Dr. John King confirmed as U.S. Department of Education Secretary

The U.S. Senate recently voted 49-40 to confirm Dr. John King, Jr. as the U.S. Secretary of Education. Dr. King had previously served as Acting Education Secretary since January 2016. Thomas Gentzel, Executive Director of the National School Boards Association (NSBA,) released the following statement following Dr. King's confirmation:

“NSBA congratulates Dr. King on his confirmation as the United States Secretary of Education. School boards have a vitally important role in the education of our nation’s children and we look forward to working with Dr. King to enhance public education and ensure that every child has an opportunity to a high quality education. The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act was a much needed step to create a better future for students, and NSBA is committed to being a constructive voice in delivering on its promise.”

Kathleen Branch, director of the National Advocacy Services Programs for NSBA, added, “NSBA looks forward to an ongoing collaborative and productive relationship with Secretary King and the U.S. Department throughout the implementation of ESSA and on issues in support of local governance and community ownership.”

Dr. King began his career in education as a high school social studies teacher. He has previously held positions as senior deputy commissioner at the New York State Education Department, education commissioner for New York state, and deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Find out more at www.ed.gov.

School Board Member Spotlight: Dr. Jackie Glasgow, Wellington USD 353

Dr. Jackie Glasgow was a teacher and administrator in Wellington USD 353 for 40 years before retiring in 2012. So what does she do just a few short years later? She runs and wins a seat on the Wellington school board.

“My husband and I reside in Wellington and my support for the Wellington school district is still very much a part of who I am,” said Glasgow.

“I have strong connections to the staff and the community and care about its educational system. I was encouraged to run for the school board and felt I could continue making a difference for students and staff if I were to be a board member,” she said.

Currently an assistant professor of English at Southwestern College in Winfield, Glasgow said her first year on the school board has been rewarding in seeing each school's accomplishments and the work of students, and challenging from a financial perspective where the board has had to make difficult funding choices and prioritization.

The Wellington district is located in south-central Kansas and has approximately 1,600 students.

Glasgow said the district's teachers are invested in the community and strive to help students succeed. She said parents and students experience a positive culture in Wellington schools.

If she could offer one piece of advice to state officials about school issues, Glasgow said she would urge elected leaders to visit their communities and schools.

“Sit in classrooms, talk to teachers, parents and students,” she said. State officials “need to listen to those who they are representing. The financial numbers do not tell the entire story. It is the lives being impacted and the sustainability of our state that is critical,” she said. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org
Earlier this year, the Albert Shanker Institute published the second edition of a report entitled “Does Money matter in Education” written by Bruce D. Baker of Rutgers University. This is a follow-up to his landmark review of existing research on the connection between education funding and outcomes. In it, he makes the following conclusions:

Does money Matter?
Yes. On average, aggregate measures of per-pupil spending are positively associated with improved or higher student outcomes.

The size of this effect is larger in some studies than in others, and, in some cases, additional funding appears to matter more for some students than for others. Clearly, there are other factors that may moderate the influence of funding on student outcomes, such as how that money is spent. But, on balance, in direct tests of the relationship between financial inputs to schooling and student outcomes, money matters.

Do schooling resources that cost money matter?
Yes. Schooling resources that cost money, including smaller class sizes, additional supports, early childhood programs and more competitive teacher compensation (permitting schools and districts to recruit and retain a higher-quality teacher workforce), are positively associated with student outcomes.

Again, in some cases, those effects are larger than in others, and there is also variation by student population and other contextual variables. On the whole, however, the things that cost money benefit students, and there is scarce evidence that there are more cost-effective alternatives.

Do state school finance reforms matter?
Yes. Sustained improvements to the level and distribution of funding across local public school districts can lead to improvements in the level and distribution of student outcomes.

While money alone may not be the answer, more equitable and adequate allocation of financial inputs to schooling provide a necessary underlying condition for improving the equity and adequacy of outcomes. The available evidence suggests that appropriate combinations of more adequate funding with more accountability for its use may be most promising.

Responding to the Debate
In addition to the main findings, Baker looked at the typical arguments against increased school funding, and determined that The following five contentions no longer have a legitimate place in the debate over state school finance policy and whether and how money matters in K-12 education:

1. Vote counts of correlational studies between spending and outcomes, without regard for rigor of the analyses and quality of the data on which they depend.

2. The long-term trend argument and supporting graphs that show long-term spending going up and NAEP scores staying flat.

3. International comparisons asserting, and perhaps illustrating via scatterplot, that the United States spends more than other developed countries but achieves less on international assessments.

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Staff Spotlight: John Rasmussen

Although the KASB attorneys can handle a myriad of education law issues, chances are that if there’s a question or issue regarding negotiations, it will be handled by staff attorney John Rasmussen, KASB’s unofficial negotiations expert.

John grew up in Lincoln, KS- a town 30 minutes NW of Salina in North Central Kansas. He attended the University of Kansas, where he earned his Bachelor’s degree in education.

For the next 10 years, he would teach social studies at the Otis-Bison, Kingman and Russell school districts and coach football, girls’ basketball and golf before attending Washburn University Law School. Following his time at Washburn John worked for Kansas the League of Municipalities before joining KASB in August of 2001.

John’s role here at KASB is a staff attorney. As such, he spends a lot of time on the phone, providing a “gamut of education law” advice to superintendents, principals and board members. One of the areas John works a lot in is negotiations. “It’s probably the thing I do the most,” he says. As chief negotiator, John provides negotiation services to school boards and, due to a recent change in the law that requires board members to have annual training in negotiations, he also travels extensively around the state providing onsite negotiations training workshops. “It’s been a huge year for trainings; it’s been a busy autumn and winter.”

As for his time at KASB, John states that he enjoys the people he works with. “We have an excellent staff right now. We work well together and help each other out.” One of the things he finds rewarding about his work with KASB and school leaders is the fact that he’s “helping the good folks who work in schools. Helping people work through a difficult issue is rewarding. The interaction is rewarding.”
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Facile international comparisons are equally deceitful, in that they (a) fail to account for differences in student populations served and the related scope of educational and related services provided; and (b) fail to appropriately equate educational spending across nations, including the failure to account for the range of services and operating costs covered under “educational expense” in the United States versus other countries (for example, public employee health and pension benefits).

4. Anecdotal assertions that states such as New Jersey and cities such as Kansas City provide proof positive that massive infusions of funding have proven ineffective at improving student outcomes.

Anecdotal assertions of failures resulting from massive infusions of funding are rebutted within the report and elsewhere.

5. The assertion that how money is spent is much more important than how much is available.

One cannot reasonably make the leap to assert that how money is spent is necessarily more important than how much money is available.

How money is spent matters, but if you don’t have it, you can’t spend it.

It is unhelpful at best for public policy, and harmful to the children subjected to those policies, to pretend without any compelling evidence that somewhere out there exists a far cheaper way to achieve the same or better outcomes (and thus we can cut our way down that more efficient path).

Baker concludes with a quote by Kansas’ three-judge panel:

“Simply, school opportunities do not repeat themselves and when the opportunity for a formal education passes, then for most, it is most likely gone. We all know that the struggle for an income very often—too often—overcomes the time needed to prepare intellectually for a better one.”

“If the position advanced here is the State’s full position, it is experimenting with our children which have no recourse from a failure of the experiment.”

KASB has prepared an online summary of the report. That, and the report itself, can be found by visiting kasb.org/research.