KASB Conference on Rose goals moves conversation forward

Over 75 educational leaders and policy makers met at KASB Friday, Aug. 22 to gain a better understanding of the Rose capacities adopted by the Kansas Supreme Court as the test of adequate funding in the Gannon decision and enacted into state law as education goals by the 2014 Kansas Legislature and signed by Governor Sam Brownback.

The day-long conference included discussions on how the education goals based on the Rose capacities align with initiatives at the post-secondary, K-12 and Early Childhood levels; and how Kansas education decisions might be made with them as the yardstick of future educational decisions. For the discussions, participants were put into groups of five and were asked to agree with, or develop, two-three statements covering four broad topics:

- Assessments and accountability;
- Preparation for postsecondary education;
- Scope of school responsibility; and
- How instruction is delivered.

After determining its position, each group was asked to identify three key challenges to implementing its position.

Given the groups’ diverse composition, the discussions took on a lot of variation, but the instructions were to find a consensus of some sort around each issue, and, for the most part, they did. Every group had at least one legislator or state board member and one or two local board members who came from KASB leadership teams. The others at the table were representatives of educator or parent organizations.

The day started with updates from leaders of the three education levels. Andy Tompkins, president and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents, discussed the Regents strategic plan, Foresight 2020 and how the Rose Standards fit in. He also shared the many initiatives the post-secondary institutions - four-year universities, community colleges and technical institutions - were engaged in to raise the level of educational attainment in the state to meet increasing workforce needs.

Interim Commissioner of Education Brad Neuenswander talked about the close alignment of the Rose Standards and a number of KSDE initiatives. He also shared the results of the most recent conversations KSDE was having with the United States Department of Education. He reported the USDOE had rejected KSDE’s proposal on the assessment schedule, but he shared a counter proposal that many in the audience thought quite appropriate. He also noted the USDOE was becoming more supportive of the state’s plan for educator evaluations.

Janice Smith, executive director of the Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund was the final speaker of the morning. She noted her organization’s strategic goals and objectives were closely aligned with six of the seven Rose Standards. She then shared some upcoming work that could dispel the belief of some positive early childhood effects, did not hold later in the elementary grades. Her preliminary research also indicates quality early childhood opportunities reduced special education placement.
KASB Board, Legislative Committee hold August meetings

A briefing on the K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission and KASB’s Rose Standards Conference kicked off a full day meeting for the KASB Board of Directors Sat., Aug. 23. Also meeting on Saturday were the KASB Legislative Committee and the KASB Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. Board of Trustees.

The KASB Board and the Legislative Committee met jointly for the advocacy briefing, and for a discussion led by Dr. John Heim, KASB executive director, on research released by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation on school board leadership. “Does School Board Leadership Matter?” is a report released in March 2014 that looks at four areas:

1. Do school board members have the capacity (accurate knowledge, academic focus, and work practices) to govern effectively?

2. Do districts with higher-capacity board members “beat the odds” and excel academically, despite district characteristics?

3. What characteristics of board members are associated with greater capacity?

4. Is a district’s method of selecting board members associated with its ability to beat the odds?

Following discussion, KASB Board of Directors and Legislative Committee members focused on two areas – individual board member engagement and increasing knowledge by attending trainings – as two key areas to expand the capacity of boards of education.

The Legislative Committee then adjourned to work on developing recommendations for 2015 legislative priorities. These will be shared with members for input and discussion.

The Legislative Committee will meet again Nov. 1 to finalize recommendations to be presented to the KASB Delegate Assembly at its annual meeting scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 7, in Overland Park.

In Other Business:

• Discussed the KASB Nominating Committee and process. The committee meets Sept. 13 to interview candidates for president-elect designee. Action taken in June 2014 by the Board of Directors altered the need to meet if there was only one candidate. However, following a review of the association’s Constitution and By-Laws, that action was rescinded. Instead, the board asked two representatives from the board of directors to meet with the committee to discuss committee rules, purpose and nomination procedures and submit recommendations for ways to improve the process back to the Board of Directors.

• Review of Executive Staff Goals. Dr. Heim presented FY15 goals set by the KASB executive staff.

• KASB Education Summits. Dr. Brian Jordan, assistant executive director for leadership services, reviewed plans for the 2014 Fall Education Summits.

• KASB Policy Updates. The board approved, on second reading, a number of KASB governing policies.

• KASB Budget. Randy Weseman, assistant executive director for operations, reviewed the unaudited budget report for the year ending June 30, 2014.

• Insurance and KJUMP Reports.

• David Shriver, assistant executive director for insurance services, gave an update on participation in KASB insurance services and KJUMP, the association’s natural gas purchasing consortium.

• Liz Maisberger, KASB work comp fund administrator, reviewed the Board of Trustees meeting held in the morning.

• KASB Board of Directors Elections. The board reviewed positions up for election this Fall. These include:

  • Region 1 Vice President - Dayna Miller, Basehor-Linwood USD 458.
  • Region 8 Vice President - Gary Yost, Otis-Bison USD 403.
  • Region 9 Vice President - Steve Watts, Wheatland USD 292.

• NSBA reports.

  • Judy Lair, NSBA liaison to the KASB Board of Directors and a board member from Woodson USD 366, gave an update on national initiatives, including a project looking at persistently low performing schools that have experienced a turnaround, then identifying policies, practices and strategies school board members can use to raise student achievement.

  • Dr. Heim discussed the executive directors retreat held in Idaho the first part of August and shared with the board information from sister school board member associations across the nation on topics of concern, including the challenges associated with restructuring collective bargaining and competition for school board representation and leadership.

  • Rod Stewart, KASB president and board member from Washington County USD 108, gave a report on the NSBA presidents retreat. Speakers included Dr. Bill Daggett, founder and chair of the International Center for Leadership in Education.
The more things change the more they stay the same

So I guess Kansas City has a new baseball team? The Royals? This is news to me because I only listen to sports talk radio from August to March every year. This allows me to hear lunatics scream and wail about Chiefs football and Jayhawk basketball, and generally by August these “Royals” aren’t getting a lot of airplay. August is the time when Royals fans have lost hope, and Chiefs fans are gaining false hope.

The recent success of the Royals has sports talk wasting my time with talk of pitching rotations and batting orders instead of important things like who will be the Chief’s third QB!? One station had a competition to have callers talk about where they were 29 years ago when the Royals last made the playoffs. Not being a baseball fan, I don’t have a lot of memories around the sport, but 29 years ago I remember Ell-Saline shop (yes, it was shop back then) teacher Tom Fee parading through the school halls wearing a crown, holding a bat as a scepter, with a blue Royals blanket for a cape. One might say Tom was a fan. He and his wife Marilyn traveled to every home game.

As I thought about Tom and Marilyn Fee (both ESHS teachers) it reminded me that it was my first year as a school administrator, principal of Ell-Saline Jr-Sr High School. I hope those teachers have forgiven me by now for being green as a gourd and not really knowing what I was doing. Fortunately, it was enough just not to be the previous principal.

So where were you 29 years ago? Youngsters, don’t bother with your smart answers. Now think about how much education has changed since the Royals last made the playoffs. We were just thinking about continuous improvement in schools. We were still accredited based upon a system of counting inputs like, “Did you fly the flag? and How many books were in the library.” QPA was still years away, and now it is being retired in favor of a more robust system of accreditation.

Everyone gave the ITBS, and no one paid much attention to the results. There wasn’t talk about assessments for accountability, or to inform instruction.

Now we have a generation of students and teachers who know no other way except how important it is to do on state assessments. A sad fact, I think.

Ell-Saline bought eight apple computers that year, and assigned two students to a computer in computer class. Students learned some obscure programming language. We showed off that lab to anyone and everyone who came through the building. We were state of the art.

Today, the paper has an article about all 25,000 of the students in Shawnee Mission joining districts all over Kansas in getting their district-provided computers for the start of school. According to mybroadband, my antiquated iPhone 5 has 262,144 times more memory and is 1,300 times faster than those old Apples.

But as William Faulkner said, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” How many things are exactly the same as they were 29 years ago? Grading scales, attendance policies, worksheets, nine months on, three months off, and Parent-Teacher conferences all look pretty much the same as they did in 1985, 1975, and 1955. Some say all educational change is a pendulum swing; I would say that it certainly swings back and forth, but we continue to get better. The one tradition we have to embrace is a willingness to look critically at what we are doing and continue to change and get better, even if it takes 29 years to make the playoffs.
KASB Fall Education Summits

Six dates and locations to choose from

- September 30 - Greenbush
- October 1 - Clearwater
- October 2 - Garden City
- October 7 - Oakley
- October 8 - Junction City
- October 9 - Shawnee Mission

$150 per person OR $450 for teams of four or more

About the Summits

Are the Schools of the Present the Schools of the Future?

What’s happening now in Kansas will change how we educate our children. The outcome of the 2014 General Election, the next Legislative Session - even recommendations from groups such as the K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission - all have the potential to influence policies, regulations and school funding.

The courts and politicians have had their say. The Kansas Supreme Court, State Legislature, Governor and Kansas State Board of Education have all agreed the Rose Standards are the appropriate measure to use when determining adequate funding for Kansas public schools. This is now a part of our state’s constitutional test when deciding if the Legislature has made “suitable provisions for finance of the educational interests of the state.”

Locally elected boards of education, professional educators and communities should guide the future of public schools in Kansas, but they must become part of the conversation. How should we prepare our students for success after high school graduation? How will we measure progress and hold ourselves accountable for meeting the Rose Standards? What state policies need changed or added? What resources do we need, both now and in the future?

Kansas public schools and their communities have new opportunities for collaboration, change and innovation, leading our students and our state to greater heights of achievement and future success. Become part of the discussions and join education and community leaders at one of the six KASB 2014 Fall Education Summits.