Kansas education leaders launch new vision for schools

Kansas top education officials have unveiled a new vision for public schools that focuses on meeting the needs of all students and developing both academic and non-academic skills, such as conscientiousness.

The new vision will be implemented under the slogan: “Kansas leads the world in the success of every student.”

Kansas Education Commissioner Randy Watson and Kansas State Board of Education Chairman Jim McNiece unveiled the visioning statement and strategic plan on Oct. 26, during the Kansas State Department of Education’s Annual Conference in Wichita.

The new vision came out of a statewide tour of meetings led by Watson and Deputy Commissioner Brad Neuenswander.

During those meetings, Kansans said they wanted:
- Quality pre-school, including all-day kindergarten.
- Changes to address school culture. The student who chooses to pursue a technical education or a two-year college has to be valued and supported as much as the student pursuing a four-year degree.
- Giving counselors and social workers new, dynamic roles. They should be able to focus on helping individual students explore career paths and develop individual plans of study.
- Businesses to play an integral role in a student’s education. Internships and job shadowing are important.
- Community service to play a larger role in education.
- Schools to be reorganized around the student, not systems. Equity and common sense should coexist.

“As a board, we recognize the need to be flexible because the needs of our students are always changing,” Education Board Chairman Jim McNiece said.

“With the shift in the direction of education, we need to focus on new outcomes,” Watson said.

KASB offers training for negotiations

Kansas not only changed the way it funded schools last year, but it overhauled the way teachers and school boards negotiate, including a requirement of annual training for negotiators.

The new law revised the Professional Negotiations Act so parties must negotiate salary, hours and amounts of work. Each side can select up to three additional terms and all other conditions of professional service are permissive topics for negotiation if both parties agree to discuss them.

Under the old law, there were more than 30 items that could be negotiated each year if raised by either party.

The new law also requires that those selected to represent the local board and the professional employees’ organization must complete training every year on conducting negotiations.

In this regard, KASB Legal Staff offers to all KASB members a full range of training services, from negotiation preparation to helping write the final agreement. A more detailed look at services provided by KASB is available at www.kasb.org and choose Legal Services/Negotiations Services.

KASB will conduct negotiations training both at our Topeka office and on-site.

The first Basic Negotiations Workshop will be held Thur. Nov. 12, at KASB. Go to www.kasb.org and click on the graphic in the slider on the front page of the site for a detailed agenda.

The law also changed some key deadlines, moving from Feb. 1, to March 31, when required notices on items to be negotiated are due and from June 1, to July 31, the statutory declaration of impasse date.
School finance, budget, ESI on legislative agenda for November, December

With the 2016 Legislative Session just a little more than two months away, education legislative efforts and budget considerations are becoming more prominent.

The Special Committee on K-12 Student Success held its first meeting on Oct. 23, received numerous documents on school finance and will meet again Nov. 10.

The 15-member committee is working on a possible new school finance formula to replace the block grant, which was touted by proponents as a bridge to a permanent finance system.

The block grant essentially froze school funding levels for two years and has been declared unconstitutional by a three-judge panel. That decision has been appealed to the Kansas Supreme Court.

KASB has put on its website all the documents being considered by the K-12 committee. They can be accessed at www.kasb.org/keyresources.

Meanwhile, state revenues — half of which go to school funding — continue to fall below projections.

That could mean the current fiscal year budget may have to be adjusted, either through tax increases, budget cuts, transfers from other areas of state spending, or a combination of all those actions.

In another area, a task force that will advise the Legislature continues working on the issue of dealing with students who are in danger of harming themselves or other students.

The Emergency Safety Intervention Task Force is charged with providing a report to the Legislature.

Parents who have special needs children have expressed the desire for more information from schools when ESI is used, increased training of school personnel and less use of seclusion or restraint.

Meanwhile, school officials have cautioned against additional regulations and changes that could overburden teachers and increase costs.

An interim committee also is looking at House Bill 2345, which would greatly limit who would be able to serve on school boards. The bill failed to advance last session, but legislative leaders asked for further study.

Earlier this month, the committee surveyed school districts to see how many current school board members would be disqualified from serving if the bill were adopted. The results of that survey have not been released, but it would be a substantial number.

HB 2345 would prohibit people from serving on school boards if they had a spouse or sibling who worked for another school district in the state. The bill was broad enough that a person working for a business that did business with a school district would be prohibited from serving on a school board.

The Legislative Session starts Jan. 11.
KASB Survey Status: Have you submitted your data?

KASB currently has four annual surveys open for districts to submit. Let’s take a minute to look at what they are, where they stand, and why they matter.

Negotiations Settlement Survey
KASB collects information on the teacher base salary, fringe benefits, districts eliminating positions, districts reporting impasse, and similar data on the annual Negotiations Settlement Survey.

Figure 1 shows teacher base salary and board paid fringe benefits from 1996 through 2016.

This data is used by other districts to see how they stand compared to their peers, and is used by KASB to ensure we are aware of any emerging trends related to district-teacher relations.

As the pie charts below show, as of October 28, about 56 percent of districts have responded this year.

Fees Survey
KASB collects information on the fees charged by districts for uniforms, instruments, facilities usage by outside groups, and the like on the annual Fees Survey.

This data is used by districts to ensure their fee structure is consistent with their peers, and by KASB to inform legislative activities related to funding.

As the pie charts below show, as of October 28, about 62 percent of districts have responded this year.

Calendar/Activity Survey
KASB collects information on school opening and closing dates, teacher in-service and work/duty days, and holidays, and also information on fees charged for activity participation and activity admissions.

This data is useful for districts to ensure their school calendar is consistent with their peers, and is used by KASB to identify trends related to school year length, days teachers are working, and to inform legislative activities related to funding.

As the pie charts below show, as of October 28, about 70 percent of districts responded this year.

Administrators Survey
KASB collects information on superintendents, board clerks, treasurers, principals, assistant principals, and central office staff on the annual Administrators Survey. This information includes salary and board paid fringe, age, years of experience, education, and other duties.

Figure 2 shows superintendent salary and board paid fringe benefits from 1996 to 2016.

This is perhaps the most used data collection by members and by KASB. It is used for superintendent searches, administrator salary decisions, and is used by KASB to inform legislative activities related to the allocation of funds between administration and the classroom.

As the pie chart below shows, as of October 28, about 81 percent of districts have responded this year.

Check Your District
If you are not sure whether your district has submitted data for this year on these surveys, please visit www.kasb.org/data and look at the Survey Checklist, then go to www.kasb.org/surveys to submit. If you have questions, contact research@kasb.org.

KASB appreciates all the effort districts put into providing this information, and is always working to improve the process.
Explore innovative ideas to expand opportunities for students and create success for all students.

Grow your network of colleagues and education experts to call on for ideas and support.

Hear nationally-acclaimed keynoter Cile Chavez and our featured speaker - Kansas’ own Dale Dennis!

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