Let the learning begin

Across the state, hundreds of thousands of Kansas students were met with cheers and hugs as they arrived for the new school year this month. Kansas has a tradition of strong public schools where families, teachers, administrators, staff and school boards work hard to help each student succeed. KASB wishes all our students and schools the best of luck for the 2016-17 school year.

Photos submitted by Kansas public school districts.
Increasing high school graduation rates crucial part of Kansans Can initiative

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

In recent comments to the Kansas State Board of Education, Education Commissioner Randy Watson said one of the most crucial paths to success for Kansas students is high school graduation. Increasing high school graduation rates is one of the five areas the State Board is focusing on as part of its Kansans Can vision to ensure the success of every student.

Kansas’ graduation rate of 85.7 percent ranks 21st in the nation and is 3.4 percent higher than the national average.

The 14.3 percent of students not graduating, Watson said, “will have a difficult time making the middle class.”

He added, “We can’t afford as a nation and as a society, students who do not graduate.”

Kansas ranks 22nd in graduating students from economically disadvantaged families (eligible for free or reduced lunch), 6th in the graduation rate of those with limited English proficiency and 4th graduating those students with disabilities.

The gap between the Kansas graduation rate — 85.7 percent — and the graduation rate of those students from economically disadvantaged students — 76.9 percent — is 8.8 percent.

But when separating the graduation rates of those students from economically disadvantaged families from those who are not economically disadvantaged, the gap becomes much greater.

Those from non-economically disadvantaged families graduate at a rate of 94.5 percent as compared with the 76.9 percent graduation rate of students from economically disadvantaged families.

That is a difference of 17.6 percent. In the U.S., the high school graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students is 74.6 percent. For non-economically disadvantaged students it is 90.6 percent, a difference of 16 percent.

Low income students make up half the student body in Kansas and graduation is crucial as a path out of poverty, according to federal statistics.

The median annual earnings for those with a high school diploma is $35,256, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as compared with $25,636 for those without a high school diploma; a difference of $9,620 per year.

In addition to concentrating on graduation rates, the State Board’s initiative on student success focuses on making sure children are prepared for kindergarten, having an individual academic plan for all students, increasing the percent of students completing a credential or pursuing post-secondary education and providing emotional and social growth.

### Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Non - Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Gap between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kansas</strong></td>
<td>85.7 percent</td>
<td>76.9 percent</td>
<td>94.5 percent</td>
<td>17.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S.</strong></td>
<td>82.3 percent</td>
<td>74.6 percent</td>
<td>90.6 percent</td>
<td>16 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kansas Association of School Boards is a not-for-profit organization located in Topeka, Kansas dedicated to serving members of governing boards for unified school districts, community colleges, area vocational-technical schools and cooperatives, interlocals and regional service centers. The association serves a membership base of close to 5,000 school board members and educational leaders.
KASB recently released the 2015-16 Calendar Survey Report.

One of the key findings in the report is the fact that over the last two decades, the number of days in teacher contracts and the number of days students attend have been decreasing, but the total time per day for both students and teachers has been increasing.

In 1995-96, the average number of days per teacher was 187. In 2015-16, the average was 179. During this same time, the number of days for students went from 179 to 169.

Total minutes per day for teachers increased from seven hours and 50 minutes to eight hours, and total time for students went from seven hours to seven hours and 20 minutes.

Putting these two together, we can estimate that total teacher time per year went from 1,464 hours and 50 minutes in 1995-96 to 1,432 hours in 2015-16, and total student time went from 1,253 hours in 1995-96 to 1,239 hours and 20 minutes in 2015-16.

The report includes this information along with details on holidays, dates, times, policies, kindergarten formats, and more.

You can find the report, data, and an interactive tool to explore local data at kasbresearch.org. If you have questions or require assistance, you can contact research@kasb.org.
Debi Mansch, Belle Plaine USD 357 board member, is finishing up her first term on the KASB Board as Region 6 vice-president. As a long-time board member, first joining her local board in December 1992, she was well-acquainted with the benefits of KASB membership prior to joining the board of directors. She is also a 2005 graduate of KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow program.

“I thought it would be exciting and challenging to become a more active part of the association that has helped me so very much over my terms of service on my local board,” she said.

She was also motivated to seek election to the KASB board because of an interest in supporting leaders all across the state.

“We are living in exciting times, challenging times, and I welcomed the opportunity to help all Kansas school board leaders and help assure Kansas students stay at the top,” she said.

Mansch sees many benefits to becoming more involved at a state level.

“At an Association, we stand united and our voice is strong and heard,” she said. “We network and find things that will work for us on our local level, we find colleagues and friends, and we become an integral part of Kansas education.”

She first joined the Belle Plaine board because she had young children in school. She quickly saw the possibilities technology could offer, but also knew it would be a challenge to provide access and assure that each student succeeded and could use the new tools available to them.

“Little did I know how vastly different schools would be as technology became part of our daily lives,” she said.

Throughout her years on the local school board, Mansch has served in a number of leadership roles. She has held the office of president, vice-president and the board’s governmental relations representative for KASB for a number of years.

“I have served on bond committees from conception to cornerstone, and have been a part of our district negotiations team and serve on the policy committee for the district,” she said.

She has also taken an active role as president and vice-president of the South Central Kansas Education Service Center in Clearwater and served as alternate representative to the local special education cooperative. She is especially proud of making sure that each student succeeds in a comfortable, safe environment with all the necessary aids and tools available for them.

“We have accomplished much,” she said, referring to her local community’s support of schools. “We continue to improve the district facilities, as well as our technology. We have been able to recruit and retain very high quality teachers who are excellent educators and caring, compassionate teachers. Our administration has remained steady and focused, and our students are always our driving force.

She continued to run for election to her local board because she wanted to be part of the future of her community’s schools, she said.

“I was elected each time, and through the mentoring of some really awesome individuals on my boards, and continued education and training through KASB, I have found this experience to be richly rewarding and personally fulfilling,” Mansch said. “In addition, the experiences have helped provide excellent education in rural Kansas for the students of my district,” Mansch said.

...Continued on page 5
Region 9
Tracy Rogers
Colby USD 315

Tracy Rogers is a relatively new member of the KASB Board, serving as Region 9 vice-president since 2015, but is a seasoned veteran when it comes to local board service. He joined the Colby USD 315 board of education in July 2001.

“My children were about to start attending school and I wanted to be a part of the decision making process to help make our schools the best possible place to get an education,” Rogers said. “Also, my father was a longtime educator and administrator, and I wanted to be involved in education in some capacity.”

As his service on the local board continued, Rogers attended various meetings hosted by KASB and eventually decided it was “time I got involved at the next level,” he said.

“I enjoy meeting others from around the state who share the same interests about education that I have. There’s a wealth of knowledge about education when everyone gets together,” he said. “Hearing about what is happening at the state and national level is very interesting.”

The opportunity to learn from each other and then use that information to improve local schools is a great benefit to becoming more involved, he said.

“KASB is an awesome organization that gives so much to local districts. I can’t say enough good things about the entire staff of KASB and the support they give to districts no matter the size or location. I’m honored to be a part of it,” Rogers said.

He emphasizes the need for KASB membership to remain active and involved in statewide education issues.

“It’s important that people from all over the state keep volunteering to share their time and ideas in order to keep improving the quality of education being offered to the children of Kansas,” said Rogers.

As important as he feels his service to KASB is, there is no denying Rogers finds the most satisfaction from his local board service.

“My favorite thing about being a local board of education member has to be getting to hand out diplomas to the graduating seniors every year. It’s great to see how kids have grown and hear their plans of where they’re going in the future, and know I had a small part in their development,” he said.

Rogers has continued to serve the Colby community in many other ways, including the Colby Booster Club, serving on the local recreation commission board, and membership in Kiwanis among other service activities. He is also a regular volunteer for many of the school activities, and proud of the community support and accomplishments of Colby Public Schools.

“I’m proud of the fact that we’ve been able to continue offering new technology, retaining quality and caring staff, and making improvements to our facilities while not increasing the tax burden on the local patrons,” Rogers said. “I feel we offer our staff a good salary and benefit package, and have to keep improving on that in order to attract new teachers and administrators.”

Gail Billman profile
continued from page 4

attended meetings with us on Capitol Hill and advocated from a student’s perspective.”

Billman encourages local board members to look beyond the boundaries of their own districts to gain perspective and ideas.

“You gain a lot of ideas when you come together with like-minded people who are supportive of all students in Kansas,” she said. “Through my KASB experiences, I have also made some life-long friendships,” she said.

Billman’s other community interests include church mission work and serving as a task force member for the Kansas Speech Language Hearing Association. Her local board service grew out of an interest in doing what she could to provide a future for her area of the state.

“I wanted to serve my community and help support our school district,” she said.

Now in her second term, she sees the progress the district has made through teamwork and collaboration.

“We now have a well-focused team and have common goals that support the students’ successes,” she said.

Debbie Mansch profile
continued from page 4

Mansch urges local school board members to remain watchful of state politics.

“It’s essential that we be informed on political fronts to keep Kansas education constitutionally funded, alive and well in our state. We have to protect local control and keep our schools in our towns and in the neighborhoods of our cities,” she said.

“It has been my pleasure to serve in many different capacities on my local board, and be a member of KASB for many years,” she said. “I have enjoyed the ride, and look to continue to serve the children of my district and the state for years to come!”

Wichita
Kansas
Hyatt &
Century II
Convention Center

Watch for more information coming soon!

Dec. 2, 3, 4.
2016
Wichita, Kansas
KASB
99th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

kasb.org/kasbcon

Each KASB member organization receives one free pass!
Westar announces 2016 STEM grant awards

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

Three projects have been selected to receive Westar Energy STEM Innovation Curriculum grants in the third year of the grant program.

Each project receives a $3,000 grant from Westar Energy aimed at increasing student interest and academic achievement in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines as applied to electrical energy. A focus on expanding the diversity of students involved in STEM education is of particular interest in the grant program.

“We are very proud to continue our support of this important program,” said Jerl Banning, Westar Energy senior vice-president, operations support and administration. “There were many impressive projects submitted this year for consideration, and the winning projects in particular will provide creative, fun ways to inspire learning and expand awareness of career opportunities in science and engineering.”

The awards are presented annually based on submissions from Kansas public education K-12 teachers and are a partnership among Westar Energy, the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Each submission must include a budget, measurable goals and the link or links to state standards. A committee composed of personnel from Westar Energy, KASB and KSDE selects the winning applicants.

“KASB applauds Westar Energy’s continuing commitment to this project,” said Dr. John Heim, KASB executive director. “The focus on diversity and innovative projects that spark an interest in energy-related careers fits perfectly with our state’s renewed vision of providing every Kansas student with a path to success.”

As part of the grant program, recipients will present their projects during a session of the annual KASB conference in Wichita in December. They must also provide a written summary with samples of class work and photographs.

2016 Grant recipients/projects include:

“Powering the Future of STEM,” Blue Valley-Randolph High School, Blue Valley-Randolph USD 384, Ruth Hutson, science teacher. This hands-on learning project will center on four sources of energy production in Kansas: coal, nuclear, wind and solar. Students will explore how electricity is generated and provided to consumers, and guest speakers from each of the four related industries will help students connect to career potentials. Projects will include designing a circuit board and building a miniature house to demonstrate how electricity travels from the power plant to a home; exploration of how radiation is created and controlled in a nuclear reaction; designing and testing a wind turbine; and finally, tracking the sun’s path to determine the optimum angle for energy generation by a solar panel. Students will also design a solar panel bank and determine how much water can be pumped over a set period of time using both parallel and series circuitry.

“After-school STEAM with Wind, Jewelry and Electricity,” Cottonwood Elementary School, Andover USD 385, Shari Rooks, principal. A new after-school program focused on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) will focus on environmentally friendly energy, magnets and electricity. Students will study how energy is produced and creative ways to use electricity. Hands-on projects will include designing wind turbines and studying circuitry. Students will then create electric bracelets and artwork using their new knowledge. An electricity art show in May will include a fashion show for the bracelets and an art display.

“Electrical Education,” Schlagle High School, Kansas City USD 259, Mike Allen, teacher, Nathan Litka, student. In a project-based learning environment, dubbed Schlagle Research and Development, students will study the nation’s power grid by focusing on the wires and power stations that deliver electricity. The project will include both generating and consuming energy. Students will build a portable, working model of the U.S. power grid system that can then be used by other classes and schools to learn about the power grid. The mini-grid will include working outlets where students can plug in devices and monitor system-wide changes. The mini-grid will also be used to demonstrate alternative energy sources, including solar, human, wind and propane generators. Because the power grid is a working model, students will also learn how to monitor consumption and manage voltage for greater efficiency.

This is the first year the Westar Energy Grant program has named honorable mention projects.

“The number and quality of applications for this grant program continues to increase, making it harder to choose just three,” said Heim.

The nine projects that received honorable mention in this year’s round of grants include:

1. “Build a Crystal Radio,” Coleman Middle School, Wichita USD 259, Jared Hall, 7th grade science and honors science teacher.
2. “FALCONS Solar Stem Club,” Derby North Middle School, Derby USD 260, Denise Rankin, sixth grade science teacher.
3. “WILDCAT STEMergy,” Haven Middle School, Haven USD 312, Kevin Stucky, director of learning services.
5. “Accessing the world through technology for students with different abilities,” Eisenhower Elementary, Great Bend USD 428, Jessica Nelson.
School funding conference set for Aug. 31

By Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

The Kansas Association of School Boards and United School Administrators of Kansas will co-host a members-only workshop at 9 a.m. on Wed., Aug. 31 on the development of a school funding framework for K-12 education.

The workshop will take place at KASB headquarters, 1420 SW Arrowhead Road in Topeka. It is open to school board members whose boards belong to KASB and to school administrators who are members of USA/Kansas or its affiliated associations.

A task force of KSSA, KASBO, KASEA and KanSPRA members has been working on a proposed funding framework since 2013 and signed into law by Gov. Sam Brownback.

In addition to an update on the funding framework, the workshop will feature discussions about Kansas’ overall educational attainment and national funding rank, the role of the Kansans Can vision for public education in the development of the framework and the status of CTE and virtual education.

Attendees will leave the workshop with a toolkit of talking points, graphics and other materials that will enable them to share the funding framework and key issues with other leaders and state stakeholders.

Celebrations focus on country’s founding

By Scott Rothchild, srrothschild@kasb.org

Next month, Kansas students will observe Constitution Day or Celebrate Freedom Week, or perhaps both.

Federal law requires the teaching of the U.S. Constitution on the anniversary of the signing of the landmark document.

Meanwhile, state legislators in a handful of states, including Kansas, require schools, for students from kindergarten through eighth-grade, to devote a week during the school year to teaching students about the country’s origins.

Because the actual anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution is Sept. 17, which falls on a Saturday this year, the observance will be held on Fri. Sept. 16.

A good website for information and activities surrounding Constitution Day is at constitutioncenter.org.

The Celebrate Freedom Week measure was approved by the Kansas Legislature in 2013 and signed into law by Gov. Sam Brownback.

The Kansas State Department of Education has developed a long list of resources for various grades for Celebrate Freedom Week.

Don Gifford, KSDE’s history, government and social studies program consultant, said the state leaves it to local school districts to decide how to focus on Constitution Day and Celebrate Freedom Week.

One of the Rose Standards, adopted by the Legislature, directs the State Board of Education to ensure that students receive a well-rounded education including knowledge of economic, social and political system that will enable the student to make informed choices.

Teaching students about the country’s founding and focusing on the importance of being a responsible citizen would seem to lend itself to that endeavor.
Upcoming Workshops

Season Pass Eligible

Balanced Leadership Session 1 Aug 30 Topeka
Balanced Leadership Session 1 Sept 1 Fredonia
*Juvenile Justice Changes & Managing |
Aggressive Behaviors Sept 2 Topeka
*Student Suicide Prevention & Awareness
Training Sept 7 Topeka
*Transgender Issues for Schools Sept 7 Topeka
*Superintendent Evaluation Sept 8 Oakley
Policy Webinar 6:00 p.m. Sept 12
*Becoming an Effective Supervisor Sept 20 Hays
*Becoming an Effective Supervisor Sept 22
Topeka
*Fall Summits, Various Dates/Locations

2016 Fall Education Summits

KASB’s SEASON PASS
Entitles Your Organization to
Unlimited Registrations
for Workshops and Seminars

August 31 Deadline to Purchase
this year’s Season Pass.

Learn more at kasb.org/training
Contact KASB for details
785.273.3600  800.432.2471
Order online at kasb.org/seasonpass1617

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
10.06.16 Hutchinson ESSDACK