Analysis: Candidates seeking more support of public schools were victorious

Kansas legislative races in the Republican Party primary earlier this month pivoted on school funding and the results were clear: Moderate GOP candidates who argued for increased support of public education routed incumbent conservative Republicans aligned with Gov. Sam Brownback.

The question now is will strong school advocates also be winners in the Nov. 8 general election? KASB doesn’t endorse candidates but encourages school leaders and parents to stay informed on the issues and the stances of candidates in the run up to the election.

Also on the November ballot are five Kansas Supreme Court justices up for retention. Brownback and his conservative allies would like to non-retain four of those justices and have often criticized the Kansas Supreme Court for its decisions in favor of plaintiff school districts in the long running school finance lawsuit.

In the primary, while Brownback was not on the ballot, the tax changes he has signed into law and his school funding policies were. Critics have blamed the tax cuts for the state’s continued financial mess and have blamed the block grant school finance system he signed into law for schools having to make cuts to the classroom.

In the Senate, six incumbents were defeated, including Senate Majority Leader Terry Bruce, R-Nickerson, who had expressed a desire to become

NSBA’s Gentzel: Public education is not broken

The executive director of the National School Board Association has a thoughtful, well-written Huffington Post blog that resonates as we approach the beginning of a new Kansas school year. KASB members may want to consider sharing the post with their news media and communities.

Thomas J. Gentzel, in a July 27 blog post entitled, “Public Education Is Constantly Evolving And Progressing,” hits back at critics who he says want to “hand the schools over to for-profit racketeers who claim to guarantee success.”

“I have devoted more than 35 years to public education, working alongside and advocating for school leaders and their communities,” Gentzel writes. “Public education is my life’s work. I am here to tell you: Public education is not broken.”

Gentzel cites historic high school graduation rates, rigorous academic standards and educational achievement by English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

“Multiply these successes, these victories, by the millions, and you have an accurate picture of what public education is accomplishing - every hour, every day, every year,” Gentzel writes.

Gentzel acknowledges that public education faces many challenges: almost
McREL Training develops district leaders

Kansas educators have the opportunity to take advantage of research-based training to ensure all district leaders are focused on best practices to improve student achievement.

KASB’s annual McREL Balanced Leadership Series, which takes place at three locations around Kansas in August through November, gives district leadership teams the time and space to develop a common vision for student success in their districts without the distractions that inevitably interfere with in-district meetings. The content can also be tailored for specific districts.

“This training is designed around what research says improves student achievement,” says KASB Director of Leadership Brian Jordan. “Participants will develop plans for leading and managing change and for identifying the most important focus for their schools and students.”

The training series assists principals in prioritizing the most important work for their building. Superintendents are encouraged to bring their district leadership teams in order to develop what Jordan calls a common “language” and goals based on best-practices research. The core work that occurs over the course of the sessions centers around how to effectively lead change, the necessary strategies along with why they are important and when is the right time to use them.

Attendees also develop a valuable network of colleagues from across the state.

Participants are expected to attend all six sessions.

Get more information about McREL at www.mcrel.org/leadership/

Register online by going to www.kasb.org and clicking on the “Event Registration” tab or contact KASB at 800-432-2471 for assistance. –Leah Fliter | lfliter@kasb.org

Fredonia
9/1/16 Overview
9/22/16 Purposeful Community
10/11-12/16 Managing Change
11/10-11/16 Focus of Leadership

Salina
8/31/16 Overview
9/21/16 Purposeful Community
10/24-25/16 Managing Change
11/15-16/16 Focus of Leadership

Topeka
8/30/16 Overview
9/20/16 Purposeful Community
10/20-21/16 Managing Change
11/17-18/16 Focus of Leadership

2016 Convention Call for Presentations now open

The Kansas Association of School Boards is seeking proposals for breakout sessions for the KASB 99th Annual Conference. The 45-minute breakout sessions will be for Sat., Dec. 3, 2016, in Wichita. Any KASB member organization can submit a proposal.

Annual Conference is the association’s flagship event—an intensive learning and networking experience bringing together hundreds of board of education members, school district leaders and content experts. Presenting at KASB’s Annual Conference is the ideal way to share your district’s story while focusing on best practices, effective strategies and helping fellow educators deepen their understanding of emerging issues in education.

Additional details regarding the five strands can be found in the next column or the Call for Presentations form available online at www.kasb.org/CFP. The deadline for submitting a proposal is August 19, 2016.
School funding on minds of board members

As the new school year approaches, school board leaders expressed optimism but said tight appropriations from the state were uppermost in their minds.

Trisha Brooke-Fruendt, vice president of Auburn-Washburn USD 437 in Topeka, said even with budget challenges, district leaders were working on the same page.

“They are focused on all students. They want everybody to achieve,” she said.

Bob Knoernschild, president of the Lyndon USD 421 school board in Osage County, said one of the main challenges is maintaining programs and facilities.

For years, the district had a strong vocational-technical program where students built homes in town, he said.

But since the retirement of a teacher, the district has had to send students to Emporia and Topeka for training.

Knoernschild has been on the Lyndon board since the 1990s while Brooke-Fruendt is in her third year on the Auburn-Washburn board.

Both were recently in Topeka for a Board Leadership Workshop conducted by KASB. An earlier workshop was held in Hays. The workshops are designed to help new and experienced board members gain the leadership skills they need, from chairing a meeting to handling disagreements and difficult situations. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

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Analysis: Candidates identified
continued from page 1

Terry Bruce; Bruce Givens, assistant director of the Butler County Special Education Co-Op, ousted Knox; and Stafford USD Superintendent Mary Jo Stafford won the GOP primary in Senate District 33 for the seat being vacated by conservative Mitch Holmes.

On the House side, eight Brownback conservatives were defeated; two open seats held by conservatives were won by moderates and three moderate incumbents who faced conservative challengers all won.

The bottom line is Brownback’s conservative majorities in the House and Senate have been reduced -- if not ended -- depending on the results of the Nov. 8 general election, which also will determine who leads the Kansas House and Senate and who will be appointed chairs of committees. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

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Watch for more information coming soon!
kasb.org/kasbcon
Kevin Schasteen joined the KASB Board of Directors in 2015 as Region 2 vice-president. He was appointed to serve an unexpired term that fell, then elected to a three-year term in December 2015. Region 2 includes 32 school districts in eastern Kansas.

It is a role he has come to appreciate and enjoy. “It is interesting to learn about the difference perspectives from all across our state and hear all the ideas,” he said. “There are so many good people serving on the board, all committed to their local schools.”

As a member of the KASB Board, Schasteen continues to expand his understanding of education issues and how they might - or might not - affect Paola.

Kevin Schasteen
Paola
USD 368

Region 4 Curt Herrman
Manhattan-Ogden USD 383

Curt Herrman is in his third term as a board of education member for Manhattan-Ogden USD 383. He was first elected in 2007. The district's enrollment is about 6,000 students.

As the KASB Region 4 vice president, Herrman represents 27 school districts in north central Kansas.

“I was originally appointed in 2012 to fill a vacant position on the KASB board, but decided to run since I really enjoyed serving students at a higher level,” he said.

Herrman values the opportunity to explore education issues at both the state and national levels and the chance to influence state legislative and congressional decisions. Much of that process involves listening and learning. “I really enjoy hearing first hand what other districts across the state are doing to take on and resolve their challenges,” he said. “No matter the size of the district, we all have similar problems and it is great to see and hear the creative solutions people come up with.”

In his role with KASB Herrman sees first hand the value the association brings to the state.

“KASB is a critical partner in student success,” he said. “The resources are abundant and extremely beneficial to every player in the education game, not only K-12 schools, but also postsecondary and on into the careers of students across our great state.”

His interest in a local board of education role began with serving on several district committees, then growing frustrated that much of the time and effort involved in committee work didn’t seem to be producing results.

“Getting elected to the board provided me with a way to get more involved,” he said.

Herrman said as an elected board member he gained the ability to get something done while making sure the district respects and honors the work of advisory councils and committees.

“I fully acknowledge I am not an expert at everything. That’s why we have local resources of parents, teachers and administrators who advise the board,” he said.

His own family background made running for the school board an obvious choice. “I also wanted to have a deeper involvement in the board since both my parents were teachers and were leaders in their respective districts,” he said.

Herrman takes great pride in what the community accomplished with its 2008 bond issue. Because of his longevity on both the board and in the community, he has been there through it all.

“The best part? Beginning, executing and completing a $100 million bond issue that improved 12 buildings and gave us a first-class high school,” he said.

Among the many other successes he lists for the Manhattan-Ogden school district is the work being done to reduce the achievement gap, particularly with the district’s minority students. “We were (and still are) the only district to have appointed a district diversity coordinator,” he said.

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greatly values the chance to learn more about different approaches to meeting the needs of students by developing relationships with peers across the state.

“Sharing ideas strengthens education for all Kansas kids,” she said, “and the professional development of board members learning from others’ experiences is key to providing innovative environments for students at home.”

Blake remains active in numerous church and community initiatives with a particular focus on children’s well being. As her own children entered school, she became more involved in the Southeast of Saline district.

One volunteer role included chairing the district’s strategic planning project. When she was approached in late 2008 to apply to fill an unexpired term on the local board, she liked the idea of being involved in implementing the recommendations. She was then elected in 2009, and re-elected in 2013.

“I wanted to ensure the opportunity is there for more districts to utilize KASB services,” she said.

Serving on the board of directors brings her the opportunity to bring a voice from the schools in her region to KASB and at the same time deepens her understanding of education issues. She greatly values the chance to learn more

“I love Kindergarten round up. The fresh faces and excitement are always a thrill to see,” Herman said.

“As the back-to-school pace picks up in Kansas, KASB member boards and school districts can take advantage of some good messaging resources courtesy of the the Learning First Alliance (LFA). KASB can also provide member boards with back-to-school public relations material, including Kansas-specific data and graphics.

Busy school district communications staff can get turn-key messaging help from the Learning First Alliance and http://www.learningfirst.org/backtoschooltoolkit

The LFA suggests districts use the toolkit to:

• Speak collectively about key issues such as college and career readiness
• Discuss publicly the great things happening in their classrooms and schools
• Emphasize the important role that each member of the education community plays

The kit includes sample news releases, opinion pieces, talking points on key public education issues, sample letters to parents and the media, an infographic, blog prompts, a template for a school district fact sheet, sample social media posts and tips on how to use the materials.

School districts have LFA’s permission to use the tools as presented or to adapt them to your own needs. ~Leah Fliter, lfilter@kasb.org
KASB seeks candidates for association President

KASB is seeking candidates for the office of KASB President. The position 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 Wednesday, August 31.

The Association depends on engaged, active participation by members to guide its work on behalf of the children of Kansas. The successful candidate for president will serve a six month term as KASB President-Elect Designee, beginning with their election at the 2016 KASB Delegate Assembly in December. In July 2017, the individual will move into the office of KASB President-Elect. This position will spend the next year as President and the third year as Past President.

The KASB Nominating Committee will meet September 10 to interview and endorse candidates. The Committee’s recommendation will then be shared with the general membership of KASB and formally presented to the KASB Delegate Assembly on December 4. Delegates will elect the new president-elect designee during that time.

Those interested in applying are encouraged to contact current members of the KASB executive committee or past KASB presidents with questions. KASB members are also asked to encourage applications from fellow board members who they believe possess the necessary vision and commitment to serve as Association president.

An online pdf application with additional information can be found at kasb.org/nominating. –Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

KSDE outlines new system of targeted school assistance

Kansas State Department of Education officials recently briefed stakeholders on plans to pilot a revised approach to assisting Kansas schools under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Under ESSA’s predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), schools with subgroups of students that did not reach certain assessment targets were termed “on improvement.” That designation, officials say, lead parents, media and others to label those schools as “bad” or “failing.” Those labels, in turn, lead to a “teach to the test” focus that did not serve students well. In addition, officials say, “failing” schools saw higher rates of teachers who left those schools.

Under ESSA, while state assessments will still play a role in determining a school’s eligibility for additional state support, other factors will also be considered in designating a school as being eligible for “Comprehensive Support and Improvement” (CSI). States must identify approximately 5 percent of their Title I schools as being eligible for CSI.

“We know we don’t have ‘bad’ or ‘failing’ schools in Kansas,” said Tammy Mitchell, Assistant Director Early Childhood, Special Education & Title Services for KSDE, but she said some schools do need assistance to compensate for several factors that can affect student performance.

While state assessment results on math and English Language Arts will be a primary indicator of need, Kansas may also consider risk factors like cumulative poverty, high mobility, high number of English Language Learners (ELL), Students with Disabilities severity, attendance, suspension/expulsion, teacher equity, migrant students, and homeless students.

Districts with schools eligible for CSI will work over the 2016-17 school year with the Kansas Learning Network (KLN) to review data and develop comprehensive plans to address the school’s challenges.

Districts will be notified in August and September if they have schools eligible to participate in the CSI program, which will track the cohort through 2020.

For more information, contact:
Tammy Mitchell, Assistant Director Early Childhood, Special Education & Title Services Kansas State Department of Education (785) 296-7929 or Michele Hayes, KLN Director, michele.hayes@klnemail.org; (620) 640-5035. –Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org
KASB welcomes new staff to finance, legal departments

Rollenhagen joins finance department

The start of the new fiscal year, brought with it the introduction of a new staff member in the KASB finance department with the addition of Amanda Rollenhagen on July 1st. Amanda will join Sheryl Fincham helping the organization keep on top of all things finance and bookkeeping related.

Amanda joins KASB after 4 years as an accounting specialist with Personalized Brokerage Services in Topeka and Lawrence. Prior to that she was a member of the accounting team for Protection One Home Security.

A native of Erie, Amanda grew up in southeast Kansas and earned a Bachelor’s degree from Pittsburg State University in 2007. She chose accounting as a major for a couple different reasons, “My grandfather was an accountant, growing up I was interested in the work he did. Later I came to realize accounting and bookkeeping just came naturally to me and seemed like a logical fit for my academic pursuits.”

Amanda lives just outside of Topeka with her husband Michael and two children Blake, a Sophomore at Washburn Rural this fall and her daughter Emmaline who joined the family in January.

When asked about what she likes to do in her free time, she joked, “My life is pretty much diapers and driving.” Meaning, having a nice balance between spending time with Emmaline and helping her son Blake log hours behind the wheel, so that he can earn his driver’s license.

KASB is excited that Amanda has joined our team this year and we hope that you take the opportunity to say hi to her next time you are in Topeka. ~ Rob Gilligan, rgilligan@kasb.org

Sobba newest member of the KASB legal staff

The Kansas Association of School Boards would like to introduce the newest member of our legal department, Luke Sobba, who joined us full-time on July 27. Luke will help fill the vacancy left this spring when John Rasmussen joined the Federal Mediation Services.

Sobba brings with him a dual background in education and law. He began his professional career as a high school teacher and coach in Jetmore, KS in the early 1990s. After eight successful years of teaching and coaching, including being named 1995 Coach of the Year by the Dodge City Globe, Luke was persuaded by a friend to take the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test) and explore a future in the practice of law.

He began his path to a legal career in 2000 as a student at Washburn University Law School, Topeka, and served as a law clerk at Morris, Laing, Evans, Brock & Kennedy, Chartered. After graduating he continued at the firm as an associate attorney until 2008 when he was promoted to partner. While in private practice Sobba gained valuable experience as a litigator, representing clients in 15 states in the eastern U.S.

In his free time, Sobba is an accomplished musician, using his talents at his church as well as being a cast member in the Topeka Bar Show. His talents earned him an Arty Award in 2014 for his portrayal of Governor Sam Brownback in the Topeka Bar Show performance.

“Luke is a great addition to our team and we are so pleased to have him join the department,” said Donna Whiteman, KASB assistant executive director for legal services. “His legal knowledge and legal experience will allow us to expand our capacity to meet our member’s legal needs.” ~Rob Gilligan, rgilligan@kasb.org
Upcoming Workshops

* Superintendent Evaluation Aug 23 Topeka
* Balanced Leadership Session 1 Aug 30 Topeka
* Balanced Leadership Session 1 Aug 31 Salina
* Balanced Leadership Session 1 Sept 1 Fredonia
* Superintendent Evaluation Sept 8 Oakley
* Becoming an Effective Supervisor Sept 20 Hays
* Becoming an Effective Supervisor Sept 22 Topeka
* Fall Summits, Various Dates/Locations

2016 Fall Education Summits

09.27.16 Sublette Service Center
09.28.16 Oakley Service Center
09.29.16 Salina BiCentennial Center
10.04.16 Blue Valley USD 229 Ed Ctr
10.05.16 Girard Greenbush
10.11.16 Clearwater Service Center

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