Rod Stewart, Washington County USD 108 board of education member, urges members to stay informed and involved as he begins his year as president of KASB.

“We must remain focused on and committed to what’s really important, and always ask ourselves ‘what is in the best interest of the students?’ If we, both on our local boards and as KASB, will keep that as a guide, we can provide the kind of leadership our communities and state require.”

Stewart was elected by the Association’s Delegate Assembly in December 2012 and served as president-elect last school year. KASB serves a diverse membership base of close to 5,000 board members and educational leaders from unified school districts, community colleges, area vocational-technical schools and cooperatives, interlocals and regional service centers.

“KASB members have unique challenges and opportunities, but we are united in a common cause,” Stewart said. “We all want our students to be prepared for success, to accomplish their dreams and to become responsible citizens.”

Stewart’s local leadership experience includes the USD 222 board of education, president of the consolidation transition board, and membership on the Washington County USD 108 board, serving terms as president and vice president. He has been involved in the district’s negotiation committee, the superintendent selection committee, the curriculum committee and several facilities planning and construction committees.

He has served two terms on the KASB board of directors as regional vice-president, and has been involved in the convention credentials committee, the executive director interview committee and has been an active participant in both the KASB Governmental Relations and the Federal Relations networks.

Stewart holds a bachelor of science in agriculture education and a master of science in adult and occupational education, both from Kansas State University.

He is a member of the Washington County Schools Booster Club and the school’s agriculture science department’s advisory committee. He is a member of the National Corn Growers Association, Kansas Soybean Association, National FFA Alumni Association, K-State Alumni Life Member and both the First United Methodist Church and the Washington County Historical Society.

Follow Stewart on Twitter at farmall1902.
During the 2000s, things began to change. Budgets grew tight and professional development budgets were cut to the bone. Associations of every kind in Kansas and the nation experienced a drop in attendance at seminars and conventions. At the same time, a social phenomenon defined in Robert Putnam’s “Bowling Alone” was occurring. Memberships and participation in everything from local bowling leagues to professional associations like the American Medical Association were in rapid decline. As Putnam put it, people were moving from the front porch to the back patio, and in doing so were decreasing civic and social involvement.

When I was hired in 2010, the KASB Board recognized changes were required for the association to continue to thrive. The Executive Committee of Pam Robinson, Rodney Roush, and Fred Patton represented the desire of the board with a clear direction: improve service, improve leadership for student achievement, and be a voice for public education. A different business model began to emerge. KASB would no longer be an ivory tower of knowledge to be pursued. Instead, it represented KASB being a service organization that met our members, how and where they needed us. On-site trainings, whole board workshops in districts, individually designed trainings, and customized service have become the norm.

Staff members have embraced a culture of service at any cost. They have collaborated with service centers, other associations, KSDE, and local districts to provide services using a new array of delivery models. KASB has turned a corner and is moving forward again, thanks to a visionary board and a staff that have embraced a need to continue to improve every day.

The board met in June and acknowledged the positive direction with a new directive; continue to get better at serving our districts and being a “truth machine” for Kansas public education. This board, and this staff, will not go backward. We will demand continuing improvement on behalf of Kansas students.

On July 1, to acknowledge a new service model and direction, a new logo was introduced. It represents KASB being a voice for all of Kansas public education. We think it symbolizes where we have been, and where we want to be.

Election season may bring political activities against board policy

While there may not be a consensus regarding talking about the Great Pumpkin, it is fairly well established that one does not talk about religion or politics in polite company.

However, contentious election activities can quickly become emotional, and common sense can suffer. Public school employees must adhere to statutory regulations regarding political activity, and most boards have adopted policies prohibiting the use of school time, school property or school equipment by employees for the purpose of furthering the interests of any political party, the campaign of any political candidate or the advocacy of any political issue. (See KASB Policies GBRK and GCRK). These policies can be particularly important in election years.

If your board has adopted such a policy, it should be brought to the attention of staff and the expectations of the use of school time, property and equipment should be explained.

Administrators and supervisors should also be sure that any violations of such policies are addressed immediately and disciplinary measures applied consistently regardless of the type of political speech.

Any further questions or the handling of violations of these policies can be directed to the KASB legal staff.
KASB releases latest statewide enrollment projections

The Kansas Association of School Boards is projecting statewide public school enrollment will continue an upward trend that began in 2008 and will reach a record of nearly 510,000 students in 2018-19. The percent of students who are white will drop to 60 percent of the total, down from 85 percent in 1993, with virtually all of the increase coming from Hispanic, multi-racial or "other" enrollment.

These projections were relayed in KASB’s Kansas K-12 Headcount Enrollment Projections for 2014-15 through 2018-19. This report is produced by KASB every year. It utilizes a comparison of resident live birth rates to first grade enrollments and subsequent student cohort retention rates from grade to grade to predict the statewide student enrollment by grade for five years out. This year’s projections also include predictions of the race/ethnic makeup of each year’s student population based on historical trends, as noted in the chart to the right.

For the 2014-15 school year, KASB predicts statewide enrollment at approximately 489,300 students; an increase of 0.86 percent from the 2013-14 enrollment of 485,100. The projections indicate a small but steady annual increase for the Kansas student population overall throughout the 2018-19 school year; when the student population is expected to reach 509,800 students. The number of white students is expected to decrease, and the number of black students is expected to stay relatively the same. The number of Hispanic students is expected to continue to increase steadily.

The report can be found on the KASB website. KASB also provides district-level enrollment projections to member district school boards upon request.

KASB welcomes Randy Weseman as the association’s new Director of Operations. He replaces longtime association employee Dr. Bill Majors, who retired earlier this year. A former superintendent in Lawrence USD 497 and Tonganoxie USD 464, Randy brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the position following a long career in public education.

He started his career in education with Lawrence USD 497, spending 35 years as a principal, teacher, and administrator, as well as spending the last 10 years as the superintendent.

After retiring from Lawrence, he started working as a private consultant. He returned to working in the schools, serving as the superintendent in Tonganoxie for three years.

Randy decided to join KASB because he remembered the great services and benefits he received as an administrator with the Lawrence and Tonganoxie school districts. In addition to having the opportunity to work with the KASB staff, he is also interested in getting involved in public education again and would like to add value to the community.

As the director of operations, Randy will oversee many facets of KASB to help keep the association running smoothly so it can provide the best service possible to its members, such as the daily operational activities, employing techniques and initiatives that help to maximize efficiency and coordinating financial and budget processes, just to name a few.

Randy says he has had many positive experiences working in public education over the years. He has always enjoyed being able to provide quality services in an efficient manner that is mindful of the financial constraints of families and school boards.

Overall, Randy’s really just a people person. “I love working with people, problem-solving and producing results.” He is gratified when he sees people who are happy and well-served: this enhances the experience even more for him.
School leaders share opinions of new educational standards

KASB presented a briefing on new educational standards or goals adopted by the Kansas Supreme Court, the Legislature and the Governor at 23 meetings for school board members and other district leaders across Kansas from May 28 to June 27. About 325 individuals, including several Kansas State Board of Education members and legislators, participated in discussions about these standards, and many also filled out a survey on these issues.

Read the rest of this article at www.kasb.org/wcm/_NB/14/NB0707b.aspx

Legislative Committee examined KASB advocacy positions

The committee met July 12 to review how KASB’s current positions on legislative and Kansas State Board of Education issues match up with the new educational goals or “Rose” capacities adopted by the Kansas Supreme Court, Legislature, and Governor. Watch the next School Board Review for a summary of the meeting.

The purpose of the committee is to develop recommendations for changes in KASB’s priority resolution “First in Education, the Kansas Way,” as adopted last year, changes in any of KASB’s permanent policies, or any new one year resolutions. Any new positions or changes must be adopted by the KASB Delegate Assembly.

School board members and district leaders with recommendations for KASB action may contact members of the committee, or the KASB advocacy staff: John Heim, Mark Tallman, or Tom Krebs, through the KASB office or website.

Kansas Learning First focuses on Professional Learning

The Kansas Learning First Alliance, a coalition of educational organizations in Kansas representing school boards, administrators, teachers, teacher educators, parents, the Kansas State Board of Education, and the Kansas State Department of Education, wrapped up its 16th year of operation at a June meeting with a focus on “professional learning,” a new term for “professional development,” which long-time participants in education might remember as “inservice.”

Find more “News Briefs” on the KASB website at kasb.org/newsbriefs. Stories may be accessed in date order on the middle of the page or by choosing a topic from the list in the right hand column of the page.