I’m from Kansas: The main thing is the main thing

Here at KASB we have several former high school debaters, but only one state champion. Some might think our staff person who talks longest is the natural guess at who has enjoyed the accolades of being the best in the state, but that would be a wrong guess. Legal staff member Lori Church brought home a state championship for Lyons High School.

Mark Tallman, sadly, was only able to garner a second-place finish. His debate colleague was none other than Lt. Governor Jeff Colyer and there are differing versions of who pulled that team down. I tend to believe that it was probably Mr. Tallman who received the worst speaker points, only because of his inability to stay within the allotted 8- and 4-minute time constraints.

Other former debaters who now work at KASB had less storied careers, myself included. High school debaters learn many skills, from research to speaking off the cuff. While I learned the value of those skills, I wasn’t very good at the implementation. Even so, one Saturday in Stafford, KS my colleague and I advanced to the final round of the tournament.

Maybe because the stakes were so high - bringing home the coveted Stafford High Debate Tournament Championship Trophy - I remember some specific feedback I received on our championship round ballot. The judge wrote, “Just because the other team makes silly arguments, doesn’t mean you should spend all of your time refuting them.” Coincidentally, I think what that judge was saying is a paraphrase of Lori Church’s father’s (ESU Professor Edwin Church) favorite leadership quote from Stephen Covey: “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

Not to slight all of the great advice I got from my own parents, but if my dad Max had told me that, we could have won that round in Stafford. In the nature vs. nurture debate, this is clear evidence that Lori had a nurture advantage that helped her win a state championship.

That same nurturing lesson is a good one to remember when considering any legislative session, but it appears especially true for this one. The main thing, of course, is “Kansans Can.” That’s the vision for success established by the Kansas State Board of Education. Unfortunately, educators are now spending the majority of our time doing exactly what cost Tom Taylor and I that debate championship - spending time refuting silly arguments.

We should be spending our time working together to solve problems that will advance the cause of student success in Kansas. Instead, politicians are obsessing about efficiency instead of efficacy, pundits are nitpicking Kansas student success reports, and boards, administrators and teachers are reeling from insults about “immoral” decisions.

It is troubling that we have to spend time in defense mode instead of advancing the cause of student success. Let’s remember what brings home the state championship: The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.
LFT visits Topeka USD 501

The final session for KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2015-16 took place Jan. 20, 2016. The first stop - after boarding the bus and a welcome by Larry Robbins, Topeka USD 501’s deputy superintendent of operations - was the co-campus of Eisenhower Middle and Ross Elementary schools.

The buildings were physically joined by a connecting hallway in 2011, but the two schools share much more than real estate. As part of the district’s “signature school” program, Eisenhower Middle and Ross Elementary focus on music as an instructional tool.

Other Topeka USD 501 “signature” programs can be found on the co-campus of Chase Middle School and State Street Elementary, whose focus is on Fine Arts; at Quincy Elementary, where the focus is on Fine Arts; and at Topeka West High School, whose focus is leadership.

The LFT team heard reports on how the staff of the two schools meet the needs of their students. Music is emphasized both during the school day and the schools’ extensive after-school program. Instructors have developed a variety of ways to offer their curriculum using music, and there are a wide variety of music classes available.

The leadership class also received an update on a new program coming to USD 501, the Topeka Center for Advanced Learning and Careers.

The T-CALC concept, modeled after the nationally recognized Center for Advanced Professional Studies, or CAPS, in Blue Valley USD 229, was part of USD 501’s $143 million bond issue approved by patrons in April 2014. The estimated cost of T-CALC, which includes the renovation of Capital City High School, is $18.65 million. The Capital City High School will be moved into a new building.

LFT finished the day at the Kanza Education and Science Park. The park, located at I-70 and McVicar in Topeka, is a partnership between Topeka USD 501 and Westar Energy.

The day ended with dinner at the Kanza Cafe, another Topeka USD 501 initiative, and presentation of awards to the 23 LFT graduates.

Call for Nominations 2016-17
Leadership for Tomorrow Program

The Kansas Association of School Boards is accepting nominations for the Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2016-2017. Any past graduate of the program can nominate colleagues. Individuals can self-nominate and current KASB members can also submit a nomination. Once nominated, an application and further instructions will be sent to the nominee.

The nomination window will close Feb. 26.

Through five two-day sessions, the KASB Leadership for Tomorrow program creates a greater understanding of the Kansas public education system and provides opportunities to develop leadership skills for effective governance and raising student achievement.

The program is open to any KASB member district’s school board member or school administrator. Participation is limited.

For further information or to nominate a colleague, please contact Carol Pitts, KASB assistant executive director for communications and marketing, cpitts@kasb.org.
The estimated impact of HB 2504

This article shows the possible result of implementing the district reallocation rules as described in HB 2504 in terms of the new districts that would result.

KASB took the legislation, which can be found at www.kslegislature.org, and from it developed rules for determining which districts would remain unchanged, and which would be combined.

Note that some of this work involved “best guesses” in terms of which districts might be combined.

In addition, the language in the legislation suggested that a new district would be formed any time two or more existing districts were merged (with the exception of any merges involving an Innovative District).

Based on KASB’s analysis, House Bill 2504 would have the following impact:

• Of the 286 existing districts, only 50, or 17.5 percent would remain unaffected.
• Kansas would go from 286 to 132 districts, which represents a 53.8 percent reduction in the number of districts.
• The average district size in Kansas would go from 1,719 students to 3,724 students.

The maps to the right show the district boundaries before and after this legislation would go into effect.

In addition, KASB estimated the number of administrative staff in the original districts, and how many positions would have to be eliminated in order to comply with the following rule:

…the number of school administration and supervisory service employees employed by a realigned school district shall not exceed 120 percent of the number of school administration and supervisory service employees of the school district with the largest enrollment in the prior year whose territory became part of such realigned school district.

KASB used the data provided by KSDE in the Certified and Noncertified Personnel Reports, which can be found at ksde.org.

Based on KASB’s analysis:

• Of the 286 existing districts, only 53, or 18.5 percent would avoid staff terminations.
• Kansas would go from 6,909.4 to 5,725.2 staff in these “administration and supervisory service” positions, which represents a 17.1 percent reduction.
• The impact of the reductions would be highly unequal across the state.

For more on this and other KASB data and reports, visit kasb.org/research.

Earlier this month, House Education Chairman Ron Highland, R-Wamego, said HB 2504 on realignment of school districts would probably not advance during this Legislative Session, but the debate over merging school districts or their functions is always present.
February/March 2016

February
18  Negotiations Workshop - Greenbush
    Twin Valley USD 240 Supt Search Application Deadline
19  KASB Legislative Update Webinar, 12:30 p.m.
22  Negotiations Workshop - Hays
23  Washington County USD 108 Supt Search Application Deadline
24  Cheylin USD 103 Supt Search Application Deadline
25  Clerks-Treasurers Workshop - Topeka
26  KASB Legislative Update Webinar, 12:30 p.m.
29  Greeley County USD 200, Little River USD 444 & Inman USD 448 Supt Search Application Deadline

March
1   Negotiations Workshop - Oakley
4   KASB Legislative Update Webinar, 12:30 p.m.
7   Eureka USD 389 Supt Search Application Deadline
8-9  Kansas State Board of Education Meeting
11  KASB Legislative Update Webinar, 12:30 p.m.
24  Human Resources Academy

To pool or not to pool? That’s the A & M Efficiency Audit question.

The answer may not be that clear. KASB Insurance Services is here to support our members along the way. One clear answer is KASB Property and Casualty Insurance. KASB members have access to national insurer specializing in our market & local agency support - all under the umbrella of your professional association!

Ready to learn more? Contact us for details!

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