Raising the standard for student success in Kansas City USD 500

KASB’s 2015-16 Leadership for Tomorrow class recently received a first-hand view of how Kansas City USD 500 raised student achievement and community expectations in developing a system in which every graduate will either have college credit, be prepared for postsecondary education or obtain an industry certificate.

A journey of 20 years

“We see ourselves as on a journey,” said David Smith, who is Kansas City, Kansas Public School’s director of communications and governmental relations and one of four staff presenters for the LFT’s Session II last week.

The journey has been formidable. The district has the highest poverty rate in the state with 90 percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. However, instead of focusing on what many had labeled a road block, the board and administration set about changing the future for the 22,000 students. What followed took courage, commitment and creativity.

Dr. Cindy Lane, superintendent of schools, Marcy Clay, assistant superintendent for elementary, and Dr. Jayson Strickland, assistant superintendent for secondary (and a member of the leadership class) along with Smith shared with the LFT class the opportunities, challenges and lessons learned during the district’s 20-year journey.

The journey begins

KCKPS charts its current journey as beginning in the mid-1990s. The district partnered with the Kansas City, MO., school district to begin a comprehensive study of outcomes. A researcher, funded by a grant through the Kauffman Foundation, looked at what students needed to be able to do to take their place in society once they graduated.

KASB seeks candidates for association president

KASB is seeking candidates for the office of KASB president, which requires a three-year commitment to serve on the KASB Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Candidates must be serving on a member school board. The deadline for application is Wed., Sept. 2.

The association is asking its membership to search among themselves for a highly qualified individual for this office. Continued high quality leadership of the Association will depend on the true dedication put forth by individuals who are vitally interested in its future and the education of the youth of Kansas. Commit to the future!

This candidate will serve as president-elect designee for six months, beginning with their election at the 2015 KASB Delegate Assembly. In June 2016, the candidate will move into the office of KASB President-elect and will then will spend the next year as President and the third year as Past President.

The KASB Nominating Committee will meet September 12, 2015, to interview and endorse candidates. The Committee’s recommendation will be presented to the KASB Delegate Assembly in December when delegates will elect the new president-elect designee during the KASB annual convention.

Find the application online at kasb.org/wcm/_NB/15/NB0708a.aspx.
KASB releases 2015 school board election data

Nearly 500 new school board members took office on July 1 after being elected in April. Another 664 board members were reelected. This is the last year school board members will be elected in the Spring. The Kansas Legislature moved local elections from April of odd-numbered years to November of odd-numbered years, beginning in 2017.

KASB has posted this year’s School Board Election Results as reported by our members; along with data going back to 1997. This data can be found on the main data page at www.kasb.org/data. You can find this year’s results and historical data for each school district, as well as statewide and for districts grouped by high school activities league, KNEA uniserv area and KASB region.

Below is a map showing Kansas school districts and the number of new board members elected this Spring. Not all districts are listed because of space. If the district you are looking for is not shown, go to www.kasb.org/electionresults for an interactive map and hover over the dot closest to your district. The district number and number of new members will pop up.

For more information, visit KASB Advocacy Director Mark Tallman’s blog post on the topic at http://tallmankasb.blogspot.com/2015/07/kasb-releases-2015-school-board.html.

Calendar/Activity, Fees Surveys now open

The online and printable versions of the 2015-16 Calendar/Activity Survey and the Fees Survey are now available for board clerks to complete and submit to KASB. Every year we collect information on your districts’ calendars, activities, and fees. This data is used at the state level for research and legislative advocacy efforts, and is made available to KASB members to allow for comparisons across districts, regions, and a variety of other factors.

Visit www.kasb.org/forms to find the surveys and complete them. The printable form can be used for your own recordkeeping or can be completed and returned to us via mail or by scanning and emailing.

To see what your district submitted for these surveys in previous years, visit www.kasb.org/data and look for the “Calendar,” “Activity,” and “Fees” interactive tools and Excel files.

If you need assistance or have questions, contact Debbie Dyche or Ted Carter at ddyche@kasb.org, tcarter@kasb.org, or 785-273-3600.
KASB intervenes in electrical rate case

KASB has submitted testimony asking the Kansas Corporation Commission to reduce or eliminate an electric rate increase for school districts proposed by Westar Energy. The KCC has final authority over electricity rates charged by Kansas utilities.

Associate Executive Director Mark Tallman explained state aid for school district operating budgets was reduced during the last school year and will be frozen at the level for the next two years under the block grant system. He said any increase in utility costs will require districts to shift funding from support for instruction and student success.

KASB is intervening on behalf of its member school districts and education entities. Westar is requesting just under a 10 percent rate increase for schools, and similar increases to other identified categories. There are a number of different rate-paying groups. The KCC has the option to set different rates and increases for these groups.

The issue in this and previous rates cases is that schools, large manufacturers, large retailers, and some of the other categories are already paying the cost of service, while some groups, especially residential users, are not paying the actual cost of receiving service. Experts hired by KASB and Wichita USD 259 say the rate paid by school districts already covers Westar’s costs.

This is the third time KASB has participated in a rate case. In 2012, KASB provided testimony on behalf of schools. The utility initially requested an overall 6 percent rate increase. The end result for schools was an increase of less than 2 percent. KASB was an observer in 2008 but did not enter as an intervening party. Wichita USD 259 has historically intervened in all recent (last 10 years) cases.

“Although KASB believes school districts are already paying an appropriate share of the cost of electricity, we want to emphasize Westar has been a strong supporter of Kansas public schools,” said KASB Executive Director Dr. John Heim.

Through a partnership with KASB, Westar provides grants for school district STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs. In addition Topeka USD 501 has been recognized by the National School Boards Association for its partnership with Westar in an innovative energy education project.

A decision in the rate case is expected by the end of the calendar year.

KASB developing health insurance option

KASB is offering school districts the opportunity to develop a health insurance pooled risk program to hold down costs by reducing administrative overhead and broadening the base of covered employees.

Director of Insurance Services David Shriver says the association has been working with Coventry Health System, recently acquired by Aetna, on a two-step process. First, districts would sign up for a fully insured program for their employees, available for renewals on and after Oct. 1.

In the second step, if districts with insured lives totalling 800 to 900 join, the plan would be converted into a health insurance pool by July 1, 2016.

According to Shriver, the pool concept would lower costs in two ways. It would minimize the administrative costs of individual employer groups, and it would allow the risk of high cost claims to be spread over a larger number of employees than most individual districts can provide.

The plan would include two other important features. First, it would offer employees more options for health insurance plans, including choice of deductibles and health savings accounts. Second, the goal is to use advancing technology to help districts reduce costs by risk management strategies.

The Coventry/Aetna plan offers a comprehensive network of health care providers, comparable to networks offered by other major insurance plans.

Shriver says the developing program could help almost any district, but should be particularly helpful for school employers experiencing significant increases in premium costs, facing higher costs of covering employees newly eligible under the Affordable Care Act, or finding other options such as the state health plan too expensive or restrictive.

For more information, contact Shriver at dshriver@kasb.org, or call 785-273-3600.

P1 Group, Inc. joins KASB Prestigious Partner program

The KASB Board of Directors approved P1 Group, Inc. as a Prestigious Partners at its June 6, 2015 meeting. P1 Group, Inc., based in Lenexa, Kansas, is a vendor-neutral, single-source provider for all things facilities-related.

“T he company has deep roots in Kansas, a strong commitment to family and community and a long history of success,” Weseman said. “We believe P1 Group is a great fit for KASB’s prestigious partners program.”

P1 Group, Inc.’s roots date back to 1919 when it began as a family-owned contractor in Kansas City. It has since grown to be one of the nation’s premier specialty contractors with over 900 employees and offices in Lenexa, Lawrence, Topeka, Wichita, Joplin, Des Moines, Saint Joseph and Las Vegas.

“Our offerings help to reduce the total cost of ownership associated with owning and operating school facilities, thus allowing more flexibility to spend resources on what matters most – our kids and their education,” said Dana Dunn, P1 Group, Inc.

KASB Prestigious Partners support the association’s work with school boards by bringing access to cost effective products or services to meet local needs and improve efficiency.

P1 Group, Inc. joins four other KASB Prestigious Partners: American Fidelity Assurance Company; Piper Jaffray & Co.; K12itc and Opaa!

~Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org
Why are school districts cutting budgets when total funding is up?

As school boards across Kansas adopt budgets for the upcoming year, the media is reporting two different situations.

School administrators in some districts have laid off staff and are cutting programs for students while nearly all districts are making tough choices.

But others, such as Gov. Sam Brownback and legislative leaders, are saying that school funding is at an all-time high, and the new block grant system, they say, was designed to protect districts from cuts and provide stability.

Many parents, patrons and even school board members are likely confused by these different perspectives. The facts are really fairly simple. Although total funding is up, the part of school funding available for day-to-day operating costs is not keeping up with inflation and enrollment.

1. Operating funding per pupil has not kept pace with inflation since 2009 even though total funding per pupil is at an all-time high.

School funding falls into several big categories. The money school boards can use for general educational purposes, from paying teacher salaries to heating, cooling and lighting buildings to busing students, comes from general state aid, special education state aid, and a local option budget. These are state and local operating funds, and they represent about two-thirds of total funding.

The remaining third is made up of federal funding for education programs, food service costs (funded by both federal aid and student meal fees), state contributions to the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, costs of buildings and equipment approved by district voters or from local capital outlay tax levies, and other student fees for textbooks, etc. By law, none of these funds can be used for “general” operating costs.

Total school district funding is, in fact, at an all-time high, expected to top $6.1 billion this year. Following the Montoy school finance decision by the Kansas Supreme Court in 2005, funding increased rapidly, then declined following the Great Recession before beginning a slower rate of increase.

However, state and local operating budgets, which include each school district’s general fund, state special education aid and local option budgets, took a bigger hit following the recession, and recovered much more slowly. In fact, state and local operating budgets for the school year that just ended were at the same level as in 2009, although inflation has increased nearly 10 percent.

Total funding does not take into account changes in student enrollment, which has been increasing.

Total Kansas per pupil spending is at its highest point ever, projected to be over $13,000 in 2015. However, state and local operating funds per pupil is still below the 2009 level.

Finally, actual dollars do not show the impact of inflation. The following chart shows per pupil funding adjusted by the consumer price index to 2014 dollars. Total spending per pupil, when adjusted to 2014 dollars, is actually below 2007 levels.

Operating dollars per pupil have declined when adjusted for inflation every year since 2009, and are projected to do so for the next two years under the block grants approved by the 2015 Legislature.

2. In the next two years, per pupil operating funding is projected to fall behind inflation under the block grant system.

The block grant bill passed by the 2015 Legislature basically did three things. First, it cut the state aid formula for local option budget and capital outlay state aid, so most districts did not receive as much funding as expected last year. This, in turn, required these districts to reduce their budgets during the year.

Second, it locked in most funding for school operating budgets for the next two years at the same level as the current year. In other words, it “froze” funding levels regardless of changes in student enrollment, special needs or inflation.

Third, it provided increased funding for KPERS pension contributions over the next two years - but districts can’t use these funds for any other purpose. KPERS aid is simply transferred to the district, then immediately transferred out.

When districts talk about budget cuts for the next two years under the block...continued on next page
grants, it generally means they have rising fixed costs for salaries, insurance, utilities, and in many cases additional students. Because the block grant freezes operating funds, the district must find cuts in other parts of the budget to cover these additional expenses.

3. While total K-12 funding has increased over the past five years, most of the increase has not been available for regular educational operating costs.

School funding is not interchangeable. Districts have significant flexibility within some parts of their budget, and much less flexibility in others. Over the past five years, the flexible parts of school budgets have increased much less than restricted funding areas.

Since 2010, total funding for school districts increased by $510 million, but general operating funds from the state account for only $53 million, or about 10 percent of the total.

Special education aid has barely changed. Local Option Budgets have increased by $127 million, or about one-quarter of the increase. The state legislature provided a large increase in LOB aid that took place last year (2015) to comply with a Supreme Court order. However, most of this increase had to be used to reduce local LOB mill levies, not to provide districts with additional spending power.

Over past five years, federal funding for education programs such Title I, special education federal aid and career and technical education aid has actually declined. However, federal meal support has increased due to the higher number of low income children. In fact, federal food aid accounted for more of the funding increase in the past five years than general state aid.

KPERS contributions for school employee retirement benefits increased by nearly $100 million, as the state has increased contributions to the underfunded pension system, but none of those dollars can be used for regular classroom expenses. In addition, state aid for bond payments and capital outlay expenditures - which can only be used for those purposes - increased nearly $90 million, because local voters have approved a number of school bond projects and the Legislature voted to restore capital outlay aid after another Supreme Court order.

Conclusion

It’s true that from the viewpoint of total dollars, funding for Kansas school districts is rising. However, the rate of increase is less than enrollment and inflation, especially for operating budgets, and the increased funds, such as pension obligations, are devoted to areas that cannot be used for classroom instruction. That means districts must cut positions, programs and services to cover expenses that are increasing faster than resources. This situation is projected to continue for the next two years under the block grant program.

~Mark Tallman, mtallman@kasb.org

<table>
<thead>
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<th>State and Local Operating Budgets</th>
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Based on McREL’s “What Matters Most,” and delivered in five highly interactive and energetic sessions, this Building Leader Mentoring and Support program has been customized by KASB staff and Kansas education leaders to provide the knowledge/resources AND mentoring/support your building leaders need to be successful.

This year-long mentoring and induction program meets the KSDE requirement for the professional building leader’s license. Plus participants who already hold this credential will earn professional development points for renewal of the KSDE license.

Sessions are held at the following locations to cut travel costs and time away from the building: Smoky Hill Service Center (Salina); Greenbush (Girard and Topeka); South Central Kansas Education Service Center (Clearwater). KASB will hold centralized sessions for those who do not have access to this program through their service center.

Learn more by contacting a participating service center or KASB’s Brian Jordan, KASB Leadership Services at 785-273-3600, bjordan@kasb.org. www.kasb.org/leadertraining

Building Leader Mentoring & Support

LEADERSHIP SERVICES

in partnership with service centers

Greenbush
Smoky Hill
SCKESC
In 1998, KCKPS formally implemented “First Things First,” a comprehensive research-based school reform model that included small learning communities, high standards for academics and conduct and lower student-teacher ratios.

In those first several years, the district established high, clear standards for learning, performance and recognition and put in place enrichment opportunities for all students and expanded options. And all adults in the system began to build an understanding of how their individual role connected to the success of a system that supports student success.

Pleased but not satisfied

The district demonstrated significant advances in student achievement and graduation rates. By the mid-2000s significant improvement had been made in almost every area. However, the district remained dissatisfied with reading and math achievement and struggled to meet No Child Left Behind targets. Like every public school, KCKPS felt growing pressure to prepare every student for a rapidly changing world.

As Dr. Lane said, it knew it needed to go farther. District leadership was “pleased, but not satisfied.”

“The board had the courage to take the data and put it in front of the community,” she said. The district began talking about its successes, but also their hopes for the future. “We began to build a constituency for support and change.”

The district credits consistent leadership and support from the board of education as critical to the it’s success. KCK has had only 14 superintendents in its 150 year history, a significantly lower turnover rate than most large urban school districts. Today, that system includes 22,000 students in 30 elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools and four early childhood centers.

Dr. Lane said the board’s courage and continuing commitment is the foundation of their progress. The board shares the same focus — Inspiring Excellence for Each Child. “More than 50 percent of our agenda is about student achievement,” Dr. Lane said.

In 2010, the KCKPS board of education established the district continuous improvement plan that established non-negotiable targets for achievement and instruction. And success is measured by the district’s one goal: “each student will exit high school prepared for college and career in a global society.”

The district has created what it calls a “guaranteed curriculum.” With close to 50 percent mobility within the district, the consistency and continuity of system-wide standards and defined sequence are critical to keeping all students on track and on time for the next step.

A high school diploma that means more

And the next step for KCKPS is the Diploma+ program. Diploma+ means every student will graduate from KCKPS with a diploma and at least one of the following: at least two years of college credit, a technical certificate or credential, or at least a 21 on the ACT. This college and career focus is a system-wide initiative, and awareness and instruction starts with kindergarten.

“We are building a system that monitors and tells us when a student starts slipping and not meeting the targets,” Dr. Strickland said. “We are not an intervention factory,” Strickland said. “You don’t enter ninth grade if you have not passed core classes.”

“If you are a part of the KCKPS you will have access to not only a high school diploma, but something more,” Dr. Strickland said. “A high school diploma is not enough anymore. You have to do more, and we have the system that will help you do more.”

Continuing the journey: Flexibility for innovation

Dr. Lane said the district’s desire for flexibility is behind its work with the Coalition of Innovative Districts. KCKPS is one of six districts in Kansas granted this status by the Kansas State Board of Education.

The most recent changes in teacher licensure is a good example. Dr. Lane noted there is considerable misinformation about the proposal. It is a one-year pilot program and only for targeted areas. The project includes close monitoring and is designed to provide qualified professionals with the pedagogy, such as classroom management, they would need.

The Diploma+ requirements are now fully implemented beginning with last year’s sixth grade students. The district continues to build the infrastructure and processes necessary for monitoring, community supports and other details. And through the district’s continuous improvement plan, work continues in the areas of literacy, meeting the needs of students whose native language is not English, early childhood programs, to name just a few.

The single goal and promise of Diploma+ is changing the culture of their community. “Our kids have enormous capacity,” she said. “We are truly shaping futures.”

About the Leadership for Tomorrow program

The KASB Leadership for Tomorrow program identifies exemplary school board members, superintendents, principals and other administrators for training and experiences that create opportunities for professional and personal growth.

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 developing leadership skills for effective governance and raising student achievement. In the past 10 years the program has graduated over 100 leaders who have gone on to have an impact at the local, state and national levels.
More bad revenue news for the state
After the record 114-day legislative session ended last month with reportedly the largest tax increase in state history, legislators thought the ending balance for the fiscal year would total $86 million, assuming Gov. Sam Brownback made $50 million in cuts.

The $86 million in cash reserves was knocked down by legislative staff to $67 million by the end of the fiscal year; still assuming Brownback will make the $50 million in budget cuts.

The cash reserve estimate was lowered because the state didn’t make tax projections as it closed out the books of the last fiscal year.

There has been no word yet on what Brownback will cut to hit the $50 million target, but the Legislature adopted a bill that was touted as a way to prevent him from cutting education funding.

Meanwhile, the school finance appeal pending with the Kansas Supreme Court could require the Legislature to approve approximately $50 million in equity funding to schools.

Resolution approved by State for $1B in bonds
On a partisan vote, state elected leaders authorized the issuance of $1 billion in bonds to shore up the pension system for teachers and government workers.

The State Finance Council, chaired by Gov. Sam Brownback, and composed of legislative leaders approved the bond resolution on a 6-2 vote. All Republicans at the meeting voted for the measure while Senate Democratic Leader Anthony Hensley of Topeka and House Democratic Leader Tom Burroughs of Kansas City voted against it.

Supporters of the proposal say the bonds can be sold at a low interest rate and then invested, earning a higher return that can then be used to pay for pension obligations.

But opponents say the strategy is fraught with risks and the move was being made because of the state’s revenue problems caused by steep income tax cuts in 2012.

Under the proposal, the bonds will be capped at 5 percent interest while the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System estimates it will earn 8 percent annually on investing the funds.

Currently, the market would offer just below 5 percent interest on the bonds, according to Rebecca Floyd, legal counsel and executive vice president of the Kansas Development Finance Authority.

Floyd said she believed the state could make the bond transaction no earlier than six weeks from now. If interest rates go higher than 5 percent, she said KDFA would not make the transaction.

Because of possible future increases in interest rates, state officials said it would be better to market the entire $1 billion at once instead of multiple transactions.

Alan Conroy, executive director of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, said the entire $1 billion infusion would be applied to the pension system for teachers and state government employees.

Brownback initially called for $1.5 billion in pension obligation bonds, but the Legislature reduced that figure.

State Board approves specialized license
The Kansas State Board of Education voted this month to approve a specialized teaching license for members of the Coalition of Innovative Districts, after several amendments to narrow the original proposals. KASB supported the concept.

The proposal to allow innovative districts, which are free from most state laws and regulations in exchange for higher student performance standards, to hire teachers without the usual licensure qualifications has been highly controversial, and passed on a 6-4 vote.

Kathy Busch, R-Wichita; Deena Horst, R-Salina; Ken Willard, R-Hutchinson; John Bacon, R-Olathe; Steve Roberts, R-Overland Park; and Jim McIniece, R-Wichita, supported the amended proposal. Janet Waugh, D-Kansas City; Sally Cauble, R-Dodge City; Carolyn Campbell, D-Topeka; and Jim Porter, R-Fredonia, were opposed.

The swing vote was Ms. Busch, who supported the plan after it was amended on a motion by Mr. Willard. The changes limit the licensure option to the six current innovative districts, made the proposal a pilot program with a sunset date, require special license-holders to have a college degree or professional certificate, and require the State Board to approve each license, rather than the local board only.

KASB has supported the concept of the innovative districts to allow local boards more flexibility to experiment with instruction and operations, and has also supported greater teacher licensure flexibility. The state’s largest teacher organization, the Kansas National Education Association, and other education groups, strongly opposed the opposition as weakening the teaching profession.

U.S. Senate passes bipartisan ed bill
The U.S. Senate Thursday approved S 1177, the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act, to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) on a vote of 81-17. If reconciled with the version passed by the U.S. House and signed by the President, the bill will replace the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act.

Kansas Senators split their votes on the bill, with Sen. Pat Roberts voting yes and Sen. Jerry Moran voting no.

The National School Boards Association, which includes KASB, praised the measure for including two of its top priorities presented in a July 6 letter to the Senate: reaffirming local-level decision making in public education and opposing any proposals supporting vouchers or tuition tax credits to non-public schools. NSBA accomplished both of these priorities and applauds the continued momentum on ESEA reauthorization.

The final bill includes an amendment offered last week by Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE) and co-sponsored by Sens. Angus King (I-ME) and Jon Tester (D-MT) for local governance (Amendment No. 2079).

“This amendment would ensure communities have ultimate authority over their school districts,” said Senator Fischer, who is also a past president of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. “It also strengthens the relationship among local school board members and parents.”

Find more ‘News Briefs’ on the KASB website at www.kasb.org/NewsBriefs. You may also sign up to receive the News Briefs in your email each day by emailing email@kasb.org.
August/September At-A-Glance

August
4 ESI Task Force Meeting, Topeka
10 KASB Attorney on Call
11-12 Kansas State Board of Ed Meeting, Topeka
28 School Finance Summit
29 KASB Board of Directors, Legislative Committee & Workers Compensation Fund Trustees Meetings

September
2 Deadline to Declare Candidate for President-Elect Designee
7 Labor Day
8-9 Kansas State Board of Ed Meeting, Topeka
10 New Superintendent’s Day with KASB
12 KASB Nominating Committee Meeting, Topeka

Section 504 Workshop, 8/3/2015 Clearwater (Two Sessions)
These half-day workshops (choose from a morning or afternoon session) cover Section 504 for Students, explore the differences between Section 504, IDEA and ADA, and discuss staff, parent and patron concerns with Section 504.

Board Leadership Team Workshop
8/4/15 Hays Rose Garden Banquet Hall & 8/6/15 KASB Topeka
Students succeed when the district is led by a strong board-superintendent team. This one-day seminar for the school board leadership team (president, vice president, superintendent, clerk) focuses on roles and responsibilities and gives district teams time to work together. You will gain the leadership skills you need, from chairing the meeting to handling disagreements and difficult situations. While the focus is on the leadership team, this workshop is open to all board members.

Evaluation Workshop
8/26/15 KASB Topeka
9/16/16 Sublette Service Center
This workshop is for building and district level administrators to gain skills in conducting personnel evaluations of certified staff, including having difficult conversations and improving employee performance through evaluation. A portion of the workshop will focus on helping districts develop consistency across their evaluation system within their district. Bring your team of administrators for this interactive workshop.

Find detailed agendas and register online at www.kasb.org.