



Oral testimony before the
Senate Select Committee on Education Finance
on
Accreditation, Accountability and Improving At-Risk Student Performance

by

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Kansas Association of School Boards. Since the latest Gannon decision was released in March, three major questions have emerged:

- How should a school finance system be structured to address student improvement, especially among the lowest-performing students?
- How should that improvement be measured and what should be done if improvement does not occur?
- How much money will it cost to support that improvement?

KASB has previously provided to this committee and all other Legislators a statement on school finance focusing on the bill under consideration in the House. Today, we would like to address the three questions above, beginning with accountability and accreditation.

Kansas School Accountability and Accreditation

A brief history

Since the original 1861 “Wyandotte” Constitution for the state of Kansas, education has been a constitutional responsibility shared between state and local elected officials. Article 6 included the following:

SEC. 2. The Legislature shall encourage the promotion of intellectual, moral, scientific and agricultural improvement, by establishing a uniform system of common schools, and schools of higher grade, embracing normal, preparatory, collegiate, and university departments.

Although the Legislature was to “establish” public schools, the constitution also provided for an elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction to have “general supervision of common-school funds and educational interests of the State,” and elected county superintendents. Not mentioned in the constitution were local school boards, literally thousands of them in the first half the 20th Century.

In other words, responsibility was shared between the Legislature, an independent executive office and local officials, and accountability was primarily with the voters.

In 1966, the people amended Article 6, keeping the mandate to improve educational through public schools, but switching “general supervision” from a single State Superintendent to an elected State Board,

replacing county superintendents with “elected local boards” to “maintain, develop and operate” public schools, and directing the Legislature to make “suitable provision for finance.”

As the new State Board was put in charge of “general supervision,” the school accreditation system primarily focused on “inputs,” such as requiring teacher licensure, number of books in the library, and following state regulations.

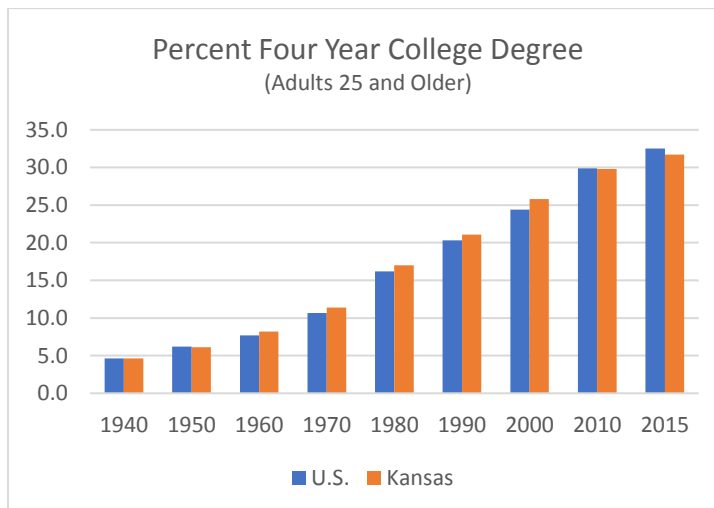
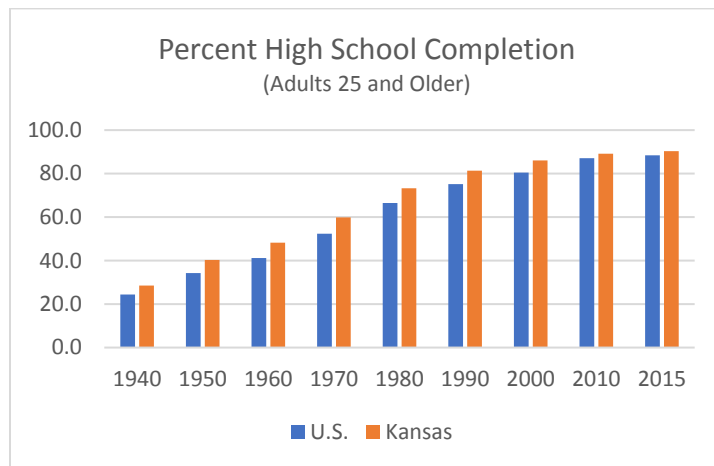
When national concern over education increased in the mid-1980’s after the “Nation at Risk” report, the State Board began moving to the “outcomes based” Quality Performance Accreditation system, which was incorporated as the accountability factor in the 1992 school finance law, the basic formula until the block grant system was adopted two years ago.

The State Board made some changes to the QPA system in the mid-2000’s to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act, which was “repealed and replaced” with the Every Student Succeeds Act last year by Congress. The Board is now launching the most comprehensive change in accountability in 25 years.

To assess the impact of these changes, we can review what has happened to Kansas education improvement in the long term, medium term and short term.

Long Term Educational Improvement:

Since U.S. census data became available, Kansas has steadily improved high school and college completion.



Because of the *Gannon* focus on lower performing groups, it is worth noting that Kansas African American high school completion has increased from 16 percent to 86.3 percent; and four-year college completion from 2.3 percent to 14.9 percent since 1940. Hispanic data has only been available since 1980, and has increased from 53.2 percent to 62.6 percent for high school and 8.7 percent to 12.7 percent for college. It is important to note that the Kansas Hispanic population includes a large number of immigrants who were not educated in Kansas schools and colleges.

Medium Term Improvement:

In the 25 years since 1990, Kansas adult education levels can be tracked in more detail. The percent of adults over 24 without completing high school has been cut in half, from 18.7 percent to 9.7 percent. The percent with any college experience increased from under 50 percent to nearly 64 percent. The table below also shows the difference in total earnings if education levels in 2015 were the same as 1990.

Kansas Education Levels and Earnings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	1990 Percent at Education Levels	2015 Population By 1990 Ed Level	2015 Average Kansas Earnings by Education Level	Hypothetical 2015 Earnings at 1990 Education Levels	2015 Percent at Education Levels	Actual Number at Education Level 2015	2015 Earnings at Actual Education Levels
Population 25 years and over		1,888,479	\$36,727			1,881,521	
No High School Diploma	18.7%	353,146	\$23,174	\$8,183,795,509	9.7%	182,508	\$4,229,429,662
High school graduate only (includes equivalency)	32.5%	613,756	\$28,715	\$17,623,994,208	26.5%	498,603	\$14,317,387,011
Some college, or Associate's Degree	27.3%	515,555	\$33,462	\$17,251,493,613	32.0%	602,087	\$20,147,025,825
Bachelor's degree	14.4%	271,941	\$46,436	\$12,627,851,162	20.4%	383,830	\$17,823,543,068
Graduate or professional degree	7.0%	132,194	\$59,574	\$7,875,297,356	11.4%	214,493	\$12,778,229,454
<i>Total Wage Earnings:</i>				\$63,562,431,847			\$69,295,615,021
Increase in Earning Due to Higher Education Levels							\$5,733,183,173

The difference in wages and salaries alone, not including other forms of income, is \$5.73 billion higher. Total school funding in Kansas, adjusted for inflation, increased \$2.3 billion, so the increased earning power due to higher education levels is more than double the increased investment in K-12 education.

Short-term Educational Improvement:

Finally, we track improvement in adults 18-24, those most recently impacted by K-12, since 2000.

Kansas Education Levels (Age 18-24)	2000		2005		2010		2015	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Population 18 to 24 years		275,991		265,344		291,662		302,928
Less than high school graduate	21.7%	59,890	15.8%	41,924	14.6%	42,583	12.5%	37,866
High school graduate only (includes equivalency)	26.8%	73,966	32.4%	85,971	27.5%	80,207	29.7%	89,970
High school graduate or higher	78.3%	216,119	84.3%	223,685	85.4%	249,079	87.5%	265,062
Some college or associate's degree	43.9%	121,210	42.2%	111,975	49.2%	143,498	48.9%	148,132
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.6%	20,943	9.7%	25,738	8.7%	25,375	8.9%	26,961

In short, Kansas educational levels have NEVER been higher, and we have seen steady improvements all the way to the early years of the current decade. (Note that the 18-24-year-old age group include students who graduated from 2008 to 2014.)

This improvement was not achieved by *punitive* “accountability,” like taking away accreditation, state take-over of schools, cutting funding or more “school choice.” None of those were used over the past 25 years. Instead, the State Board of Education, the Legislature and local school districts have been *partners* in setting ever-increasing standards or goals, and allowed local school leaders, accountable to local voters, figure out how to reach them.

The system has not been perfect; Kansas still has too many students not reaching the level we want and need. But no school system, public or private, in any state, has yet been able to assure that every child will succeed. KASB research into student success in other states indicates that Kansas still ranks in the top 10 of all states across 15 measures of achievement. Kansas schools have shown, over decades, they can consistently improve – at least until recently.

Student achievement in the Gannon adequacy case

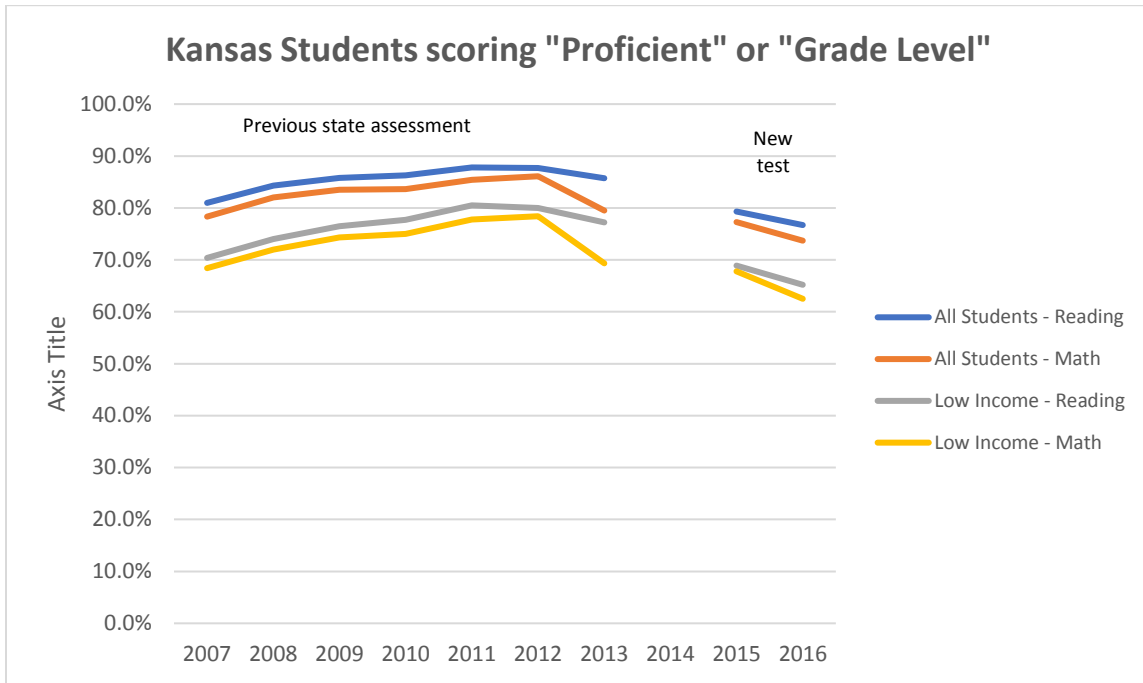
In *Gannon*, the state argued that if Kansas educational outcomes have been improving and rank higher than most states, school funding should be considered constitutionally adequate. The Supreme Court rejected that argument in part because of the approximately 25 percent of students who seem to be “below grade level,” but I believe of even greater concern is the evidence that *improvement* has stopped and even begun to decline.

The court included the following chart in its decision:

KSDE 8th Grade ELA	2011-2012	2012-2013	2014-2015	2015-2016	NAEP 8th Grade Reading	2009	2015
All Students	11.8%	13.3%	20.5%	23.4%	All Students	20%	21%
African Americans	27.2%	28.0%	40.2%	44.1%	African Americans	43%	43%
Hispanic	21.1%	24.2%	32.0%	34.0%	Hispanic	39%	34%
ELL	29.7%	33.5%	39.3%	41.2%	ELL	61%	39%
KSDE 8th Grade Math					NAEP 8th Grade Math		
All Students	15.2%	22.2%	36.8%	40.1%	All Students	21%	24%
African Americans	32.8%	41.3%	60.4%	66.5%	African Americans	48%	46%
Hispanic	24.8%	35.7%	52.1%	55.7%	Hispanic	35%	35%
ELL	30.0%	44.0%	57.0%	61.9%	ELL	52%	45%
KSDE 4th Grade ELA					NAEP 4th Grade Reading		
All Students	11.6%	14.3%	11.0%	13.8%	All Students	28%	32%
African Americans	26.6%	31.2%	24.7%	31.5%	African Americans	44%	56%
Hispanic	18.9%	26.2%	17.8%	22.9%	Hispanic	45%	46%
ELL	22.4%	30.7%	20.2%	27.2%	ELL	53%	55%
KSDE 4th Grade Math					NAEP 4th Grade Math		
All Students	11.0%	17.5%	13.8%	16.5%	All Students	11%	17%
African Americans	26.7%	35.9%	30.1%	38.4%	African Americans	34%	43%
Hispanic	16.3%	28.9%	21.7%	26.4%	Hispanic	19%	29%
ELL	17.8%	32.5%	24.0%	30.0%	ELL	20%	34%

The chart shows that for all students, and for major subgroups, the percentage of students NOT at the basic level has increased since around 2010. To show an even longer trend, KASB prepared an additional chart showing performance on state assessments since 2007 and a table showing Kansas performance on the National Assessment of Education Progress since 2000.

In both cases, it is very clear that the performance of all students and low income students was increasing until approximately 2009 to 2011, and has fallen back since then.



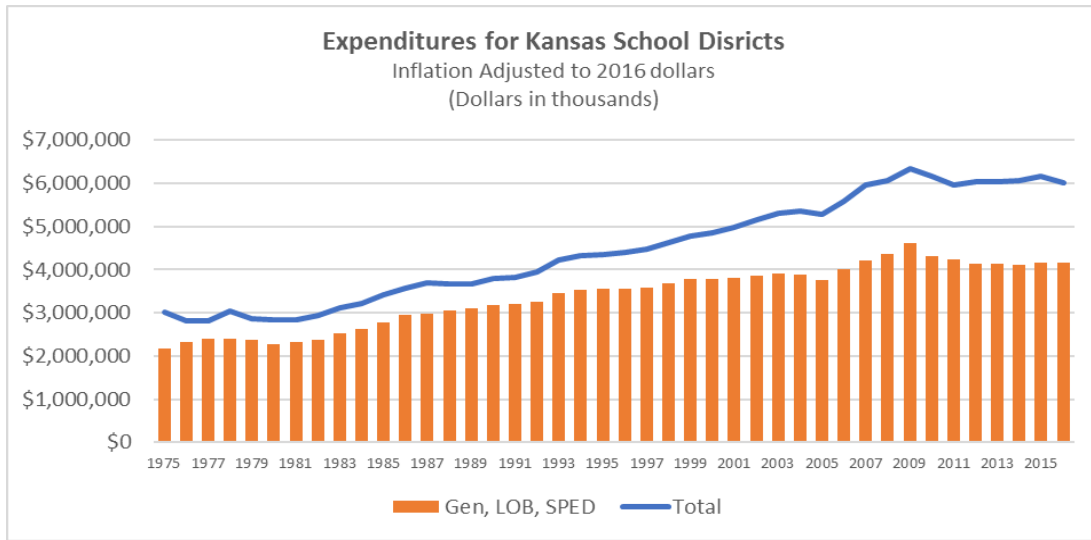
National Assessment of Education Progress: Percent of All KS Students At Basic or Above									
	2000/02	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	
Fourth Grade Math	76	85	88	89	89	90	89	83	
Eighth Grade Math	76	76	77	81	79	80	79	76	
Fourth Grade Reading	68	66	66	72	72	71	71	68	
Eighth Grade Reading	81	77	78	81	80	79	78	79	
Average	75.25	76	77.25	80.75	80	80	79.25	76.5	

So to recap: for decades, Kansas educational outcomes continually increased, generally above the national average. Specifically, more students have completed high school, started postsecondary education programs and completed higher educational levels than ever before in history.

The only way to achieve this is to have more students who previously did not reach these levels – who were previously considered at risk or low performing – become successful. Rising educational outcomes occurred as the state become more ethnically diverse and student poverty also increased. This improvement occurred under the previous school finance system (since 1992) and the previous accreditation system. In other words: the system was working.

Then, approximately five year ago, test scores in lower grades began to decline. KASB research shows that on almost all indicators, other states began to improve faster than Kansas. What changed? Did teachers suddenly forget how to teach? Did school boards decide they really didn't care about improvement performance? Did Kansas students just become less intelligent?

Funding for At-Risk Students and Success



There was one very clear change. For the first time since 1975, Kansas stopped increasing school funding. Adjusted for inflation, funding peaked in 2009 and has never recovered.

How Increased School Funding Helps At-Risk Students

The increased funding for education since 1975 has been used for programs specifically designed to help more students succeed. Some major examples:

- Beginning in 1975, expanding requirements for special education and services to increasingly costly programs – which continues with a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision.
- From optional kindergarten to near universal half-day kindergarten to near universal all-day kindergarten.
- Increasing early childhood programs.
- Cutting drop-out rates by keeping more students in school longer, and increasing graduation requirements and college entrance requirements.
- Increasing more expensive career and technical education programs.
- Reducing class size to provide more individualized instruction, especially important for at-risk students.
- Adding summer school and after-school programs for struggling students or enrichment, with more family outreach and involvement.
- Adding school resources officers, security and social workers to address safety and deal with students and families in crisis that affect learning by those students and others.
- Adding school breakfast programs (required by state law) and more nutrition requirements.
- Expanding activity programs to keep students engaged and provide non-academic skills.

There are literally hundreds or thousands of specific strategies to implement the programs above. What do these programs have in common?

- They work. We know this through both academic research and the clear evidence of improved educational outcomes.
- They require more people, which means the number of school employees has increased significantly. That requires more funding than simply keeping up with inflation.

- They impact other costs, such as the need for larger and more secure school buildings.

These facts are also confirmed by the experience of other states. KASB ranked all states on 15 educational outcomes measures, including performance of low income students on NAEP scores and graduation rates. On a weighted average of those rankings, nine states rank higher than Kansas. (On an un-weighted average, Kansas also ranks 10th, but two states of the nine states are different.) We call these “aspiration” states, because we “aspire” to higher student success.

Note that all 11 states provided more total revenue per pupil than Kansas in 2014, and all rank at least 26th out of 50 (Kansas ranked 29th). We also adjusted these numbers for state cost of living differences. Even with this adjustment, these states spent on average \$3,000 per pupil than Kansas, and states in the Midwest only provided almost \$1,000 than Kansas.

Overall Outcome Ranks and Aspiration States										
	Rank of Average Ranks		Actual Dollars		State Cost Adjusted (RPP)		Funding 2008-14			
	(Unweighted)	(Weighted)	Total Revenue Per Pupil	Rank	Total Revenue Per Pupil	Rank	Average Funding Per Pupil	Rank of Average Funding	Percent Change in Funding	Rank
New Hampshire	1	1	\$15,919	11	\$15,132	13	\$14,654	12	19.2	5
Massachusetts	2	2	\$17,896	7	\$16,710	9	\$16,618	7	15.6	10
New Jersey	4	3	\$20,531	3	\$17,931	6	\$19,287	2	11.2	19
Iowa	6	4	\$12,346	24	\$13,673	21	\$11,716	26	13.0	12
Nebraska	5	5	\$12,773	20	\$14,099	17	\$12,263	21	12.4	16
Vermont	3	6	\$19,009	6	\$18,783	4	\$17,579	6	16.9	8
Illinois	14	7	\$14,756	14	\$14,654	15	\$13,459	15	25.5	2
North Dakota	9	8	\$14,817	13	\$16,193	10	\$12,986	18	32.4	1
Connecticut	14	9	\$20,577	2	\$18,912	3	\$18,374	4	24.0	3
Minnesota	7	12	\$13,693	18	\$14,030	19	\$13,044	17	12.0	17
Indiana	8	19	\$12,064	26	\$13,199	24	\$12,016	24	12.7	15
Kansas	10	10	\$11,702	29	\$12,901	25	\$11,619	27	1.7	38
Average, All Aspiration states			\$15,853		\$15,756		\$14,727		17.7	9.8
Average, Midwest Aspiration states			\$13,408		\$14,308		\$12,581		18.0	10.5
U.S. Average			\$12,774				\$12,353		6.2	

In addition, these states provided an average increase in funding of about 18 percent between 2008 and 2014, while Kansas averaged just 1.7 percent, ranking 38th among the 50 states.

What do the most successful states spend their money on? People. Not just teachers – many different staff positions. KASB research has consistently found that both lower pupil-teacher ratios and lower total staff to pupil ratios are associated with better student results (so are smaller school buildings and districts).

These findings are supported by data from the National Center for Education Statistics. We looked at school district staffing per 1,000 students. The highest achieving states have 161 staff persons per 1,000 students, much higher than national average of 125, which is higher than the lowest performing states (117). Kansas has 143 total staff per 1,000 students, despite spending well below the U.S. average,

	Total Staff Per 1,000 Students	District Admin. Staff per 1,000	Percent of Total	Teachers, Paras, Aides per 1,000	Percent of Total	Principals, Student and Teacher Support, 1000	Percent of Total	All other support staff per 1,000	Percent of Total
United States average	125	5.1	4.1%	77.6	62.0%	19.9	15.9%	22.4	17.9%
Top Nine Achieving States	160.7	6.3	4.0%	105.8	65.8%	26.3	16.4%	22.2	13.8%
Kansas (10th Achieving State)	143	3.8	2.7%	94.3	65.8%	23.6	16.5%	21.6	15.1%
Bottom 10 Achievement States	117.2	4.5	3.8%	72.5	61.8%	19.3	16.5%	21.6	18.5%

Key points about national data on district staffing:

- The highest achieving states also have *more* district administrative staff, while Kansas has *fewer* district office positions than the national average.
- Kansas is also *above* the national average in instructional staff (teachers, paras, aids) with same percentage as the top achieving states.
- Kansas and the highest achieving states are also *higher* in principals and student and teacher support positions.
- Kansas and each other group is about the same in all other support positions.

Conclusions: targeting at-risk funding for student success

- The Kansas Supreme Court has directed the Legislature to address the lowest performing students. Kansas school districts have been consistently addressing the lowest performing students for years, which is why more students are completing high school and going on to postsecondary success.
- There are no single best ways to address low performing students. Collectively, however, they require more resources. No other state has been able to achieve better overall outcomes than Kansas while spending less money on more targeted intervention.
- There are significant differences in the numbers of low performing students because of different demographics and economic circumstances. Therefore, the school finance system must structurally direct more resources to such districts.
- Kansas districts have demonstrated they know how to spend resources effectively. The problem is that funding has fallen behind. Increased funding will produce improved student success – if the Legislature, State Board, local school boards and the communities they represent share the same vision, goals and measures.
- In the document KASB shared last week, we compared current funding levels with previous constitutional levels of funding, adjusted for inflation; previous rates of increase; historic school funding as a percentage of state personal income; funding levels and rate of increase in the most successful states; and the State Board of Education’s proposed two-year budget for school finance. All this data indicates the proposal under development in House K-12 Education Budget Committee is in the minimum range required to address low performing students and continue to improve the success of all students.

New Kansas School Accreditation and Accountability

Last December, KASB adopted two policy statements on accreditation and accountability:

Accreditation and Assessments. KASB supports an accreditation and accountability system based on meeting or exceeding the Rose capacities as identified by the Kansas Supreme Court. State assessments should be used to identify students who need additional support and as indicators of school and student success, not as outcomes. Districts that fail to meet standards should receive support, and if performance fails to improve, state intervention.

Accountability. The school finance formula must support the State Board of Education’s vision that an excellent school system must focus on helping each student succeed and setting accountable outcomes to measure that goal.

a. The formula must allow districts to meet or exceed the Rose capacities identified by the Kansas Supreme Court and adopted by the Kansas Legislature. To do so, it should also assist districts in improving district outcomes under the State Board of Education's Kansans Can vision: kindergarten readiness, higher graduation rates, more postsecondary participation, individual plans of study and social and emotional indicators.

b. The formula must be monitored regularly to ensure the state is meeting its responsibility to provide adequate and equitable funding.

Based on these positions, KASB supports the State Board of Education Kansans Can vision and new accreditation system, and the development of a measurement system based on both state assessment, graduation rates and postsecondary participation and success.

Conclusion

Members of the committee, Kansas faces an immediate crisis in school funding because of the Supreme Court decision. But we suggest Kansas faces an even deeper crisis. At time when education is more and more the key to personal, state and national economic growth and security, our school system is falling behind.

For the first time in decades, Kansas is at best “treading water” in school funding when other states are swimming faster. The first consistent decline in reading and math scores suggest we may actually be starting to drown.

The percent of state personal income going to K-12 education is at the lowest level since the mid-1980’s – which means it is not simply a poor economy but state choices have reduced education funding. The highest achieving states are spending more on education when we are spending less. Essentially, we are disarming ourselves in the competition for high skills jobs, wages and growth.

As KASB has shared with the Legislature, there is a strong, positive correlation between state educational levels and state per capital and household income; far more significant than tax burden.

The Kansans Can vision provides a new set of measurable goals to turn this around. It requires a school finance system that helps not just low income or currently low performing students, but all students succeed in preparing for life. That means increasing funding for all students, with a portion of those funds targeted to those with the highest need. That means a plan comparable to what the House K-12 Education Budget Committee is developing.

Thank you for your consideration.