New research by the Kansas Association of School Boards shows the amount of money spent on schools does make a difference in student achievement, and the Kansas public school system, like the citizens it serves, knows how to stretch a dollar to produce the best results.

KASB Research Specialist Ted Carter analyzed a decade’s worth of education funding and student outcomes across the nation and found:

- School spending is a strong predictor of improved student achievement.
- Kansas spends below the national average per pupil but has student outcomes well above the national average.
- Kansas consistently performs above what is predicted based on funding.

This report points out that in the world of school finance, Kansas is an outlier in a good way — it overachieves, meaning it produces sound results at a bargain rate. Kansas is an “overachiever” in that it has academic results in the top 10 or 15 states while spending below the national average.

“As Kansas heads toward more fiscal uncertainty, we do not want to jeopardize the gains we have made,” Heim said.

During the current political season there is a lot of information swirling around school finance. This report, which used data from all 50 states, offers the most complete dive into student outcomes and spending that has been done in recent years. The report examines performance on national reading and math tests, college readiness measures and high school completion, all indicators of the Rose Capacities.

The report was released as policy makers discuss the impact of the so-called “Rose Capacities,” which have recently been endorsed by every branch of state government and set broad education goals. The “Rose Capacities” are seen by many as a renewed focus on producing well-rounded students who can compete in the global marketplace.

The report is available at www.kasb.org/assets/Research/RRedFunding0914.pdf.

The report shows Kansas good steward of public school dollars

Legislative Committee to finalize recommendations

The KASB Legislative Committee will complete its report on recommended advocacy positions on Nov. 1. School boards may offer comments or recommendations to members or association staff until that day. Contact information and the draft report released after the Aug. 23 meeting is available at www.kasb.org/assets/Advocacy/LegComReport092214.pdf.

The committee has received a number of comments on school funding recommendations and will consider several options. KASB staff also prepared possible recommendations on several other issues based on discussions at the KASB Fall Summits and other input from members.

The committee report will be e-mailed on Monday, Nov. 3, so school boards will have one month to review the proposals before the Dec. 7 meeting of the KASB Delegate Assembly. The committee’s proposals are subject to amendment by the assembly.

KASB member boards may submit other proposals not recommended by the committee, either in the form of one year resolutions or permanent policy positions, until Nov. 10 for consideration by the Delegate Assembly. Any new proposals after that date will require a two-thirds vote by the assembly to suspend the rules to be considered.
School officials express concerns with some recommendations of K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission

During a meeting hosted Wednesday by the Kansas Association of School Boards, public school officials raised several concerns about draft recommendations of the K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission.

Specifically, educators and administrators said some of the recommendations could result in more costs and work for school districts while solving nothing.

One of the draft recommendations from the commission would recommend a study on the costs and benefits of developing a statewide accounting and fiscal management system that would apply to school districts.

But school officials said such a change would increase software, training and up front costs, while no problem in the current system has been identified.

Jim Hinson, who is superintendent of Shawnee-Mission USD 512 and vice chair of the commission, said the recommendation is coming from groups and individuals who believe school districts are not running as efficiently as they could.

Another proposal by the commission would recommend legislation to collapse most school district operating funds into a district’s general fund. Again, school officials said the current system is working and transfers of funds from one fund to another are done easily with little expense of time.

The K-12 Commission is expected to meet several more times before it presents its final recommendations to the Legislature before the start of the 2015 Legislative Session in January. Its next meeting is Nov. 14.

Hinson urged school officials to stay apprised of the commission’s work. He said some outside groups are applying pressure to commission members.

“The politicking from outside groups has been pretty nasty, has been pretty intense,” Hinson said. He said one of his concerns is that proposals, unknown at this time, may be inserted in the commission’s report “at the 11th hour.”

Hinson noted that KASB’s interaction with the commission has been extremely positive and helpful to the panel’s members.

Home, community support and dedicated staff lead to Blue Ribbon schools

At Oatville Elementary School in Haysville USD 261 nearly every parent attends and participates in student programs and parent-teacher nights.

It is that kind of support from the home to community coupled with dedicated teachers and staff that form the foundation of excellence at Oatville and five other Kansas schools that were recently named 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education named 337 schools as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Those schools are recognized in one of two categories: Exemplary High Performing Schools or Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing.

Performing and Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing.

Kansas schools recognized as Exemplary High Performing Schools were St. Patrick Catholic School, of Kingman, Catholic Diocese of Wichita; Valley Falls Elementary, Valley Falls USD 338; West Bourbon Elementary, Uniontown USD 235; and Oatville Elementary, Haysville USD 261. Kansas schools recognized for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing were Marias Des Cygnes Valley Elementary, Marias Des Cygnes Valley USD 456; and Ogden Elementary, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383.

“These six schools represent the high quality education taking place throughout our state,” said Interim Commissioner of Education Brad Neuenswander. In many cases, the Kansas schools have overcome high rates of poverty and other challenges to win the prestigious award.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Every year the U. S. Department of Education seeks out and celebrates great American schools, schools demonstrating that all students can achieve to high levels. More than 7,500 schools across the country have been presented with this coveted award. The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.
The Kansas State Board of Education on Tuesday, Oct. 15, approved three more Innovative Districts, held a discussion on Emergency Safety Intervention regulations, and heard complaints about the new Advanced Placement U.S. History framework.

Innovative Districts
The board approved 9-0 the applications of three school districts to operate as Innovative Districts, which exempts the districts from some state laws.

Those approved were Kansas City USD 500, Blue Valley USD 229 and Hugoton USD 210.

Officials from the three districts said they were focusing on ways to better prepare students for college, careers or the workforce.

Under a 2013 law, Innovative Districts can be exempt from certain state public education plans if they present plans to improve student achievement.

The districts said they would like to establish their own assessments tailored to understanding their academic progress, and they would like exemptions from teacher licensure regulations, saying that would give them flexibility to access individuals with experience and expertise.

Kansas City and Hugoton also were seeking exemption from a law that prohibits high school level classes taken in middle school to count towards Kansas Board of Regents admission requirements, and a waiver from a law that prohibits school districts from paying tuition and transportation costs for students concurrently enrolled in high school and college classes.

Emergency Safety Intervention
The board had a lengthy presentation and discussion dealing with the appeals process when a parent alleges their child was inappropriately restrained or isolated during school.

KASB has raised multiple concerns about the proposed changes to the Emergency Safety Intervention (ESI) regulations. However, KASB's greatest concern is that the most recent proposal to add an appeal process would substitute the judgment of a state hearing officer for that of local school boards.

The Disability Rights Center has said currently there are too many obstacles for parents when they lodge a complaint or appeal a decision they think is wrong.

KASB attorney Sarah Loquist, however, testified to the State Board that the current proposal would be unconstitutional because it would interfere with local control of school boards.

Some State Board members said they were wary of usurping local control. Board member Ken Willard said the Legislature may have to weigh in on the issue. Chairwoman Jana Shaver said the board needed time to reflect on all the information it received.

Complaints about APUSH
During the public comment period, two mothers of high school students spoke in opposition to the new Advanced Placement U.S. History framework. They said the framework fails to highlight American achievements and focuses on negative parts of U.S. history.

Conservatives have been attacking the new framework — known as APUSH — for several months. In August the Republican National Committee passed a resolution that said the framework reflected “a radically revisionist view of American history that emphasizes negative aspects of our nation’s history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects.”

Several board members say they were unaware of the controversy and indicated complaints about the program should be addressed at the local school board level.

As the discussion progressed, several board members criticized the framework, while others said they wanted to learn more about the controversy and what the State Board’s jurisdiction was in the matter.

The College Board owns the AP program and officials have defended the document. They said the framework is as an outline that allows local decision makers to provide content. They also say that as an advanced college-level course offered to high school students, APUSH is not meant to be a student's first exposure to basic American history.

Election 2014: Successful students, the Kansas Way
In the run-up to the Nov. 4 election, the Kansas Association of School Boards will be sending out, on a daily basis, articles to help you and your constituents understand the issues being debated. Look for these election updates in your email inbox.

In addition, we are seeking stories from you about funding struggles in your school districts and asking that you email those to our communications specialist Scott Rothschild at srothschild@kasb.org.
Regional Nominating Committees appointed

Regional Nominating Committees have been named in three KASB Regions where Regional Vice President elections are held in December during the KASB Annual Convention in Overland Park. Any interested school board member should contact a member of their Regional Nominating Committee to submit their name as a candidate for that Regional Vice President’s position.

Regional Vice Presidents serve a three-year term as a member of the KASB Board of Directors. Members are eligible to serve two consecutive terms on the board. The Board meets six times a year at the KASB office in Topeka.

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<th>Region 1 committee members:</th>
<th>Region 8 committee members:</th>
<th>Region 9 committee members:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia Welicky</td>
<td>Jay Haremza</td>
<td>Pattie Wolters</td>
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<td>Bonner Springs USD 204</td>
<td>Ft Larned USD 495</td>
<td>Rawlins Co USD 105</td>
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<td>Ronald Langston</td>
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<td>Janice Frahm, Colby USD 315</td>
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<td>Region 1 includes the following counties: Atchison, Doniphan, Douglas, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte.</td>
<td>Region 8 includes the following counties: Barber, Barton, Comanche, Edwards, Harper, Kingman, Kiowa, Ness, Pawnee, Pratt, Rush and Stafford.</td>
<td>Region 9 includes the following counties: Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Greeley, Lane, Logan, Norton, Rawlins, Scott, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita.</td>
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