Several great school programs featured during Meeting All Kids Needs tours

In conjunction with the KASB Annual Convention, the Meeting All Kids Needs (MAKN) tour continues to thrive. These tours allow board members and superintendents the opportunity to see wonderful school programs. I was fortunate to be part of one of the three tours scheduled for the day. I am pleased to be able to provide this narrative of the great day our group had meeting dynamic district office staff, principals, teachers and students.

We started the tour from the Hyatt Regency at 8:15 and began our visits at Wichita USD 259’s Horace Mann Dual Language Magnet School. Horace Mann provides dual language immersion in English and Spanish for kindergarten through eighth grade. Our group was fascinated by observing high quality teaching and learning and watching students engage in both their primary and secondary languages. These students were actively participating in class by verbalizing their questions, comments and presentations in both their primary and secondary language.

After the conclusion of the Horace Mann tour, we traveled to the Levy Special Education Center. This school is best described by the description on their website. “Levy Special Education Center serves students who are severely multiply disabled, have an intellectual disability, autistic and otherwise health impaired. Levy serves students from ages three to 21 whose educational needs can best be met in a special school setting.” Our group was allowed the privilege of visiting numerous classrooms. We watched many caring adults teach and assist students by providing educational activities designed for each student’s individual needs. The hydrotherapy pool and sensory room were highlights of the tour.

Our next location was Goddard USD 265’s Eisenhower High School where we were met by a group of students that led us to the cafeteria where we dined on an outstanding school lunch. We ate our lunch in the art room where we were introduced to numerous Goddard officials who explained their district’s emphasis on Project Lead the Way. “Project Lead The Way is the nation’s leading provider of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. Through world-class K-12 curriculum, high-quality teacher professional development, and outstanding partnerships, PLTW is helping students develop the skills needed to succeed in the global economy.” The Goddard School District has made a philosophical and financial commitment to Project Lead the Way from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Our first stop at Eisenhower High School was a classroom where we observed a student launch a ping pong ball from a machine he produced using his

Kindergarten students at Amelia Earhart Elementary School in Goddard engineer and build “Three Little Pig” houses to keep the “wolf” from blowing them down. 

The KASB office will be closed for the holiday season on Dec. 24 and re-open Jan. 4. We wish you all Merry Christmas and look forward to serving you and working with you in 2016!
This year has brought some big changes for me. Among them, I am not commuting 120 miles a day anymore. I also traded my 10-year-old Nissan pickup on a new Ford F150. These changes made me think about an interesting argument made by a Kansas policy group about median spending in schools. The argument is the Legislature should take the median spending level for schools and limit spending to that median for each spending category. The assumption, I guess, is that any spending above the median for each category is wasteful.

So let’s take a look at two hypothetical situations, call them medians for 2014JH and 2016JH. (Since I only had two data sets, I used average instead of median for a measure of central tendency.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending Category</th>
<th>2014JH Monthly</th>
<th>2016JH Monthly</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Maintenance</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>$360</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Interest</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red River, the second district is in the same metropolitan area and has been growing rapidly. All of their buildings have been built since the 1980s. Because of the rapid growth, they add a new school building every year or so. This district’s bond and interest costs will be far above the Metro City’s and above the median in their category. But because they built with modern designs and materials, their energy costs are far less than the median. Maintenance costs on their newer facilities will be less than Metro City and the median.

If one is looking for a way to take cheap shots at different district’s spending levels in different categories, they would say Metro City is wasteful and inefficient because of high energy and maintenance costs out of one side of their mouth and Red River is wasteful and inefficient because of high bond and interest costs out of the other, while ignoring the obvious big picture differences.

Kansas School districts are as different as the children they serve. Garden City and Maize have similar enrollments, but are unique in more ways than my short blog can list. Should we really expect them to be at the same median spending levels in total in categories? If you believe that, you haven’t driven a Ford lately.
More than 500 attend KASB’s annual conference

Education leaders urged their colleagues to get out the good word about their local Kansas schools during KASB’s 98th annual conference that was held Dec. 4-6, in Wichita.

“Rally your community around your school,” said KASB President Don Shimkus, a member of the Oxford USD 358 school board.

More than 500 school leaders from across the state met at the Hyatt Regency and Century II Convention Center. The conference featured numerous breakout sessions, exhibits, vendor workshops, school tours and inspiring speeches.

Dr. Cile Chavez, a former school district superintendent and motivational speaker from Colorado, urged school leaders to raise their game. She said most school board members give their heart, intellect and time for a higher good.

KASB Executive Director John Heim said Kansas public schools have one of the best stories in the nation to tell.

Kansas ranks eighth among states in student outcomes while ranking 27th in spending per pupil. Every state that ranks ahead of Kansas spends more per pupil.

“We have better results for less money than any other state,” Heim said.

Both Heim and Shimkus urged KASB delegates to try to lead the conversation on public schools in Kansas.

The Delegate Assembly voted unanimously for Dayna Miller, a member of the Basehor-Linwood USD 458 school board, as president-elect designee.

“I promise to do my best and continue our mission and advocate for all students,” Miller said. Her term as president will start in July 2017.

Shimkus’ term will run to July 2016 at which time Amy Martin, a member of the Olathe USD 233 school board, will become president.

The Delegate Assembly also approved its 2016 Legislative Committee report, which outlines KASB’s goals and stances for the upcoming Legislative Session. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org
There has been some contention recently about a fairly straightforward question, namely “Is there a correlation between school funding and student outcomes?”

The answer is yes, and in this article, I am going to provide evidence to support this answer.

But before that, let’s make sure we all understand the question. A correlation, according to Merriam-Webster, is “a relation existing between phenomena or things or between mathematical or statistical variables which tend to vary, be associated, or occur together in a way not expected on the basis of chance alone.”

Therefore, to say two things are correlated is to say they tend to vary together. When one is higher or lower, the other tends to be higher or lower. The correlation coefficient tells us the degree to which these things are correlated. A 100 percent correlation means the two variables move perfectly in sync.

Back to our question, what we are really asking is: “Do student outcomes tend to be higher/lower when funding is higher/lower?”

Again, the answer is yes. And I will show you by listing correlation coefficients for a variety of funding measures compared to a variety of outcome measures:

- Total Revenue per Pupil
- Current Spending per Pupil
- Spending on Instruction per Pupil
- Spending on Instruction as Percent of Current Spending
- NAEP assessment results
- ACT assessment results
- SAT assessment results

This is all publicly available state-level data, and anyone can take a look for themselves. The funding amounts come from the U.S. Census Bureau. The adjustments for state cost of living were calculated using the Regional Price Parity statistics from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The NAEP data comes from the Institute for Education Sciences, and the ACT and SAT results come directly from the tests’ websites. I used data across several years for all fifty states.

Table 1 below shows the results I found.

So, with the exception of the SAT, we can say that across all these student outcome measures, more money is correlated with better student outcomes. We can also say a higher percent of current spending going towards instruction is correlated with better student outcomes, but these correlations are not as high as those for the dollar amounts.

Does this mean increasing funding for education will lead to better student outcomes?

No, it does not.

The mantra that I have made everyone here at KASB who works with this data memorize is: “Correlation is not causation.” The fact that two things tend to move together does not mean one causes the other.

With school funding and student outcomes, it is virtually impossible to prove via statistics that increasing funding will improve student outcomes. But then again, it is virtually impossible to prove ANYTHING via statistics unless you are working in an environment where you have complete control over all your variables.

School funding and student outcomes are also correlated with a lot of other things, like median household income, education level of adults, population per square mile, percent of students with disabilities, percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, percent of students eligible for ELL services, and so forth.

So to try and separate out the impact of funding on outcomes by itself is not something that can be done in a clear and concise manner. Using different statistics for different time periods will yield different results, which is why people on both sides of the school funding argument continue to find new ways to present the data and argue their cases.

But let’s take a step back. Do we really need statistics to tell us that if you increase funding to schools, schools are going to have a better chance of enabling students to succeed?

You tell me.
NEGOTIATIONS TRAINING

Yearly training is required for local negotiations’ team members. KASB offers three levels of training that meet these requirements.

NOTE: Those participating in the Basic Negotiations Workshop Nov. 12, 2015 at KASB have met the law’s training requirement for this year.

www.kasb.org

KASB Staff Spotlight: Leslie Garner

KASB attorneys have an incredible work load. Between fielding calls, hosting seminars and workshops and everything in between, the day can get pretty hectic. Luckily, legal assistant/paralegal Leslie Garner is here to help keep things running smoothly.

Born and raised in Nebraska, Leslie moved to Salina, Kansas at 19, where she attended Brown Mackie College. After earning her legal secretarial degree, Leslie moved to Great Bend, where she worked as a municipal court clerk for 16 years.

Following her time at Great Bend, Leslie relocated to Topeka, where her husband works as a Shawnee County Sheriff’s Officer.

Once in Topeka, Leslie worked a variety of positions, including an executive assistant at Bryan Travel and accounts payable manager at Duffens Optical.

Her most recent position before coming to KASB was a legal assistant with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, where she worked with a very familiar face.

“Angie was an intern when I worked there,” Leslie said, referring to KASB Attorney/Policy Specialist Angie Stallbaumer. “I was there when she left, came back to work at the Ag. Department and left again. I’ve known Angie for a while now.”

Leslie joined KASB in February 2015, after 16 years with KSDA. As a legal assistant/paralegal, she assists the attorneys with policy audits and reviews; prepares and proofreads documents for seminars, hearings and negotiations; and maintains daily reports.

When asked what she has enjoyed most about her time at KASB, Leslie stated, “It’s all been positive. [KASB] has just been an upbeat, positive place to work. I enjoy working with the people [here]. I like the work.”

Part of what she enjoys about the work is getting to know school law. “I’ve never dealt with school law before. Learning a different type of law has definitely been a positive experience.” –Shaneice McNabney, smcnabney@kasb.org.

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KASB's Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. can meet your needs, and more!
Resources available for January 2016 School Board Appreciation Month

KASB joins state school board associations from around the U.S. in celebrating School Board Appreciation Month in January. KASB has created a website that includes a logo and other resources to get you started, including a customizable certificate of appreciation, a sample media release and tips to get others involved.

Be sure to follow #thankBOE during January! Find all the resources at www.kasb.org/thankBOE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Public school board members create a future for every child.

School Board Member Appreciation
January 2016
Kansas Association of School Boards

Meeting All Kids Needs
continued from page 1

many engineering skills. Why was this impressive? The ping pong ball landed squarely into the classroom trash can. The knowledge and skills this student had to learn to build this machine was outstanding.

We then were fortunate to travel to Goddard Middle School to watch a classroom of students and their teacher interact while programming robots for predictable movements. We were able to mingle with the students. Their knowledge of what they were doing and producing was incredible.

Our next stop was Goddard High School where we saw students working diligently on their computers to program their screen images to move in a prescribed manner. One young man informed the whole group that this coursework will lead him to an engineering major in his postsecondary work. The students were quietly working on their projects in spite of our probing eyes.

The last stop of the day was to Amelia Earhart Elementary School in Goddard. We had the good fortune to visit a kindergarten classroom where they were engineering Three Little Pig Houses in a manner to keep the wolf from blowing them down. The students were working independently or in small groups building their houses from sponge bricks, toothpicks, and clay. These kindergarten students were working with conviction as the wolf (a high powered fan) was going to have a chance to blow down their houses. Each student had their own idea of what would be a successful build based upon the knowledge and skills they had learned previously. One of our participants asked a young lady what grade she was in…the student answered, “I’m not in a grade, I’m in kindergarten.” This was a fitting conclusion to the Meeting All Kids Needs tour.

I would like to personally thank the Goddard and Wichita school districts for allowing the participants to observe the great learning demonstrated within these schools. You have much to be proud of. ~Gary Sechrist, gschrist@kasb.org
Right: KASB Past Presidents

Left: Westar, KSDE, KASB STEM Grant Award Winners
Students and officials from three school districts were on hand to receive $3,000 grants from Westar Energy for projects in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). The winners were from Goddard USD 265, Olathe USD 233, and Topeka USD 501.

Grade A entertainment
Students from the Oxford USD 358 Choir serenaded delegates on Sunday morning. Oxford FFA made the presentation of the colors.
Join KASB & USA Kansas for a power-packed Advocacy Seminar

The conference begins Thurs., Jan. 21, at Manor Conference Center, Topeka, with a full day’s agenda co-hosted by KASB and United School Administrators of Kansas. The conference is aimed at providing education advocates with information they need to engage their community and legislative representatives. A trip to the Statehouse will be part of this day’s activities. On Fri., Jan. 22, KASB will continue the seminar with speakers and discussion covering several topics, including the newly-authorized Every Student Succeeds Act, school finance, state budget and proposed legislation.

Register at www.kasb.org