“Elections belong to the people. It’s their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.”
- Abraham Lincoln

Get an A in voting

Inside: Special election section

- Get out the vote in your district.
- Important state House races to watch.
- Learn about State Board of Education candidates in 3 contested races.

"The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."
- Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965

"...never be enough. In the end, the people must choose and the people must help themselves."
- John F. Kennedy
Blake nominated president-elect designee

Lori Blake of the Southeast of Saline USD 306 school board has been endorsed as a candidate for KASB president-elect designee by the KASB Nominating Committee.

Blake has served for 10 years on the school board, including three years as president and is currently vice president.

She is also a graduate of KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow program and is serving in her fourth year on the KASB Board of Directors as Region 5 vice president.

In addition, Blake is executive director of Child Advocacy and Parenting Services, a non-profit that collaborates with community and state partners to improve the lives of children and strengthen families. She and her husband have three children and also own a service station.

The president-elect designee serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the board of directors until assuming the office of president-elect. The president-elect designee participates in the NSBA Federal Relations Network and NSBA Leadership Conference.

If elected, her term as president of KASB would start July 1, 2020.

KASB board holds August meeting

During its meeting in August, the KASB Board of Directors continued working on strategic planning and the Legislative Committee began its annual task of recommending legislative priorities for the year.

The Legislative Committee, which is comprised of representatives from each of KASB’s 10 geographic regions and the state’s five largest school districts, will forward a final product to the KASB Delegate Assembly on Dec. 2 during the association’s annual convention. Both the board and Legislative Committee heard reports on the recent primary election, an update on the school finance court ruling and the status of legislative interim committees.

Later, the board discussed long- and short-term goals to continue KASB’s mission of advocating for public education, providing a culture of collaboration and service and improving student achievement. The board also heard updates from various departments, briefings on planned Fall Regional Meetings and Conference from Nov. 30-Dec. 2 and reports on recent National School Boards Association activities.
Celebrating Public Schools

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More election news pages 14-19.
Board members must rebut false claims

Greetings fellow school board members. It’s that time again; election season! If you’re like me, you probably get a kick out of reading political ads from candidates across the state. I find it fascinating to observe the various rhetorical tools employed by candidates to make their arguments to the voters – their choice of language to describe policies they support as opposed to those they oppose, the way they choose certain statistics to support their arguments and how they define the context that frames the issue.

Let’s take the issue each of us spends our free time thinking about most: education. It’s common to hear two office-seekers cite statistics and facts from the very same source – be it a piece of school finance legislation, a school district budget or a decision from the Supreme Court – in support of arguments that are diametrically opposed to each other.

For example, in this year’s race for the office of Governor, one of the candidates has, in both public statements and debates, cited the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) as a source in his claim Kansas schools are adequately funded, but improperly spending their funds on too much administration. Interestingly enough, this is the same source school district officials cite as evidence public schools in Kansas are spending their funds responsibly on things that directly affect instruction, though many are still recovering from the massive cuts imposed during the Great Recession.

As a school board member, I know the claim that Kansas districts are “top-heavy” is false. In fact, I myself often offer KSDE data as evidence to make the claim our districts spend wisely on instruction. This leaves me, as a three-term board member, scratching my head and asking, “How is it possible for two claims so diametrically opposed to be based on the same data?”

Luckily for us, our own Mark Tallman dug in to this question and the data cited to provide the full picture. He sought to answer the questions, “Are there too many administrators in Kansas schools?” and “Are districts spending too much on management?” Most importantly, he sought to put these questions in proper context by asking, “Compared to what?”

Using the very same data from KSDE, Mr. Tallman compared management expenses in school districts with management and administrative expenses in the private and public sectors statewide, compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor. This comparison brought to light many important facts:

- **First**, public education has fewer management level employees (principals and directors of major departments) than do the private and public sectors in all of Kansas;
- **Second**, the number of chief executives for school districts (superintendents) has seen a steady decline over the years while the number of chief executive officers has grown in the other sectors;
- **Third**, management and chief executive salaries in school districts (principals, directors and superintendents) are significantly lower than those in the other sectors; and
- **Fourth** and most importantly, there are simply fewer management jobs and expenditures in school districts than there are in the private and public sectors in Kansas.

So, a quick review of the KASB research helps to paint a clearer picture of this issue by providing the full context. With this important information provided by our association, it’s our duty as board members to rebut false and damaging claims such as this one.

As local board members, we do need to explain why we make the decisions we do. I don’t know of any board member who wants excessive administration. We do want strong, effective leaders and support staff, just like every business in Kansas.

The real question is who should make these decisions for your district: elected members of your community or state government?
It’s no bull: School redesign can be dangerous

Recently in the KASB offices we discussed what makes school redesign so difficult, and even scary. It can be a dangerous business and requires a delicate dance of agreeing upon a mission, establishing clear goals, planning strategies and tactics, teamwork and adaptability in working toward a common goal. As often is the case with trauma victims, it caused me to recall a moment from my younger days.

In the early 1980s, when my dad decided to become a gentleman farmer/rancher, the decision was made to make a dramatic change in breeds of cattle from the pet-like polled Herefords which were the family tradition, to a more, shall we say, challenging cross between a cow and a Tasmanian devil -- the Brangus Breed.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with our bovine buddies, Brangus cattle are the result of taking a docile, pet-like Angus cow, and crossing her with a fire-breathing, snot-blowing rodeo bull. When you arrive at an offspring that can jump a five-wire fence flat footed and is mean enough to chase you into the bed and over the cab of your pickup, you have a Brangus.

A Brangus bull is a magnificent beast to look at and admire, but a menacing monster to both man and beast. On the Heim farm, we introduced a particularly fine specimen who was called “The General.” He couldn’t get along with the other bulls, tormenting them to the point of exhaustion, so the solution was to put a ring in his nose. Beyonce fans, don’t be confused -- putting a ring in it is way different from putting a ring on it. A bull’s nose is very sensitive, so the nose ring makes it uncomfortable to brawl with the other fellas.

Eventually, reason won the day and the decision was made to sell The General, but the buyer had a caveat -- he wanted the ring removed. One might say this was our mission, to get this creature as far away from us as possible. I was not present for the insertion of the nose ring -- no doubt a banner day -- but I was there for the removal, and it was a day that will forever live in infamy on the little farm on the Smoky River.

Three young men were assigned the task, my brother-in-law Brad, my brother, Woody and me. Three goals readily came to mind: Don’t anger our father, remove the ring, and live through the process. We quickly arrived at strategy, tactics and roles.

Step one was to get The General into a squeeze chute. A chute that at least 20 years old and not one of these fancy new ones but a wood-slatted creaky thing I remember trapping my brother in it when we were young. It was an ample design for trapping a five-year-old boy, but not so much for a five-year-old bull. We got him in and squeezed him down. Every time he inhaled it sounded like the slats would explode with his next breath. Every time he exhaled I swear you could see fire in his nostrils. Adaptability and teamwork came when we saw the flimsy chute trying to contain that big angry beast.

My brother-in-law is a master with tools and metal, so he was assigned the screwdriver. My brother is quick-witted, so he was assigned the gate to the barn exit and encouragement duties.

I have few skills at all, so my job was to stand at the barn door and if the other two came running out, roll the door shut before the bull made it to the opening. Roles were assigned and teamwork ensued.

The ring was brass and had a small brass screw holding it together. Brass is a soft metal, and an angry 2,000-pound monster is an unwilling accomplice, even in a squeeze chute. The screw head was quickly stripped. Again, time to adapt in the middle of the plan. As with any plan, one doesn’t always have the necessary resources at hand when handling a dangerous problem and problem-solving skills are imperative.

Bolt cutters would have been a great option, but what we had was a hack saw. The team roles were re-assessed and a round robin ensued. Saw as hard and fast as

Be deliberate in your process, bring the bull along gently, have the courage to make the changes needed and everyone will be better off.

Continued on page 7
Regional meetings will focus on school safety, mental health

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

The tragedy of school shootings has prompted community-wide responses to improving the security of buildings and making sure the mental and social health needs of students are being met.

At a recent legislative meeting, Seaman USD 345 Superintendent Steve Noble said educators are doing all they can to make their schools safer, but it is going to take everyone reaching out to one another.

“The problem is deeper than building safer schools, adding more drills, equipping staff with better equipment or more guns,” Noble said.

“While I greatly appreciate all these efforts to make our kids and our staff safer, we must personally connect more, have more compassion for one another, be more tolerant of our differences, more patient with perceived wrongdoings and we must address the mental and emotional health challenges that seem to be ever increasing in our schools,” he said.

These issues are the focus of Fall Regional meetings in September and October put on by KASB and USA-Kansas. What are school leaders doing to assess potential threats, to communicate with law enforcement and parents, to build a mental health safety net and to ensure the appropriate culture exists at their schools?

The Fall Regional Meetings provide opportunities to share information and strategies and make recommendations on what public policy should look like.

The Legislature approved several important initiatives last session, including $5 million in school safety and security grants that went to 156 school districts. But the need is much greater, as districts requested $13.2 million in funding.

The Legislature also required local boards to approve comprehensive school safety plans and conduct nine crisis drills. These efforts will be re-visited by legislators in 2019.

Recently, a leading law enforcement official said the required crisis drills may be more effective if some of them are specifically conducted between school staff, emergency dispatchers and first responders.

The drill requirement was added as a proviso and only applies to this school year, so it will have to be reconsidered in 2019 to either continue the program or alter it.

“The problem is deeper than building safer schools, adding more drills, equipping staff with better equipment or more guns,”

-Steve Noble
Seaman USD345 Superintendent

The proviso said schools must conduct at least 16 emergency preparedness drills during the school year, including at least 9 crisis drills, four fire drills and three tornado drills. Prior to the change, schools were required to do 12 fire drills and three tornado drills.

The KASB and USA-Kansas Fall Regional Meetings provide an excellent opportunity to help form sound school safety plans. For more information, go to www.kasb.org.
I’m from Kansas

Continued from page 5

you can without nipping the beast’s nose, then hand the saw off and rotate to the other two duties. My best and last recollection is that men and beast were covered in blood and snot when my brother-in-law mumbled something under his breath about how worthless his new brothers were, grabbed the saw a final time and willed that saw through that ring in about three strokes. Mission accomplished, goals achieved, strategies, tactics and roles a success!

School redesign isn’t as dramatic, nor physically dangerous as what we went through. Making changes to schools is a harrowing business nonetheless. Instead of a large snarling beast, boards and superintendents work through a system that has evolved over 100 years to do a great job with a lot of students. To achieve the mission of all students learning, one must remove the parts that don’t work, while retaining the parts that do. It is not as clear cut as the bull and the ring, but the system can be just as angry about the process.

Be deliberate in your process, bring the bull along gently, have the courage to make the changes needed and everyone will be better off. But don’t be surprised if you get a little blood and snot on you along the way.

(Disclaimer: My description of the Brangus Breed is an obvious exaggeration intended mostly to give my dad a hard time. Mostly.)ตรา
KASB Conference will feature activities, learning aimed at improving schools

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

The 2018 KASB Conference will offer school leaders a wide array of experiences and knowledge they can take back home to their districts and use to help improve student success.

Running from Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in Overland Park, the conference features visits to schools, a trade show, seminars, workshops and more than 40 breakout sessions.

More than 500 school board members are expected to attend, so don’t miss the opportunity to visit with colleagues from across the state to discuss and review new ways to handle challenges and approach new opportunities.

Author and motivational speaker Garrison Wynn will deliver the opening keynote address on leadership strategies for educators. On Sunday morning, Dan Meers, better known as KC Wolf, the Kansas City Chiefs mascot, will share his inspirational story told in his book ‘Wolves Can’t Fly,’ about an accident that nearly ended his life. Other featured speakers include Kansas Education Commissioner Randy Watson and Deputy Commissioner Dale Dennis.

The one-day KASB Winter Law Conference on Nov. 30 will discuss the new school safety and crisis planning requirements schools must implement along with the school district’s legal responsibilities for student health and wellness.

KASB’s popular and informative Meeting All Kids Needs Tours will highlight student mental health, school redesign, community partnerships and more on Nov. 30 in Johnson County.

As schools focus on employee retention and improvement strategies, this seminar will include topics on Employee Benefits, Behaviors and Best Practices along with Social Media and School Employees’ Free Speech Rights and Responsibilities, Employee Leave Rights under the federal Family Medical Leave and Americans with Disabilities Acts and Documenting Employee Performance and Discipline Issues.
Send a letter to the future to include in KASB time capsule

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

What message would you like to send to a board of education member in the year 2117? KASB is gathering documents and memorabilia to place in the KASB Time Capsule to be opened 100 years from now.

The time capsule was gifted to the association by KASB past presidents and presented at last year’s annual conference as part of KASB’s 100 Years of Service Celebration.

The capsule will be sealed during a short ceremony at the 2018 Annual Conference in December, then transported back to KASB headquarters in Topeka where it will be sealed in an acrylic case and placed in the KASB Museum. A plaque commemorating the retirement of the capsule with an invitation to open the case in 2117 will be included in the display.

The association’s Board of Directors invites KASB member boards of education to submit letters or proclamations for inclusion in the time capsule. These can range from a short letter signed by all board members to a more formal proclamation passed by the board. Individual submissions will also be accepted from board members and district leaders.

All submissions must be received by November 19, 2018 to allow time for printing and preparation for archiving. Members can mail submissions to KASB at 1420 SW Arrowhead Road, Topeka, KS 66604, ATTN Time Capsule or send an electronic copy of the submission to cpitts@kasb.org.

This Winter School Law Conference will also review the legal authority of Kansas school boards along with the school board’s role in handling parent and teacher complaints.

KASB’s popular and informative Meeting All Kids Needs Tours will highlight student mental health, school redesign, community partnerships and more on Nov. 30 in Johnson County.

Participants will visit either Olathe USD 233 and De Soto USD 232 or Blue Valley USD 229 and Spring Hill USD 230. Attendees will see innovative programs and practices, observe in classrooms and interact with students.

Olathe will highlight its Mercury redesign work and the new Olathe West High School. The De Soto visit will feature community and business partnerships and the district’s work with KASB Prestigious Partner K12itc.

The Blue Valley/Spring Hill tour will feature visits to USD 229’s Center for Advanced Professional Studies and Hilltop Learning Center preschool along with Spring Hill’s Gemini redesign and recent bond issue to respond to growing enrollment.

The two groups will meet for lunch in Olathe for a discussion on the Johnson County school superintendents’ joint effort to prevent teen suicides. Lunch will be prepared by Olathe culinary program students.

At the new one-day Friday night trade show, attendees can visit vendors, enjoy hors d’oeuvres, beverages and door prize giveaways.

Delegates to the conference also will elect leaders and vote on policies that KASB will pursue during the 2019 legislative session.
The 4th and 5th grades at Kennedy Elementary School and ninth and tenth grades at Wellington High School are piloting redesign this school year. The students and teachers use the Summit Learning platform to support 36 cognitive learning skills like collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Those skills are among the outcomes sought by the State Board of Education in its Kansans Can vision for the success of each Kansas student. That vision was the impetus for the Mercury and Gemini redesign efforts now taking place across the state.

“The whole purpose is for kids to understand the why behind what’s going on in the classroom and be able to talk about it,” said Wellington High School Principal John Buckendorff. “It’s transferring content into skills.”

Following the Wellington school tours, KASB’s Brian Jordan led the class through a discussion of how the changes it saw taking place in Wellington intersected with earlier class work on leading change. The group also learned about how to target and frame conversations about change.

Haven USD 312 Superintendent Clark Wedel said the LFT program has been an asset for him and his school district. “We’re a [Gemini] redesign district so this is extremely timely and relevant,” Wedel said. “I like seeing how other districts work and how kids react to the changes.”

Wedel said getting to know his LFT classmates has been a highlight of the program. “It’s been so much fun meeting people and seeing them encouraging and motivating each other to learn and grow.”

Wichita USD 259 is the state’s largest school district with an enrollment of more than 50,000 students. The school district, in its second year under Superintendent Alicia Thompson, has adopted a mission statement that students and staff will be empowered to Dream, Believe and Achieve. To that end, it offers 27 career and technical education pathways ranging from A/V Communications to Health Science to Web and Digital Communications.

At Wichita Northwest High School, the LFT class observed the culinary kitchen/classroom, the machine shop and the woods shop. Students from each of those programs frequently get internships during high school and often get job offers from local food service and commercial fabrication businesses before they graduate from Northwest. Northwest also has a new IT Academy, which offers coursework in information support services, network systems, programming and software development and web and digital communications. KASB’s Gary Sechrist led the class through a discussion of how USD 259’s programs offered Relationships, Relevance, Rigor, or Responsive Culture, the four elements of the state’s school system accreditation process.

In Wellington USD 353, the LFT class learned about the district’s Mercury redesign work, which focuses on flexibility, personalized blended learning, cognitive skills, project-based learning (PBL), mentoring and acceleration.
Be our guest: cultivate school advocates

By G. Kent Stewart, Professor Emeritus Education Leadership, KSU

Not necessarily the same as the famous graduates Wall of Fame, the Famous Guest at School for a Day is usually a well-known person currently active and highly visible in the community. There is such a person in almost every community.

For example, the most well-known person in the former Midway-Denton School District (Severance, Denton, Bendena before consolidation) and now part of Doniphan West was Dr. Yoder, a local physician. Uncommonly popular, “Doc” as he was affectionately known, spent his entire career as a country doctor in service to people in that area of Doniphan County. He served on the school board in the 1970s and into the 1980s. He was a special guy well known and highly respected.

The guest becomes an advocate for schools and in the process influences others to become advocates.

- Kent Stewart
KSU Professor Emeritus

It was my good fortune to have met “Doc” several times during my early years at KSU. A favorite expression of his was, “You work your fingers to the bone and what do you get -- bony fingers.” “Doc” accidentally inspired more young people to reach their potential than most others did on purpose.

There is someone similarly regarded in virtually every school district. Invite that person to visit school for a day or a couple half-days — maybe at the high school, then the middle school. Or perhaps the individual would be more at home in an elementary school. Remember the exceptionally gifted reader mentioned in an earlier column who regularly volunteered to read to kids at Louisburg Elementary School?

The two big questions for the school board are who to invite and what the person is expected to do at school? The selection of a person from a list offered by the staff rests with the board.

Let the school principal, superintendent (or designee) and the guest plan how the school visit will be spent. Generally, these individuals like to begin by meeting and greeting kids informally at the start of the day. Some spend the morning visiting classes or greeting kids in the library on a come-and-go basis as arranged by the principal.

Principals need to be sensitive to the fact that visiting school may be really stressful for guests; especially if they have not been in a school since their own graduation; and that could have been 50 years earlier! So be sensitive. Some principals bring guests to school before visit day just to let them become familiar with the building and school routine. A relaxed guest is an effective guest.

Some readers may see this as more of a building level than a district level PR activity. Actually, it is the board that enjoys the political benefits that accrue from bringing an influential citizen to school for a day. Remember, the board made the choice from among nominees, and hopefully the board president and superintendent will join the guest and school principal for lunch or dinner following the visit.

The political dividend is the knowledge gained by the guest about what happens in today’s schools; and more particularly, what guests say to colleagues and friends about their day at school. The guest becomes an advocate for schools and in the process influences others to become advocates. Support and understanding occur slowly, but steadily, one person at a time.

Eighth in a series by G. Kent Stewart focusing on best practices in advocating for schools and students and assisting community leaders. Stewart taught school administration at Kansas State University for 32 years.

KASB Policy Review Services
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LEARN MORE at kasb.org/policy
Every Kansan who is eligible to vote should register and vote. Recent close elections show that every vote matters.

The stakes in this election are high. The winners in upcoming contests will determine how the state addresses school funding and numerous other education issues.

Just as importantly, educators should model for students, the importance of voting and participating in our democratic society.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Voting is the foundation stone for political action.”

The final is November 6

2018 Kansas General Election
Offices to be Elected or Retained

National Level
✓ All four U.S. Representatives

State Level
✓ Governor/Lieutenant Governor
✓ Secretary of State
✓ Attorney General
✓ State Treasurer
✓ Commissioner of Insurance
✓ One State Senator, District 13 (Galena)
✓ All 125 State Representatives
✓ Kansas State Board of Education, Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9
✓ Seven Kansas Court of Appeals Judges
✓ District Court Judges, 48 retained; 27 elected
✓ District Magistrate Judges, 18 retained, three elected
Administrators and teachers may lead civic participation activities to support registering to vote, facilitate voting opportunities for staff and students and celebrate voting.

Public resources, no matter how small, cannot be used to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. Simply stated, this means that all government property should be used for governmental purposes; not for personal or private purposes – including political campaigns.

Do not use a school district’s email to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. School email may be used to inform staff and patrons of elections, dates and times for voting early and on Election Day and to encourage a culture of participation. You may certainly use your personal email account to advocate.

Do not use a school district’s social networks to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. School social networks may be used to inform staff and patrons of elections, dates and times for voting and to encourage a culture of civic participation. You may certainly use your personal social network accounts to advocate.

Do not use a school district’s computers, photocopiers, telephones, facsimile, electronic printer or any other machine to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. You may use your personal equipment for this use.

Do not use state or local government time or state or local government equipment to work on an individual’s political campaign. You may advocate for or against an issue or candidate before or after work hours.

Do not use public funds in connection with a political campaign.

Do not be demanding or discourteous. By local board policy, many school districts mandate that an employee’s participation in community, political or employee organization activities shall be entirely voluntary and shall not: (1) interfere with the employee’s performance of assigned duties and responsibilities; (2) result in any political or social pressure being placed on students, parents or staff; or (3) involve using the employee’s position or title with the district.
Election preview: ‘Rob’s races to watch’

By Rob Gilligan, rgilligan@kasb.org

U.S. House

1st District is a rematch between Republican Incumbent Roger Marshall of Great Bend and Democratic challenger Alan LaPolice of Clyde. LaPolice was an independent candidate for this seat in 2016, losing to Marshall 66 percent to 26 percent. Safely R race.

2nd District is an open seat after Rep. Lynn Jenkins announced her retirement last year. Republican candidate Steve Watkins, Topeka, won a seven-candidate primary with 27 percent of the vote and will face Democrat Paul Davis, Lawrence, in November. Davis was the Democratic governor candidate in 2014, benefiting from the withdrawal of the Democratic nominee Chad Taylor, losing 53 to 42.5 percent.

The Republican Primary race was decided by less than 400 votes out of over 300,000 cast, illustrating the division within the Kansas GOP. Voter turnout for the general election in November will be a key part of this race.

Pundits give Kobach the edge in this three-person race with many indicating the presence of a “competitive” third party candidate as a spoiler. A significant amount of money from Kansas and outside is expected to be spent on this race.

Secretary of State will see Republican nominee, state Rep. Scott Schwab, Olathe, against Democrat Brian “BAM” McClendon, Lawrence. Schwab won a five-person primary race with 38 percent of the vote and will face a well-financed candidate who is known as a co-founder/developer of Google Earth. The resources available to the Democratic candidate makes this race an interesting one to watch.

Attorney General will see incumbent Republican Derek Schmidt, Topeka, against Democrat nominee Sarah Swain, Lawrence. Shortly after filling for the Democratic nomination the Kansas Democratic Party distanced itself from Ms. Swain related to statements on law enforcement.

State Treasurer will see appointed incumbent Jake LaTurner, Pittsburg, face Democrat Sen. Marci Francisco, Lawrence. With minimum fundraising and visibility for this office and the benefit of marketing dollars for the Treasurer’s office the incumbent traditionally has an edge.

Commissioner of Insurance will see Republican State Senator Vicki Schmidt, Topeka, face Democrat Nathanial McLaughlin, Kansas City. Schmidt is a well-known moderate legislator facing an unknown Democrat with limited resources.

Senate

This is an off-year for the Kansas Senate with 4-year terms. There is one race in southeast Kansas 13th Senate District where incumbent Richard Hilderbrand, R-Galena, has a mid-term race after he was appointed to fill the vacancy left when Jake LaTurner was appointed Kansas Treasurer. He faces Democrat Bryan Hoffman in the general election in a seat that is a solid R.

House of Representatives

At least 21 new faces are expected in the Kansas House of Representatives in January:

– Ten legislators retired from the House: 15th Erin Davis, 26th Frank Trimboli, 30th Randy Powell, 39th Shelee Brim, 45th Tom Sloan, 64th Susie Swanson, 87th Roger Elliot, 97th Les Osterman, 106th Clay Aurand, and 124th Steve Alford.

– One resigned this summer: 85th Chuck Weber. Michael Capps was appointed to his seat but recent allegations against Rep. Capps related to his volunteer work as a child advocate has led Republican leaders to ask him to step down and withdraw from the race.

– Three ran for different office; 5th Kevin Jones lost U.S. House primary, 14th Keith Esau lost Secretary of State primary, 49th Scott Schwab won Secretary of State primary.

– Seven House members lost their primary races in August: 8th Patty Markley, 28th Joy Koesten, 74th Don Schroeder, 75th Mary Martha Good, 80th Anita Judd-Jenkins, 93rd John Whitmer, and 104th Steven Becker.
Sixty-four House members are presumed winners with no major challenger in November, 25 Democrats (all incumbents) and 39 Republicans (31 incumbents, and eight new legislators).

The remaining 61 seats will be determined in the general election on Nov. 6, with roughly 21 of those races “competitive.”

Rob’s Races to Watch

Kansas 3rd: Incumbent Democrat Monica Murnan faces former legislator Terry Calloway, R-Pittsburg. The seat was held by Democrat Julie Menghini from 2005-2011 when she lost to Calloway in 2010. She won the seat back in 2012 but lost again to Republican challenger Chuck Smith in 2014. Murnan defeated Smith in 2016 but the district has been inconsistent at best.

Kansas 14th: This seat was vacated by three-term member Keith Esau, R-Olathe, when he ran unsuccessfully for Secretary of State. His wife, Charlotte, won a three-person race for the Republican nomination and will face Democrat Angela Justus Schweller, Olathe. This seat has consistently been Republican, but Justus Schweller has been gaining momentum.

Kansas 15th: This seat was held by two-term Rep. Erin Davis, R-Olathe. She did not seek reelection after changing jobs into a government relations role, opening the seat to challenge by candidates Democrat Chris Haulmark and Republican John Toplikar. Haulmark had initially planned to run for U.S. House 2nd District but switched to the Kansas House race this past spring. If elected he would be the first deaf legislator in the U.S. Toplikar served in the Legislature from 1992 to 2002, the Johnson County Commission and made an unsuccessful bid for Kansas Insurance Commissioner in 2014. Democrats have targeted this seat for a possible gain.

Kansas 17th: First-term House member Tom Cox, R-Shawnee, faced a challenge to his seat in the primary and will now face a strong challenge from the left in November from Democratic nominee Laura Smith-Everett. This suburban district is moving to the center and Democrats see an opportunity here, but Cox has been moderate in his votes and has the advantage of incumbency.

Kansas 18th: Democratic incumbent Cindy Neighbor, Shawnee, has held this seat three times since 2003, as it has switched back and forth between Democrat and Republican representation. Neighbor will face Republican nominee Eric Jenkins, Shawnee, who she defeated in an open seat race in 2016 by about 570 votes. The X-Factor in this election is if Neighbor sees any impact from the Shawnee Mission school board race last year when all incumbents (including her) lost their elections.

Kansas 26th: This is an open seat after current Rep. Frank Trimboli, R-Olathe, chose not to seek election to the seat he was appointed to after former Rep. Larry Campbell was appointed Budget Director by Gov. Colyer. Republican nominee Adam Thomas, Olathe, will face Democratic nominee Deann Mitchell, Olathe, in a race that hasn’t garnered much attention or fundraising up to the primary.

Kansas 28th: Incumbent Rep. Joy Koesten, R-Leawood, lost her primary race to conservative challenger, Kellie Warren, Leawood. Koesten won the seat by defeating Republican incumbent Jerry Lunn in the 2016 Primary with no general election challenge. Warren will have a Democratic challenger this time in Brian Clausen, Overland Park. While moderate Koesten supporters may swing toward a Democrat in the general election, Warren has significant fundraising and support in a traditionally held R district.

Kansas 29th: Incumbent Rep. Brett Parker-D, Overland Park will again face former Rep. James Todd, whom he defeated in the 2016 general election. The ‘16 race was decided by a margin of 5.3 percent or a little more than 600 votes, but with multiple Johnson County moderate incumbents losing to conservatives in the primary, this could be a trend that affects seats held by Democrats.

Kansas 30th: Rep. Randy Powell decided not to run for reelection in late May, making this an open seat race. Republican nominee Wendy Bingesser, Olathe, won a contested primary race against the more moderate Colleen Webster, to face off with Democratic Primary winner Brandon Woodard, Lenexa. Woodard would become the first openly gay legislator in Kansas, ironically in a seat held currently by a staunchly conservative/anti-LGBT rights legislator. This will be a hotly contested race with a considerable amount of money.

Kansas 40th: Rep. Debbie Deere, D-Lansing, defeated incumbent Republican John Bradford, Lansing, in the 2016 general election by less than 400 votes. After a relatively insignificant primary challenge, she will face Republican nominee David French, Lansing, a retired Army officer and self-identified TEA PARTY Republican. This seat was held by a Democrat from 2009-2013, then a Republican until 2017 when Deere began her first term. Rep. Deere currently is vice president of the Lansing school board and has a strong campaign account that should help her in the election.

Kansas 41st: First-term Rep. Jeff Pittman, D-Leavenworth, will once again face former Rep. Tony Barton, R-Leavenworth, whom he defeated in the 2016 election. While Pittman won that race easily by almost 10 percent, the area is relatively conservative with strong support for Kris Kobach in the recent primary election. Pittman should be on the way to reelection but could be at risk if Democrat and moderate voters don’t show up.

Kansas 42nd: First-term Rep. Jim Karleskint, R-Tonganoxie, survived a strong conservative challenge in the Republican primary from

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Races to watch
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Lance Neely. Democrats have been active all summer with support for nominee Thea Perry, Lawrence, who has been a public school advocate for many years. Karleskint had to expend most of his campaign funds in his primary race creating a slight advantage for Perry this fall, though he defeated his Democrat challenger by over 15 percent in 2016.

Kansas 48th: Incumbent Rep. Dr. Abraham Rafie, R-Overland Park, was appointed to fill the remainder of Rep. Marvin Kleeb’s seat in December of 2016 when he announced his retirement shortly after having been reelected. Rafie will face Democratic Dr. David Benson, Overland Park, former superintendent in Blue Valley USD 229 and most recently interim superintendent in Lee’s Summit. While this district would normally be a safe Republican seat, Dr. Benson has been a decent fundraiser and is challenging in an area where education is a top campaign issue.

Kansas 54th: Rep. Ken Corbet, R-Topeka, has served three terms in a seat held by Republicans for many years. Corbet will face an active Democrat nominee in Sara Coats, Auburn, a social service worker who has garnered national media coverage including being part of a women candidates Time magazine cover January 18, 2018. Corbet won his 2016 race against a strong Dem challenge by 7.5 percent but continued issues with DCF and child welfare in Kansas helps to highlight the issues and skill set that Coats offers to the race. This will likely be a close race.

Kansas 56th: Rep. Virgil Weigel, D-Topeka, is a bit of a conundrum. He first took this seat in 2013, taking over for Democrat Annie Tietze when she moved to the 53rd District in 2012. He then lost the seat to Republican challenger Lane Hemsley in 2014, even though Democrat nominee for governor, Paul Davis, won this district handily in the same election. Weigel then defeated Hemsley in the 2016 election by less than 4 percent. He is challenged now by Republican nominee Michael Snowden, Topeka, pastor of the First Assembly of God Church. Snowden has raised a fair amount of campaign funds as a first-time candidate and based on past performance in this district, has a chance.

Kansas 69th: Rep. J.R. Claey, R, Salina, has served three terms after taking over from former Sen. Tom Arpke when he moved to the Senate. Claey will once again face Democratic nominee Gerrett Morris, Salina, whom he defeated in 2016 by less than 300 votes. While Claey is running for reelection, he is also serving as campaign manager for Republican governor nominee Kris Kobach, thus taking his attention away from the race in Salina. Usually a district that would be safe Republican, the dynamics of the race make this one to watch.

Kansas 72nd: First-term Democrat Tim Hodge, North Newton, was a surprise 2016 winner against five-term Republican Rep. Marc Rhoades by a little more than 200 votes. In 2018 he will face Republican nominee Steven Kelly, former president and CEO of Newton Medical Center. A traditionally safe Republican seat, Hodge faces a strong challenge to keep this seat.

Kansas 79th: Nine-term Rep. Ed Trimmer, D-Winfield, will face a well-financed Republican challenger in Cheryl Helmer, Mulvane, a Wichita USD 259 counselor. While Trimmer has served this district for a long time, he has won close elections by 65 votes in 2012 and 17 votes in 2014. He didn’t face a general election opponent in 2016 as his previous challenger Larry Alley ran and won the 32nd District Senate seat that year. The additional advantage Trimmer will have is his challenger works in Wichita and lives in rural Mulvane in the northwest corner of the district, while Trimmer has been a longtime teacher and citizen of Winfield which makes up much of the district’s population.

Kansas 85th: Republican Michael Capps, Wichita is “technically” the incumbent after being appointed to fill the unexpired term of Rep. Chuck Weber who resigned this summer to become executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference. This is the third district that Capps has ran for office in, having previously ran in the 95th against Rep. Tom Sawyer in 2016 and filing for the 97th District seat this past spring. Capps will be challenged by his neighbor, Democratic nominee Monica Marks who lives 10 houses from Rep. Capps current address. A usually safe Republican district, the “musical districts” conversation may create an opening for the Democrat.

UPDATE: After accusations of child endangerment were made against Rep. Capps, House Speaker Ron Ryckman, and Gov. Jeff Colyer have called on him to resign his seat and “suspend” his campaign. At this time Capps has declined to do so. Because of changes in state law, he will remain on the ballot in November and this will certainly have an impact on the outcome.


Kansas 111th: Rep. Eber Phelps, originally held the seat representing Hays from 1997 until he was defeated by Republican Sue Boldra in 2012. Phelps won his seat back in 2016 by just over 7 percent but will again face a strong Republican challenge from Barbara Wasinger, Hays. She is a former mayor/city council member and is in her second term as Ellis County Commissioner.
Candidates square off in contested State Board of Education races

By Scott Rothschild, @srothschild@kasb.org

Most voters who live in the eastern half of Kansas will select candidates for State Board of Education during the Nov. 6 election.

And while the State Board has in the not-so-distant past been the focal point of controversy over science standards and other issues, the board in recent years has coalesced around the Kansans Can mission of focusing on the success of all students.

Given this period of stability, the 10-member board will receive at least three new members after the election.

Every two years, half of the State Board seats are on the ballot with this year being the odd-numbered districts.

Of those five odd-numbered districts, three have contested elections this fall. Those contested races are in Districts 1, 3 and 7.

In District 5, which covers nearly the entire western half of Kansas, Sally Cauble, R-Dodge City, did not seek re-election and will be replaced by Jean Clifford, R-Garden City, who did not draw any opposition. In District 9, which covers southeast Kansas, State Board Chairman Jim Potter, R-Fredonia, drew no opposition and will return for a second four-year term.

Of the contested races, District 1 features incumbent Janet Waugh, a Democrat from Kansas City, facing Michael Powell, a Republican from Leavenworth.

Waugh has served on the State Board since 1999 including two stints as chair. She is a former member of the Turner USD 202 Board of Education for 15 years, including eight as president and has held state and regional offices for the PTA and KASB. She is retired from a family-owned used car business.

Powell is a training analyst/curriculum developer, contracting with the U.S. Army. A retired Army colonel, he has previously served as a classroom instructor and adjunct teacher for faculty development at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. District 1 includes all or parts of the following counties: Leavenworth, Douglas, Johnson and Wyandotte.

The District 3 ballot includes Michelle Dombrosky, a Republican from Olathe, and Ruth Goff, a Democrat from Spring Hill. Dombrosky works in customer service at Prairie Life Fitness Center. Goff has 30 years experience teaching in Shawnee Mission USD 512.

District 3 covers parts of Johnson and Miami counties and has been represented since 1999 by John Bacon, who did not seek re-election.

The remaining contested election for State Board is in District 7. Republican Ben Jones, of Sterling, and Democrat James Hannon, of Emporia, are seeking to win the seat being vacated by Ken Willard, a Hutchinson Republican, who did not seek re-election after serving for 15 years.

Jones is self-employed and serves as music director for several community theaters, vice president of the Rice County History Society and has been an assistant debate and forensics coach at Sterling High School for 10 years. Hannon taught students at Emporia High School for 39 years; primarily social studies and served as the department chair for 20 years.
State BOE races

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a number of concerns that I will discuss later, I believe we are at a seminal moment in Kansas history that may not come again in our lifetime. We are at an intersection of culture and technology that is placing demands on our children that our current system was never designed to address. But we have a fleeting opportunity where both resources and research can enable us to fundamentally reimagine and redesign opportunities for our kids. We would be morally negligent if we didn’t address the emerging challenges to educating our kids for success. Having managed a number of programs that required organizations to embrace change, I recognize the difficulties involved. The most significant being to get the right people engineering the change and then the right people to accept the change. Kansans Can is on a path towards powerful change.

What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?

The State Board should fulfill its statutory responsibilities and take action as necessary related to funding in order to fulfill the constitutional responsibility for supervision of public schools, educational institutions and as it affects the educational interests of the state.

Janet Waugh

If elected to the State Board of Education, what is your top goal?

I want to ensure that the Kansans Can vision is seen in every school district. We started a new vision three years ago and set forth a ten-year plan to get it accomplished. I want to continue to work to see that all Kansas school districts have the opportunity to continue to help all students become successful.

What is your opinion about the State Board’s Kansans Can effort?

This is my highest priority and it is for the entire Board. I am proud of the work we have done to give school districts a guided path and freedom to use their creativity and skills to provide a world class education for each student. Our redesign efforts are exciting! We now have 47 school districts who have volunteered (in two years) to completely redesign their school system to meet the needs of students and families. I am excited to see this work in action.

What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?

The issue of school funding is a constitutional issue for the Legislature. Our role on the State Board of Education is to recommend a budget to the Governor and Legislature every two years. We have done that and just completed a budget recommendation this past summer. I support the efforts of the Legislature to provide a school funding plan over the next five years and am confident that they will respond to the Kansas Supreme Court’s decision this summer to add an inflationary amount to their totals.

DISTRICT 3

Michelle Dombrosky

If elected to the State Board of Education, what is your top goal?

The Kansas Board of Education is primarily chartered to license teachers and accredit schools. My primary objective would be to make sure the criteria established for licensing and accreditation are meaningful in the sense that they promote an increasing academic productivity in the classroom for student and teacher.

What is your opinion about the State Board’s Kansans Can effort?

I commend the effort and hope that I might be able to contribute to an effective program that actually tracks the success of each student after graduation. I am excited about the potential when everyone involved in the educational process is measured and focused on how effective we are preparing students to be successful in life.

What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?

I believe the role of the board is to make sure that public funding of the schools is accountable and productive for students, teachers and taxpayers. The amount of the funding is constitutionally up to the legislature to decide how much. During the last decade, precedence has allowed the courts to decide if it is enough.

Ruth Goff

If elected to the State Board, what is your top goal?

Our students in Kansas continue to lead the nation in achievement. While there’s always room for improvement, and addressing current issues that challenge students, slashing standards and gutting minimum teacher qualifications is not the way to increase students’ academic attainment. I will never support de-licensing the profession of teaching, or cutting standards in an academic race to the bottom. Kansans have always supported high quality public schools, and so do I! As a State Board member a top goal would be developing relationships with other State Board members and the communities and school boards in the eleven school districts represented in District 3. Relationship building leads
to being able to have important conversations.

**What is your opinion about the State Board’s Kansans Can effort?**

The State Board’s Kansans Can effort is an example of opportunities to “Redesign” Kansas schools. The needs of our communities, our changing cultures and the reorganizing of our schools are emphasized in this “Redesign.” As an educator, I am supportive of efforts to allow for changes, reflection and improvement in meeting our students needs. I am supportive of the Kansans Can Vision and look forward to following its journey.

Public education in Kansas is under threat, and I oppose efforts to hollow out critical learning and hire unqualified teachers just to save a little money in the short term. Our children will never get a chance to make up for missed lessons once they enter the next grade. Our schools in Kansas are some of the best in the world, and I want to keep them that way! I plan on advocating each day for what’s best for our kids, the same way I always have as a teacher.

**What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?**

The State Board should continue to recommend to the Legislature that adequate funding of our Kansas Schools is a priority. As an educator I witnessed budget cuts to my program, increased class size, loss of paraeducators and custodial staff. This affects our Kansas Kids! I am committed to make sure our Kansas Schools receive the resources necessary to maintain the great public schools in Kansas.

**DISTRICT 7**

James Hannon

If elected to the State Board, what is your top goal?

If elected to the State Board my primary goal would be to defend our system of universal public education against the growing encroachment of privatization and demands for tax dollars from private schools.

**What is your opinion about the State Board of Education’s Kansans Can effort?**

Kansans Can is an incredibly bold vision that reflects the commitment of the State Board of Education to a future-based education. It is founded on a rapidly growing body of evidence that today’s students need to develop skills and dispositions necessary for successful, sustained employment in the future. In general, I support the vision with its very lofty desired outcomes. I do have some reservations about the practicality and cost of its suggested delivery. I will question the potential increased demands on staff and likely on the increase in staff itself. I am not a proponent of alternatively licensed teachers and I fear that increased demands of this program on teachers will lead us to seek even more alternatively licensed teachers. I cannot support that. I question whether it is realistic to expect that even most parents will become active participants in IPS conferences twice a year. History suggests they will not. I truly believe that the teaching of the skills and dispositions required for successful sustained employment can be accomplished within the existing delivery system. These can and should be embedded in virtually all courses. I will keep an open mind, but with the potential costs and increased demands on staff, I can’t help but consider the possibility of alternative delivery to accrue essentially the same positive results.

**What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?**

The State Board should ensure that funding for state mandated programs are justified by the desired outcomes of the programs. Second, the State Board should keep Kansans adequately informed of educational goals, progress toward goal achievement and justification for needed programs. The Board should be responsive to the needs of local school districts and support the fulfillment of those needs. The State Board of Education has no real legislative authority to determine the amount of state funding but it can and should use its influence to ensure adequate funding for education.

Ben Jones

If elected to the State Board, what is your top goal?

My top goal is to ensure that we lift some of the regulatory burdens placed upon our CTE Pathways that will eliminate the ability of our schools to offer opportunities to our Kansas kids.

**What is your opinion about the State Board’s Kansans Can effort?**

I support the Kansans Can effort. It emphasizes the need to look at our kids holistically rather than just a test score. It allows us to make sure we are readying our kiddos for kindergarten. It is important we look at the effectiveness and see that our kids are prepared for what comes post-high school.

**What should the State Board do on the issue of school funding?**

School funding is a legislative issue. However, the Taylor study found that we average 96 percent efficiency which is very good. We should strive to spend our tax dollars as wisely as we can and make sure we don’t allow waste to creep into our spending.
Looking at the Data
Ted Carter, KASB Chief Data Officer

On average, the average ‘average’ isn’t as average as the average person thinks

In what some are calling the “Post-Fact World,” it is critical that we work to be informed consumers of information. To that end, I thought it might be useful to share some thoughts and information on the notion of “average” amounts and why you need to look at reported averages very closely to make sure you understand what they mean.

First, let’s talk about what the word “Average” means.

Merriam-Webster says Average is “a single value (such as a mean, mode or median) that summarizes or represents the general significance of a set of unequal values.”

Wikipedia says Average is “a middle or typical number of a list of numbers.”

Neither of these definitions is terribly helpful. Many statistics texts talk about “measures of central tendency,” which is what measures typically called “averages” really are getting at. As Merriam-Webster mentions, the three measures that are often referred to as averages are Mean, Mode and Median.

- The Mean is what most of us think of when we hear “Average.” It is calculated by adding up all the values in a list and then dividing by the number of values in that list.
- The Mode is the most frequently occurring value in a list of values.
- The Median is the middle value in a series of values sorted from lowest to highest or from highest to lowest.

Let’s take the following list of values:

| 1 |
| 2 |
| 2 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |

The median for the above list would be 5, because that is the 7th number on the list of 13 going from smallest to largest.

The mode for the above list would be 2, because there are three 2’s in the list.

The mean for the above list would be 4.69, because $1+2+2+2+3+4+5+6+7+7+8+9 = 61$ and $61/13 = 4.69$.

So, as can be seen, even on a simple list of numbers, different values can be reported for “Average” depending on what statistic is used.

Why do we have these different statistics? And when should each be used? Typically, mean and median are the most commonly used statistics for calculating averages. And the biggest reason to choose median over mode is to control for what are called outliers.

In our example list above, the median and mode are still pretty close (5 versus 4.69). But what if the list looked like this:

| 1 |
| 2 |
| 2 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |
| 5 |
| 5 |
| 6 |
| 7 |
| 7 |
| 8 |
| 9 |
| 100 |

The median for the above list would still be 5, because that is the 7th number on the list of 13 going from smallest to largest.

The mode for the above list would still be 2, because there are three 2’s in the list.

The mean for the above list would still be 4.69, because $1+2+2+2+3+4+5+5+6+7+7+8+9+100 = 123$ and $123/13 = 9.46$.
In this case, the median is still 5, but the mean is 12.38. A single value that is very different from the rest of the list is enough to make the mean less meaningful.

People will sometimes “throw out” outliers to avoid producing averages that aren’t really representative of the data, so that is something to watch for as well. Typically this will be done by excluding a certain number of the highest and lowest values in a list.

On the list above, if the two highest and two lowest values were excluded from the calculation (to “control” for outliers), the median would still be 5, and the mean would also be 5.

On the other hand, what if our list looked like this:
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 100
- 100
- 1,000
- 1,000
- 10,000
- 10,000

In this case, our median is 1, and our mean is 1,708.23. If we exclude the two highest and lowest values, then the median is still 1, and the mean would be 245. Neither “average” really gives us a good feel for what is in the dataset. In fact, for this data the mode might be the better statistic to use.

Another consideration is the level of aggregation. In other words, when dealing with groups within groups, how are the statistics calculated?

For example, let’s say we are interested in the average income for a state. We have information on the average by county, so if we want to know the state average, we can just add up the county amounts and divide by the number of counties to get the mean for the state, right?

That would work if each county had the same number of income-earners in it. But they don’t. So to get an accurate average across the state by income-earner, you would have to know the number of people in each county, and “weigh” the average amount for each county based on the number of people in that county.

Let’s use another example. This time we are going to use grocery stores. The following list shows the store number, the average sale amount, and the number of customers.

- 1 $30 42
- 2 $25 20
- 3 $10 75

If we want to know the average (mean) sale amount by customer, we can’t just add $30 + $25 + $10 and divide by three to get $21.67. We have to do this:

\[
\frac{\left(30 \times 42\right) + \left(25 \times 20\right) + \left(10 \times 75\right)}{42 + 20 + 75} = \frac{1260 + 500 + 750}{137} = \frac{2510}{137} = 18.32
\]

If we want to know the average total store sales, on the other hand, we would do this:

\[
\frac{\left(30 \times 42\right) + \left(25 \times 20\right) + \left(10 \times 75\right)}{3} = 836.67
\]

By the way, I apologize if I am causing you high school algebra flashbacks; sometimes working the math out is the best way to ensure you know what you are looking at.

Next, let’s talk about rounding. Best practice suggests that we should do all of our calculations using the most specific data, then the final results can be rounded for reporting.

For example, if I have a list of numbers that each have four decimal places, but I want to report out just using a single decimal place, I should still do all of my calculations using four decimal places and then round my final answer back up to one decimal place. You will often see people taking shortcuts and rounding their list of numbers before trying to calculate an average. Though this does not result in an average that is wrong, it does result in an average that is less accurate.

I’ve talked about the calculations above without mention of deliberate bias so far, but this has to be considered as well. In the examples above comparing mean and median, some folks would calculate both and then use whichever one was more consistent with their message. The same can be said for rounding, throwing out outliers and level of aggregation.

These are just a few considerations to keep in mind when reading reported averages. There are others, of course, but the important thing to know is that there are many ways to calculate averages, and when reading or hearing about a particular average, it is a good idea to try and determine how it was calculated and whether there was an ulterior motive in the choice of statistics used.
The Kansas Open Meetings Act permits boards of education to enter executive session for closed discussions on narrowly defined topics. Each exception to the open meeting requirement is intended to protect a privacy interest or the rights of an individual or business entity that might be harmed if the matter were discussed in public, or to protect the public interest in the matter being discussed. Board members and anyone invited to participate must keep all information concerning the discussions in executive session confidential.

Below are the matters often discussed in closed session by school board:

- **Matters concerning non-elected personnel** Individual employees are entitled to privacy in job-related evaluations and discussions. Disclosing job-related information, opinions and conclusions could harm both the employee’s present ability to perform for the district and the employee’s future employment prospects.

- **Discussions with the board’s attorney that are subject to attorney-client privilege**
  
  Attorneys are not permitted to disclose confidential information or advice given to clients. If a board member reveals protected attorney communications to third parties, the benefit of attorney-client privilege could be lost to the board. Such disclosure could also harm the district’s position with respect to litigation or the legal matter.

- **Employee negotiations** The board is permitted to discuss employee negotiations in executive session in order to protect its obligation as the public’s representative to bargain for the best deal for the district and its patrons. Board members who share details of closed-door strategic discussions deprive the board of leverage and inhibit its ability to strike the most favorable bargain for the district.

- **Confidential data relating to financial affairs or trade secrets of corporations or partnerships** If the district is considering a contract with an outside third party that has a valid business interest in keeping its financial condition or trade secrets from becoming public knowledge, board members could cause significant harm to the well-being of the contractor by revealing its secret data. The potential for liability is particularly high if a company loses future business or is required to furlough employees as a result of a board member publicizing its trade secrets.

- **Preliminary discussion of the acquisition of real property**
  
  The board’s ability to purchase real property at the lowest possible price would be harmed if discussions concerning the range of prices it is willing to pay had to be discussed in open session. Similarly, if a board member discloses the substance of the board’s executive session discussions on the issue, the seller gains a bargaining advantage, and the board’s ability to purchase as economically as possible will be damaged, to the detriment of public interest.

- **Matters adversely or favorably affecting a person as student/student discipline**
  
  Matters involving individual students generally constitute educational records. Such records are confidential as a matter of law. Unless the student or parents request open session hearing on the matter, discussions of individual student matters must be kept private in order to avoid a FERPA or SDPA claim.

- **School safety/security measures**
  
  If the board proposes to discuss specific policies, procedures or protocols relating to security, the discussion may be held in executive session in order to prevent information being publicized that may allow wrongdoers to circumvent the security measures. Obviously, if anyone who attends the executive session later discloses the matters discussed, the security measures may be rendered ineffective.

No minutes should be kept concerning matters discussed in executive session. Anyone who keeps notes about executive session must be certain the notes are safeguarded to ensure the privacy or public interest at issue is maintained.

Board members who publicize matters discussed in executive session violate the public trust and may violate privacy rights of the individuals who are the subject of the discussions. A board member who discloses such information could be sued as an individual.
Showcase your district’s top communication projects

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

The annual KASB and KanSPRA publications contest, open to KASB member school districts, provides recognition for digital and print communication projects produced between Aug. 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018.

This contest, co-sponsored by KASB and KanSPRA, includes these categories for both print and electronic publications:

- **District Report Card/Annual Report:** Annual publication to inform patrons of the district’s performance.
- **Audio/Video:** A presentation or episode of a single program, podcast or promotional piece.
- **Calendar/Handbook:** Publication that includes dates or information or annual publication to inform students, staff and/or parents about the organization and policy.
- **Electronic Publication:** External or internal communications distributed only electronically. Links to two issues must be provided to qualify as an entry.
- **Marketing Materials / Special Purpose Publication:** Items used to communicate the appealing qualities or explain education issues of a school, district or program. This is a single piece.
- **Newsletters:** External or internal printed publications.
- **Photo/Photo Series:** Photographs taken by a district representative for publication. Provide description of use in the Analysis and Planning section of the entry form.
- **Project, Special Event or Program:** Describe a project, special event or program that supported a district initiative. Provide description, results and samples of materials and tactics utilized.
- **Websites/Social Media:** Provide a link to your district’s home page (first page of site). Do not submit separate entries for individual school sites.
- **Writing:** Op-ed pieces, editorials, speeches or individual articles from an official written piece intended for public distribution. Provide proof of publication.

Deadline for submissions is Oct. 12, 2018. Certificates of Excellence and Certificates of Merit will be awarded in each category. Top winners in each enrollment category receive recognition at the KASB Annual Conference and winning entries will be featured on the KASB and KanSPRA websites. Entries must use the online form. Find additional information at kasb.org/PublicationsContest.

Members have online access to handbooks

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

KASB members have access to six handbooks through a password-protected section of kasb.org. KASB Legal Assistance Fund members have access to another 10 handbooks through the association’s website. All handbooks were revised in 2018 by KASB attorneys and staff.

**KASB Members:**
- Clerk’s Handbook
- Guide to Boardsmanship
- Kansas Open Meetings Act
- Forms Book
- Kansas Open Records Act
- School Site Council Handbook

**Legal Assistance Fund Members:**
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Negotiations
- Religion in Kansas Public Schools
- School District Organization
- School Law Basics (2018)
- School Law Handbook
- School Law Index
- Section 504
- Sexual Harassment and Bullying
- Student Discipline

To access the content, go to kasb.org/about us. Handbooks are password protected and those have been shared with member superintendents, board clerks and presidents/CEOs of post-secondary members.
KASB Workshops & Meetings
Through December 2018

Registration details www.kasb.org/training

• Fall Regional Meetings
  • Region 8 / Pratt 09.25.18
  • Regions 6 & 14 / Haysville 09.26.18
  • Region 3 / Greenbush Girard 09.27.18
  • Regions 1, 11, 12, 13, 15 / Lawrence 10.01.18
  • Region 2 / Emporia 10.02.18
  • Region 5 / McPherson 10.03.18
  • Region 4 / Manhattan 10.04.18
  • Region 10 / Garden City 10.16.18
  • Region 9 / Colby 10.17.18
  • Region 7 / Beloit 10.18.18
• Becoming an Effective Supervisor Emporia 10.11.18
• Politics in Education Topeka 10.25.18
• Aspiring Superintendents Topeka 10.25.18
• Basic Negotiations Topeka 11.08.18
• Section 504 Workshop Topeka 11.15.18
• KASB Annual Conference Overland Park 11.30.18, 12.01.18 & 12.02.18
• School Finance Basics Workshop Topeka 12.12.18

kasb.org/partners  KASB’s Prestigious Partner
Program gives members access to a wide range of products and services to save time and money – with a focus on maximizing efficiency and trimming operating costs.

P1 Group, Inc., based in Lenexa, Kansas, is a vendor-neutral, single-source provider for all things facilities-related. P1 Group’s K-12 offerings help to reduce the total cost of ownership associated with owning and operating school facilities, thus allowing more flexibility to spend resources on what matters most – our kids and their education.

k12ITC delivers customized services for K-12 school districts, no matter the size. Based in Kansas City, k12ITC has developed a model that leverages a special mix of cloud computing and on-site support, enabling districts to achieve better technology support at a lower cost.

Established in 1978, Opaal is a family-owned business that works with school districts to deliver a quality, cost effective, food management system. From menu planning, labor management and computerized nutritional analysis to inventory forecasting, Opaal provides a much needed solution for school systems experiencing a need for food management expertise.