



New Comparing Kansas report shows Kansas lagging in educational improvement and funding

Kansas ranks 10th in the nation on an average of 15 indicators of student success, but has been improving much slower than most states. Since 2008, total funding per pupil in Kansas has increased less than half as much as the U.S. average, and less than one-quarter as much as the top achieving states.

“There is growing evidence that as Kansas has fallen behind in educational funding, we are also falling behind in student success outcomes,” said Mark Tallman, assistant executive director of the Kansas Association of School Boards. “We are in danger of falling from a top achieving state to average or worse.”

“This report validates the 2017 Legislature’s action to increase school funding significantly for the first time in almost a decade,” Tallman said. “It also supports the Kansas Supreme Court’s ruling that funding has not been adequate. Finally, it adds urgency to the State Board of Education’s Kansans Can vision and goals.”

The updated report prepared by KASB uses the most recent data for student achievement, generally from 2015 and 2016, and state funding information from 2015, as well as extensive state demographic and economic data from various national sources. Key findings include:

Kansas still exceeds the national average and similar states on most measures of achievement

As the table below shows, on five of the key indicators selected from the 15 total, Kansas ranks above the national average on four, trailing only in 18-24-year-olds with a four-year college degree. Kansas ranks above most of its “peer states” selected because of similar demographics. Kansas trails the average of the nine “aspiration states” that rank above Kansas on the overall average on all measures.

	NAEP Reading and Math Percent at Basic (all students)	NAEP Reading and Math Percent at Proficient (all students)	4-Year Graduation Rate (all students)	18-24 Years Some College	18-24 years 4-year Degree
Kansas	76%	36%	85.7%	57.8%	8.9%
All States	74.8%	37.7%	83.2%	55.7%	9.8%
Aspiration States	79.7%	42.2%	88.2%	60.9%	13.3%
Adjacent States	76.3%	36.0%	84.1%	56.4%	10.2%
Overall Peers	74.5%	35.5%	82.1%	55.4%	9.3%
Student Peers	75.6%	37.6%	83.7%	57.4%	11.2%
Adult Peers	75.5%	36.4%	83.8%	56.1%	9.9%
Distribution Peers	74.7%	34.6%	83.1%	55.9%	9.0%

However, in recent years Kansas has been improving slower than most states, or even declining.

The following table shows that every single comparison group of states experienced a larger *improvement* in key educational outcomes than Kansas in recent years, and Kansas actually declined in three of the five key indicators.

	NAEP Reading and Math at Basic Change 2007-2015	NAEP Reading and Math at Proficient Change 2007-2015	4-Year Graduation Rate Change 2011-2015	18-24 Years Some College Change 2005-2015	18-24 years 4-year Degree Change 2005-2015
Kansas	-5%	-5%	2.7%	5.9%	-0.8%
All States	0.9%	2.3%	4.4%	9.3%	0.8%
Aspiration States	0.7%	2.0%	3.0%	9.9%	1.3%
Adjacent	2.0%	2.8%	4.3%	9.3%	1.1%
Overall Peers	0.0%	1.5%	4.8%	9.0%	0.9%
Student Peers	0.6%	2.0%	4.2%	9.4%	0.8%
Adult Peers	0.8%	2.2%	4.7%	8.1%	0.6%
Distribution Peers	-0.3%	1.4%	4.3%	8.6%	1.0%

Kansas ranks 31st in per pupil funding and provides less total funding than most similar states (even when adjusted for cost of living differences), and funding increases have fallen far behind other states.

Kansas ranks 31st in spending, less than all peers except geographic distribution; and ranks 39th in funding increase since 2008. All comparison groups increased funding at least twice that rate. The highest achieving states increased funding more than four times as much as Kansas.

	Total Funding Per Pupil 2015	Rank Per Pupil	Cost of Living Adjusted Total Funding Per Pupil	Percent Change 2008-15	Rank of Change
Kansas	\$12,055	31	\$13,335	4.8%	39
All States	\$13,569		\$13,870	11.7%	
Aspiration States	\$16,902	11.9	\$16,599	20.3%	12.3
Adjacent	\$11,308	33.3	\$12,177	10.6%	26.8
Overall Peers	\$13,307	24.9	\$13,976	14.4%	21.2
Student Peers	\$15,201	17.4	\$15,350	18.4%	15.6
Adult Peers	\$13,211	24.3	\$13,615	12.5%	23.7
Distribution Peers	\$11,741	30.9	\$12,815	12.9%	24.2

“It should be stressed that while Kansas ranks just 31st in total funding, we rank 15th in the percent of current operating funds spent on instruction, and only seven states have lower pupil/teacher ratios,” Tallman said.

Postsecondary participation in Kansas has lagged while job demands are increasing.

Between 2014 and 2015, the percentage of 18-24-year-old Kansans with “some” college, but less than a four-year degree, declined from 60.1 percent to 57.8 percent, and the state’s ranking went from 7th to 16th. The percent in this age group with a four-year degree dropped from 10.3 percent to 8.9 percent, and Kansas’ ranking fell from 19th to 30th.

Because this information comes from estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, year-to-year changes by themselves may not be significant. But over the 10-year period from 2005 to 2015, Kansas ranked 46th in the increase in young adults with some college and 48th in the increase in those with a four-year degree.

“Clearly, there are warning signs that Kansas is falling behind in postsecondary preparation and achievement, at a time when studies indicate Kansas will require more employees with postsecondary credentials than most states,” Tallman said. “That is why the State Board of Education’s Kansans Can vision and postsecondary achievement goals are so urgent.”

Competing with other states is a constitutional standard for adequate funding, as well as a state educate goal.

How Kansas compares with other states is important because the Kansas Supreme Court has ruled that constitutionally adequate funding means schools can provide what are called the “Rose Capacities.” The seven “Rose Capacities” have also been adopted by the Kansas Legislature as education goals. One of those capacities says the system must provide “Sufficient levels of academic or vocational skills to enable public school students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.”

“When we look at the nine states that clearly outperform Kansas on an average of all 15 education measures, from basic reading and math skills to high school completion to postsecondary preparation and participation, every state spends more than Kansas in actual dollars and dollars adjusted for cost of living differences, and every state has increased funding at least twice the rate of Kansas since 2008,” Tallman said.

Rank	State	Total Revenue Per Pupil 2015	Cost of Living Adjusted Revenue	Total Revenue Percent Change 2008-15
1	Massachusetts	\$18,387	\$17,200	18.7%
2	New Jersey	\$21,097	\$18,604	14.2%
3	Iowa	\$12,770	\$14,142	16.9%
4	New Hampshire	\$16,348	\$15,570	22.4%
5	Vermont	\$20,291	\$19,971	24.8%
6	Connecticut	\$21,484	\$19,764	29.4%
7	Nebraska	\$13,309	\$14,690	17.1%
8	Illinois	\$15,340	\$15,386	30.5%
9	Wisconsin	\$13,090	\$14,060	9.0%
10	Kansas	\$12,055	\$13,335	4.8%

“It is important to remember that while the Comparing Kansas report is based on the most current information from national sources, it is generally two years old,” Tallman said. “We will not be able to compare the impact of changes in funding approved by the 2017 Legislature and any impact on student success for several years.”

About the full KASB Comparing Kansas Report

The full 2017 Comparing Kansas report contains detailed information on 15 indicators of student educational success and how they align with the “Rose Capacities”; definitions and process for ranking states, selecting aspiration states and peer states; state funding and budget allocation; teacher salaries and pupil-teacher ratios; and “close up” examination of educational attainment by 18-24-year-olds; high school graduation rates; national reading and math tests; and ACT/SAT results for Kansas and comparison groups of states.

The 2017 Comparing Kansas Supplement provides comparisons between Kansas and relevant state groups on key demographic variables. It is a companion piece to Comparing Kansas 2017 that helps show how factors outside of school funding may have an impact on student outcomes in each state. In addition, it contains detailed tables supporting the summary information on student outcomes and funding for each individual state.

The following are the comparison groups determined and utilized in the report:

- *Aspiration*: States that perform better overall than Kansas. Calculated using a ranking of weighted average ranks on the Postsecondary, High School Graduation, and Assessment measure ranks, as described in the Comparing Kansas 2017. States are Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Vermont, Wisconsin.
- *Adjacent*: States that share a border with Kansas. States are Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma
- *Student Peers*: States that are within +/- .5 standard deviations of Kansas’s value on a majority of the student demographic variables. States are Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin.
- *Adult Peers*: States that are within +/- .5 standard deviations of Kansas’s value on a majority of the adult population variables. States are Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Washington.
- *Distribution Peers*: States that are within +/- .5 standard deviations of Kansas’s value on a majority of the population distribution variables. States are Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming.
- *Overall Peers*: States that are within +/- .5 standard deviations of Kansas’s value on a majority of the student, adult, and distribution variables. States are Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin.