good as the data upon which it is based. Because of our member district’s commitment to the process, the KASB Research Department is a trusted source for educational information.

This data is used to provide specific information to our member districts on everything from “number of instructional days” to “how much districts charge for admission to football games.” Districts use the information to provide context for good decision-making. The use of anecdotes and examples can provide emotional pull, but data provides context that allows logic and reason to prevail in decision-making.

My wife and I recently watched the movie Nightcrawler, an indictment of local television news that thrives on “if it bleeds it leads.” This type of reporting leads to a perception that violence and danger are rampant. In fact, according to Steven Pinker’s book “The Better Angels of our Nature,” violence in society is less prevalent than at any time in our history.

The same type of thinking occurs in education discussions. Someone has an anecdote or example that, without context or veracity defines the debate. “Fifty-two percent of school district funds are spent on administration!” “Millions of dollars in hidden accounts!” KASB strives to provide context and veracity, to be a “Truth Machine” in a time and space filled with specious claims, misleading anecdotes and outright untruths. But we cannot do it without you.

Please check kasb.org/data to see if you have provided the data about your district that we need to help you provide context for data-based decisions in your district.

Legislature...

...continued from page 1

KPERS: Working After Retirement

Legislators continue grappling with the issue of working after retirement under the KPERS.

The current law, which sunsets June 30, allows licensed employees to return to work after a break in service to the school district where they were previously employed without any penalty. If the law expires, these individuals would be subject to an “earnings limit,” which means their KPERS retirement payments would be suspended if they earn more than $20,000 per year.

House Bill 2253, which has been approved by the House Pensions and Benefits Committee, says that any KPERS employee who returns to work in a KPERS position would not draw retirement benefits, although exceptions could be made for hard-to-fill positions.

Those returning to work would contribute 6 percent of their salary, which would be matched by their employer, into a KPERS Tier 3 cash balance account for future benefits when they retire. The bill does not grandfather in current retirees.

Under Senate Bill 299, which was heard by the Senate Select Committee on KPERS, retired employees returning to work in covered positions would have KPERS benefits suspended and placed in an interest-bearing account. This bill doesn’t grandfather in employees in either.

Emergency Safety Intervention

Both the House and Senate have approved bills on regulations affecting the use of student seclusion and restraint, called Emergency Safety Intervention.

The House version requires documentation of the use of ESI, a process for parents to file complaints and the collection of data by the Kansas Department of Education.

The Senate version is narrower in scope and establishes a task force made up of members from the Kansas State Board of Education, disability rights organizations and parents, special education administrators and KASB to develop legislation or regulations by next session.

KASB supports the Senate version.

Professional Negotiations Act

The House approved House Bill 2326, which included an amendment to adopt the compromise proposal reached by KASB, the Kansas National Education Association, United School Administrators/Kansas and the Kansas School Superintendents Association.

The Senate passed Senate Bill 136, which was close to the compromise proposal. The Senate Education Committee amended HB 2326 to include SB 136, but then on the Senate floor, the Senate amended HB 2326 on a 20-18 vote to include a proposal that would have greatly limited school board-teacher negotiations.

The next day, however, the Senate killed the amended HB 2326 on a 13-27 vote.

When the wrap up session starts, the House could bring SB 136 out of committee or the issue could be inserted into another bill on a conference committee report.
Innovative school districts board recommends process for “specialized certificate”

The Coalition of Innovative School Districts on Thursday approved a plan that would allow innovative districts to hire non-licensed teachers, but leaders of those schools said they would use this option only in rare instances.

The coalition forwarded the proposal to the Kansas State Board of Education, which will consider the issue during its monthly meeting next week.

Under the plan, the state’s six innovative districts would be able to hire non-licensed professional employees or licensed professional employees in areas outside of their area of licensure.

The state’s six innovative school districts are Blue Valley USD 299, Concordia USD 333, Hugoton USD 210, Kansas City USD 500, Marysville USD 364 and McPherson USD 418. Innovative districts are allowed to shed many state regulations in exchange for implementing a plan to improve student performance.

Officials from innovative districts said allowing this alternative hiring plan would give them flexibility to address teacher shortages and staff hard-to-fill subject areas.

For example, Kansas City USD 500 Superintendent Cindy Lane said her district has difficulty finding math teachers, but under this plan would be able to hire an engineer to teach math.

Marysville Superintendent Bill Mullins said the specialized certificate program would help him fill two hard-to-fill positions; a counselor and Spanish language teacher.

Mullins and other superintendents acknowledged teachers have expressed concerns about such a program, but Mullins said his intent was make sure the district had the most qualified people instructing students.

Leaders of the innovative school districts said they envision an extremely small percentage of their staff being hired through this process.

McPherson Superintendent Randy Watson, who is the incoming state education commissioner, said if he saw the ranks of those with specialized certificates reach upwards of 10 percent, “I would start having a problem with that.”

State Board member Deena Horst, who is also a member of the innovative districts board, said, “The whole things boils down to trust, that you trust the superintendents will make the best decisions based on your students’ needs.”

A candidate for a specialized teaching certificate would be subject to background checks and fingerprinting and approval from the local school board and from the Coalition of Innovative School Districts board.

The certificate would be valid in the hiring district for one year, but could be renewed annually.

The local school board would be responsible for defining the terms and conditions of employment for the person granted a certificate.

The school district would report the hiring to the Kansas State Department of Education.

The certificate could not be granted for any positions that include federal requirements, such as special education and Title funded positions.

Affordable Care Act update

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) went into effect on March 23, 2010, and was confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 28, 2012. Several important provisions have already gone into effect, including several requirements that will impact school districts and other education-related entities.

By January 1, 2016, employers with 50 or more full-time employees must offer plans consistent with the health care packages available through the government’s Healthcare Marketplace.

- Bronze: Insurance covers 90 percent of covered expenses.
- Silver: Insurance covers 80 percent of covered expenses.
- Gold: Insurance covers 70 percent of covered expenses.
- Platinum: Insurance covers 60 percent of covered expenses.

Full time status is now considered 30 hours or more a week, or 130 hours per month. To avoid a payment for failing to offer health coverage, employers need to offer coverage to 70 percent of their full time employees in 2015 and 95 percent in 2016 and beyond.

To determine compliance, employers are subject to an assessment of full time employment numbers. The assessment period can be cover anywhere from 90 days to one year. Teachers and other educational employees will not be treated as part-time for the year simply because their school is closed or operating on a limited schedule during the summer. In addition, KASB recommends our members resist reductions of hours to get under 30 hours a week or 130 hours per month.

If you have any questions, contact KASB Assistant Executive Director for Insurance David Shriver at dshriver@kasb.org.
On March 23, Governor Sam Brownback signed SB 7, which made significant changes to the school finance system in Kansas.

First, the bill changes the formulas for determining state aid for school district local option budgets and capital outlay funds in the current school year.

- These aid programs are designed to help districts with lower local property wealth. Districts with the highest assessed valuation per pupil receive no aid. As valuation per pupil falls, districts qualify for increasing amounts of state aid in order to “equalize” the local mill required.

- Last spring, the Legislature appropriated enough money to fully fund the estimated cost of the aid formulas for those programs in response to an order by the Kansas Supreme Court. However, after school districts adopted their budgets last summer, the actual cost of the programs turned out to be much higher than anticipated.

- Under SB 7, those aid formulas were changed so the cost is about what the Legislature originally expected to spend. That means most school districts will receive less than they budgeted for the current year, but the Legislature is spending about what it budgeted for the current year.

Second, the bill abolishes the school finance system that has been used since 1993 and replaces it with a new system called block grants for the next two school years.

- The previous system provided a base state aid per pupil for every actual child enrolled in a school district, and additional amounts for “weighted” pupils based on special student needs (such as the number of low income students), special programs (bilingual or vocational education) or special district characteristics (low enrollment, rapid growth, high cost of living). On top of this funding, districts were able to adopt a local option budget of up to 33 percent of this amount. It was a dynamic system that adjusted for changes in enrollment and program costs.

- The new block grant is essentially a static system. It is designed to simply provide each district with the same amount of state funding for operating budgets in the next two years as the district received in the current year, after reductions in LOB and capital outlay. The only “adjustments” will be changes in virtual school enrollment and funding, and in locally funded weightings that apply to a small number of districts.

- The bill does provide for an “extraordinary needs” fund that could provide additional aid to districts with high enrollment growth or other special circumstances if approved by the Governor and legislative leaders. It is financed by reducing state aid for all districts by 0.4 percent below the current year’s level.

- Districts will be able to raise local property taxes to replace local option budget state aid lost this year, or to fund what their maximum authorized local option budget would have been under the old formula. However, they will receive no additional state aid.

Third, the bill provides some additional flexibility in spending state aid.

- Previously, much of the state aid provided for weightings had to be placed in certain budget funds and could only be used for specific purposes. Under SB 7, any block grant funding can be used for general educational purposes, and districts can transfer money out of certain restricted funds.

Fourth, the bill continues to increase funding for the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System over the next two years.

- The Legislature appropriates money for school employee retirement pensions. These funds are included in school district budgets but are immediately transferred to KPERS, so they cannot be spent for regular educational operating costs.

- Because KPERS was significantly underfunded (especially after the Great Recession), the Legislature adopted a plan to raise contributions each year. Although the increase did not take place in the current year because of the state’s revenue shortfall, contributions will increase over the next two years. These amounts will be added to the block grant for each district.

Fifth, the bill reduced the state aid formula for bond and interest state aid for bonds approved by voters beginning next school year.

- Bond and interest state aid works like LOB and capital outlay state aid: wealthier districts do not qualify but as assessed valuation per pupil declines, districts qualify for a higher percentage of funding. The cost of this program has grown significantly in recent years as voters have approved a number of large school construction projects.

- The formula approved in SB 7 means qualifying districts will receive less assistance from the state, resulting in either higher property taxes or reducing the cost of the projects.

Sixth, the bill appropriates funding for the next two years, but does not contain a revenue source.

- The latest estimates from the Legislative Research Department indicate the cost of SB 7 and the rest of the state general fund budget tentatively agreed to by legislative committees is approximately $300 million more than available revenue next year and $250 million more the following year.

- This means funding SB 7 as passed will require significant additional tax revenue or reductions in other state programs, such as higher education, social services and health care programs, or public safety - or the actual aid to school districts will have to be reduced.

Seventh, the bill “sunsets” in two years, following the 2016-17 school year.

- Supporters of the bill say it is designed as a temporary funding method while a new formula is developed. If the Governor or Legislature cannot agree on a new system in two years, the block grants will have to be extended or there will not be a system for providing state aid to school districts.
KASB and Regional Service Centers continue the Principal Support Series in 2015-16 school year

KASB and several regional service centers will be continuing a program designed to help building principals ensure activities in their schools support district goals and outcomes. Building Leader Mentoring and Support is designed as a two-year program offered at the regional service centers and through an online community of educational leaders from across the state. Although, this program is designed to assist the beginning principal, experienced principals are encouraged to attend these valuable sessions.

The program is based on the power of an aligned school system using a common leadership vocabulary with agreed upon outcomes and processes at the building level through the school board. The foundational knowledge inspired and developed from this program will assist leaders as they work to align their building to the district level processes and outcomes.

Onsite trainings at the service centers will focus on both the art and science of leadership, including instructional leadership practices that will help better utilize human resources. These strategies are designed to ensure high quality teaching is occurring in each classroom. The agendas of the five sessions are designed to assist principals with the duties and responsibilities they are performing during that period of the year.

These timely meetings include the topics:

- Climate and Culture
- Using Data Effectively
- Effective Communication
- Instructional Leadership
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Conducting Difficult Conversations
- Hiring the Best and Brightest
- Increasing Capacity
- Motivating Staff
- Course Scheduling

Developing the aligned system starts with utilizing a common framework to provide professional development for the educational leaders of the system. The Building Leader Mentoring and Support program aligns to the McREL, “What Matters Most” framework that allows districts to align around common outcomes and processes. The “What Matters Most” framework is also at the foundation of many of the services and supports KASB provides district level leaders and boards of education.

A participant from this year’s inaugural cohort shared the following: “As a first year principal there are numerous situations and circumstances you cannot possibly be prepared for unless you have prior experience in those situations.

By attending the new principal support sessions you are able to gain perspective on many of those uncertainties. Even though you haven’t dealt with them first hand, you are able to at the least be prepared for the situation. Many of the complex and insignificant situations you are going to face are covered in these sessions; including how to deal with parents, how to deal with students, curriculum, dealing with faculty and staff, making positive changes and public relations. The presenters share their numerous years of experience with the participants. The information shared has been invaluable to the success I have had as a first year administrator. They have guided me in the direction I need to go to grow as a professional in administration. I would not only recommend this new principal support training, I believe it should be a requirement for all new administrators and even young less experienced administrators.”

If you have a beginning principal, please consider being proactive by providing them the training and information necessary to have a successful start of their tenure in your district. This support training was first designed for the beginning principal. It has become apparent all principals would benefit from this training.

Please be aware of this service to your building administrators and watch for information pertaining to these valuable training sessions.

National School Boards Association

BUILD
Leadership Resource Center
American School Board Journal

ENGAGE
Public Engagement Toolkit

DISCOVER
Federal Insight
Legal Clips
Supplemental Briefing Papers

GROW
Perspectives Interactive Webinars
Center for Public Education (CPE)

ENRICH
National Connection This Week

KASB is proud to offer National Connection in partnership with the National Association of School Boards - a bridge for school boards across Kansas to national trends and perspectives!

kasb.org/nationalconnect
KASB recommends BoardDocs as your paperless eGovernance solution. Currently 37 Kansas Districts use BoardDocs. Here’s one of their stories!

**From the Clerk of the Board**

“Using BoardDocs not only saves Hesston USD 460 time and money, it makes life a whole lot easier!” says Judy Reimer, clerk of the board. According to Reimer, the time savings are more than 50 percent. But the printing, reproduction and distribution costs are the most measurable. “Before BoardDocs was adopted in 2007, we were averaging 28 pages per packet for at least 18 meetings per year for nine board meeting participants. That’s nearly 5,000 pieces of paper a year we are no longer printing now! Not to mention the mileage and gas we spent hand-delivering packets to board member homes prior to each meeting.”

**From the Superintendent of Schools**

District Superintendent Paul Becker pointed out that BoardDocs was not only chosen based on the ease-of-use and savings. “Improved communication is the best benefit. Patrons can at any time access BoardDocs to see current or past board meetings with ease,” said Becker.

**From the Board of Education President**

Board of Education President Mick Petrocci commented, “Most importantly, all board information is available at your fingertips. It’s so easy to navigate through BoardDocs and very nice to have a confidential area for board member eyes only.”

**For more information or a personal demonstration, call BoardDocs 800.407.0141 or visit www.boarddocs.com**

**Hear it from a Kansas Colleague!**

Contact KASB 800.432.2471 or email cpitts@kasb.org

We’ll put you in touch with similar-sized districts in Kansas currently using BoardDocs!

---

**KASB columns/Blogs**

...continued from page 1

In understanding the challenges of public education today, we offer their columns/blogs as possible candidates for your newspaper’s Op/Ed or Viewpoints pages or any media organization’s website.

Their columns are sent with our daily KASB News Briefs package and previous columns can also be accessed on our website, kasb.org.

In addition to the columns, our hope is that the daily News Briefs stories keep you up-to-date about what is happening on education issues, especially those under consideration in the Statehouse, and what will happen next.

While we are advocates for school boards, we strive to provide news stories that present all sides of the issues. Please feel free to use any of our copy in your publication and we welcome any feedback or questions, which can be directed to KASB Communications Specialist Scott Rothschild at srothschild@kasb.org.

---

**KASB hosts student intern from Shawnee Heights USD 450**

Abby Harris, a senior at Shawnee Heights, USD 450, spent a few weeks as a student intern in the marketing and public relations department at KASB in February and March. The internship opportunity was part of the high school’s Visual Arts Pathway and Information Technology Pathway. Abby has been accepted into the visual arts program at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and plans to pursue a career in graphic design. While at KASB she helped edit publications, designed a flyer for use in KASB’s member involvement program and participated in a mock interview with members of the executive staff.
## ABOUT THE DAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Opening and Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:05 a.m.</td>
<td>Why did you run for the school board?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 a.m.</td>
<td>What authority does the board of education have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>How do we work together to accomplish the seven powers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>How does policy guide and protect?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Three Things I Learned this Morning. Two Things I Have More Questions About After this Morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Lunch and Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Answer Questions from the Morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>How do we govern a school system that supports student success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 p.m.</td>
<td>How does the school finance structure support our district?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15 p.m.</td>
<td>How does KASB support my local district’s efforts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>After today - what is now more clear about my role as a school board member?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Adjourn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## WORKSHOPS LEARN.GROW.COLLABORATE.

April, May & June 2015
Seven Locations Across Kansas!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>Bluemont Hotel, 1212 Bluemont *Room Block Available (S99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakley</td>
<td>Northwest Kansas Education Service Center, 703 West 2nd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sublette</td>
<td>Southwest Plains Regional Service Center, 810 Lark Avenue West Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearwater</td>
<td>South Central Kansas Education Service Center, 13939 Diagonal Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenbush</td>
<td>Southeast Kansas Education Service Center, 947 W 47 Highway, Girard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hays</td>
<td>Rose Garden Steakhaus, 230 E 8th Street, Heritage Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topeka</td>
<td>KASB Office, 1420 SW Arrowhead Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BRING A TEAM!

Districts are encouraged to register their new board members along with current board members. A special rate of $25 is available for current board members and district office staff. Attending this day as a team will start the development of a relationship between the new board member(s) and the existing board members. This relationship is a crucial step in developing and sustaining a positive board culture that will drive improvement and progress within your school district.
KASB offering awards and certificates to honor retiring school board members or district personnel

Award Number 1 is an 8” x 12” walnut plaque in the shape of the state of Kansas with a gold plate for engraving. The cost of this award is $50 for each award plus $20 for the gold plate plus $5 shipping and handling for each award ordered. The gold plate can be engraved with any personalized inscription, including a logo of your choice or the KASB logo. If sending your logo, send a high-resolution graphic file or camera-ready copy.

Award Number 2 is a 10” x 12” walnut plaque with a mounted parchment certificate filled in by KASB and covered by transparent lucite. The cost for this award is $40 for each award plus $5 shipping and handling for each award ordered. This year we have expanded the formatting of the certificates being offered with the Award Number 2.

Award Number 3 is an 8 ½” x 11” parchment certificate filled in by KASB. The cost is $20 for each certificate plus $2 shipping and handling for each certificate ordered. The expanded formatting and font styles are available with these certificates.

Award Number 4 is a stock parchment certificate left blank to be filled in by the local district. The cost is $10 for each certificate plus $2 shipping and handling for each certificate ordered.

Any orders placed by May 15 will be guaranteed delivery by the end of the school year. Use one order forms per award for placing your order. For more information, sample awards or to download a pdf of fillable forms, visit the KASB Web site at www.kasb.org/awards.

To order your awards today, contact Sheryl Fincham at KASB, by phone at 800-432-2471 or mail your forms to Plaques & Certificates, KASB, 1420 SW Arrowhead Road, Topeka, Kansas, 66604-4024, fax to KASB, Attn: Plaques at 785-273-7580 or email your forms to sfincham@kasb.org.