Gov.-Elect Laura Kelly and the 2019 Kansas Legislature will face many challenges with more revenue and
KASB regional delegates elected three regional vice presidents during its annual conference.

Emporia USD 253 board member Art Guiterrez was elected in Region 2; Labette County USD 506 board member Kevin Cole was elected in Region 3 and Ellsworth USD 327 board member Daren Holecek was elected in Region 7.

Lori Blake, a member of the Southeast of Saline USD 306 school board, was unanimously elected KASB President-Elect Designee by the KASB Delegate Assembly on Dec. 2.

“It is through much seeking and questioning that has led to this moment in time, taking a risk to seek your approval as the next president-elect of KASB,” Blake said. “It is my time because I feel a responsibility to give back to an organization that has done so much for me over the last 10 years.”

Blake was nominated by Nedra Elbl, president of Salina USD 305, who has known Blake since Blake was a child. She said Blake “fights for fairness, equality and is a voice for the meek.”

In the seconding speech, Gina McGowan, a member of the Ellsworth USD 327 board, said Blake is a great listener and exceptional leader.

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.

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.

Blake’s term as president of KASB will start July 1, 2020.

“We are getting ready to blastoff because Kansans can and I want to work together to reach places not yet even imagined,” she said.

“This is my time because I feel a responsibility to give back to an organization that has done so much for me over the last 10 years.”

- Lori Blake

President-Elect Designee

Region 1: Jason Winbolt, Spring Hill USD 230, winbolt@usd230.org
Region 2: Art Guiterrez, Emporia USD 253, art.guiterrez@usd253.net
Region 3: Kevin Cole, Labette County USD 506, kecole86@gmail.com
Region 4: Curt Herrman, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383, mailme@curtherrman.com
Region 5: Lori Blake, Southeast of Saline USD 306, lcblake520@gmail.com
Region 6: Susan Walston, Haysville USD 261, swalston@usd261.com
Region 7: Darin Holecek, Ellsworth USD 327, holecek5@hotmail.com
Region 8: Gary Yost, Otis-Bison USD 403, yost.gary@yahoo.com
Region 9: Brad Bergsma, Goodland USD 352, brad.bergsma@nwktc.edu
Region 10: Lara Borslaw, Garden City USD 457, lara.borslaw@gmail.com
Region 11: Mike Seitz, Blue Valley USD 229, mseitz@bluevalleyk12.org
Region 12: Deb Zila, Shawnee Mission USD 512, debzila@smsd.com
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C. Patrick Woods, Topeka USD 501

‘Keep it simple’ is a winning equation

As we head into the holidays, my mind drifts back to the music that I associate with the season.

During Christmas, my family would often play music by artists from the Motown Record Label, such as The Temptations, The Jackson 5, etc. We were not alone in our love of Motown. Throughout the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s, Motown was a virtual hit factory, discovering talent in every corner of the country. Many record labels tried to emulate the Motown success. Legendary music executive and Motown founder, Berry Gordy, had a maxim to which he attributed his success as a discoverer and promoter of talent: KISS, or “Keep It Simple, Stupid.”

With the exception of the last word, this maxim comes to mind as I think about the message that Kansans sent in this past election. From the two major party candidates in the governor’s race, we heard drastically different messages. There were calls for reducing the size of government, shifting more of the burden for funding schools to local communities, investment in public infrastructure, and strengthening public schools.

The victorious candidate, Senator Laura Kelly, promised to return to the time-honored traditions that Kansas governors of both parties have subscribed to – investments in public infrastructure, workforce development, and above all, strong public schools.

Kansas voters, when given the choice between two very different alternatives, opted for Sen. Kelly’s message. When we strip away party labels and consider this election result in historical and issue-focused terms, the results come as no surprise.

From the very inception of the state, Kansans have placed public education atop of the critical responsibilities of state and local government. Dating back to the 1859 ratification of the Wyandotte Constitution until present day, Kansans have, with some exceptions, repeatedly chosen the candidate or candidates that professed to share their values of strong public schools.

It’s a pretty simple equation:

- Support strong and equitable public schools; plus
- possess the ability to work with and on behalf of all Kansas; equals
- victorious candidate.

This is the simple message that Kansans of all parties sent to elected officials in this month’s gubernatorial election – “Do your jobs, support our schools, and don’t complicate things by injecting too much bombast.” In other words, “keep it simple.” It’s clear that voters prefer competent government, cooperation and results to bombast and scorched earth politics.

I can think of no better advice for the incoming administration and Legislature: support public schools, make government responsive to the needs of all its citizens and keep it simple. And I can think of no better partners for state government in this work than school board members.

As elected officials, we are committed to lifting the students in our communities by providing our educators with the tools they need and engaging parents in their students’ learning. Our elected responsibilities don’t come with a paycheck, don’t often generate “above the fold” headlines, and because we work so closely with our colleagues on our boards, they don’t lend themselves to bombastic flare.

In other words, we are used to keeping it simple. Regardless of party labels, geography or ideological subscriptions, state policymakers can count on school board members as ready and able partners in the work of improving student education outcomes.
Here’s the scoop: Kansas politics is a swirl

There is an old adage that one shouldn’t talk about politics or religion in polite company. The saying always made little sense to me because to the best of my recollection that is all we ever discussed at family gatherings. In these tribal times, maybe it is best to talk about one thing upon which we can all agree: Ice cream is pretty much a gift from heaven. (Whoops, allow me a little religion.)

My mom’s homemade ice cream is the best in the world, and when the recipe is handed off to my older sister there is nothing quite like it. I remember waiting for what seemed like hours for that old electric motor to seize up, signaling that the creamy delight was ready to eat. To my child’s mind that 20 minutes took hours. The ozone smell of burning electricity still reminds me of homemade treats. My cranky grandfather’s redeeming feature was his love of frozen goodness. He would often consume a whole brick at a time! I remember my first-grade teacher letting us hand crank ice cream and eat it in class! Isn’t the best part of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Farmer Boy the scene in which Laura’s older sister makes ice cream?

But even ice cream can cause divisions among people. Mark Tallman will not eat anything chocolate, even chocolate ice cream. Many consider it his only flaw. On the other hand, in my mind, the only vanilla ice cream worthy of consumption comes from my mom’s recipe/sister’s freezer. Because of a drop or two of lemon flavor, it’s not purely vanilla. Most people don’t feel as strongly as Mark or I, but everyone has a favorite. Do you prefer chocolate or vanilla? (I will pause for you to discuss among yourselves.)

Based upon what I can find on the internet, the binary choice between the two is a dead heat. Some sites say chocolate is the favorite, some vanilla. One thing is clear though, when presented with a choice between chocolate, vanilla, and anything else, anything else wins every time. If this were a scientific paper, I would note that some of the research is questionable - one site listed Neapolitan as a flavor choice. Neapolitan is the inability to make a choice! But I digress.

The point is most people like ice cream with some of both - rocky road, chocolate chip, chocolate swirl, etc. The geniuses at Dairy Queen capitalized on this when they invented the Blizzard. With this advancement in ice cream science, you get to choose vanilla or chocolate and add anything you want! Does anyone order a vanilla blizzard? Of course not; that would just be ice cream!

Although I would love to babble on about ice cream, my oppressive editor, Scott Rothschild, generally insists that I have an education-related point. So, let me shift from a discussion of chocolate and vanilla to one of Republican and Democrat. Didn’t see that coming, did you?

I was looking at a map of election results recently and noticed that it represented Kansas as a county by county binary state - either red or blue. A glance at the map would lead one to believe that we are deeply divided. But I spend a lot of time with Kansans, and I know that we aren’t a chocolate or vanilla state. We enjoy a host of political flavors. In fact, one only has to look at a couple of statewide races to see it. Laura Kelly won the governor’s race - she is a Democrat who has a history of working with Republicans. The top vote getter in the state was Vicki Schmidt, a Republican who has the reputation of being willing to work with Democrats. The best representation of this was done by Representative Adam Smith of Graham County when he produced a map showing Kansas counties by population and by how strongly they supported one candidate or another. His map shows we are more alike than different - neither chocolate or vanilla, but a big blizzard of beliefs.

Kansans hold strong contrary beliefs about important issues like health care, the second amendment, abortion, due process rights, etc. and believe our public schools need to be fully funded and focused on student success. School boards members may register as Republican, Democrat, or Independent, but they agree that the key ingredient to our state’s future is strong public schools!
Education leaders come together for KASB 2018 Annual Conference

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Education leaders from across Kansas exchanged ideas, visited schools, heard from experts and voted on policies all aimed at helping students succeed during the recent 2018 KASB Annual Conference.

In his keynote speech, Education Commissioner Randy Watson told school board members and administrators Kansas education has turned a corner after having survived some tough funding years.

“We’ve never been more excited about the next four or five years,” Watson said.

The conference, held Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in Overland Park, was attended by approximately 500 people.

The KASB Delegate Assembly elected Lori Blake, a member of the Southeast of Saline USD 306 school board, President-Elect Designee

Also elected were three regional vice presidents. They are Emporia USD 253 board member Art Gutierrez in Region 2; Labette County USD 506 board member Kevin Cole in Region 3 and Ellsworth USD 327 board member Daren Holecek in Region 7.

The Delegate Assembly also approved the Legislative Committee Report, which will guide KASB’s advocacy efforts in Topeka and Washington D.C.

In addition, the conference recognized the 26 graduates of KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2018 and the winners of the $3,000 Westar STEM grants — Baldwin Elementary School Intermediate Center, Derby Middle School and Oregon Trail Middle School in Olathe.

The event also featured a trade show, school tours, legal, leadership, risk management and advocacy conferences, inspirational and motivational speakers and dozens of breakout sessions. Next year’s conference will be held in Wichita on December 6-8.
Some annual conference highlights

Left: Goddard USD 265 Superintendent Justin Henry leads a discussion on school safety. Below: KASB President Patrick Woods with Katrina Lewison (left) of Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 and Heather Ousley of Shawnee-Mission USD 512.

Phenomenal group of KASB leaders. From left: Gail Billman, Labette County USD 506; KASB President-Elect Shannon Kimball, Lawrence USD 497; Gina McGowan, Ellsworth USD 327; KASB Past President Dayna Miller, Basehor-Linwood USD 458.

Left: School leaders on the Meeting All Kids Needs bus tour visited schools in Olathe, Spring Hill, De Soto and Blue Valley and spoke with amazing students, teachers and administrators. Right: Salina school board member Ann Zimmerman and Manhattan-Ogden school board member Jurdene Coleman talk with students at Prairie Creek Elementary in Spring Hill.
BOLD members learn how to improve technology, surveys and even lunch

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

K-12 leaders from across the state recently heard from education and industry experts on ways to improve management of technology, food service and public communications in their school districts.

The deep learning experience came via the second session of KASB’s Business Operations Leadership Development (BOLD) class, which was held Nov. 13-14 at Goddard USD 265.

This year’s BOLD Class includes 17 school leaders from across Kansas who will participate in five two-day sessions through June to expand knowledge on building and facilities master planning, technology planning, finance strategies, procurement processes, school security, risk management and human resources.

Steve Adams (left) and Jack Koehn from Opaa! are introduced during the second session of BOLD by Randy Weseman, KASB CFO and assistant executive director for leadership services.

Time to tune up technology

Goddard USD 265 district leaders joined the group to discuss the district’s decision to partner with K12itc, a technology management company based in Kansas City.

Staff turnover and outdated equipment were among the reasons the growing suburban district west of Wichita knew it was time to change its approach to technology management, including the district’s phone system, classroom technology and data security.

Goddard USD 265 operates 12 buildings with an enrollment of over 5,800 students. Finding the best way to manage a district’s technology program was a time consuming and difficult process. The final decision was a significant departure from the more traditional way of managing a school’s technology and required everyone to change past practices.

Dr. Justin Henry, superintendent of schools, said they prioritized keeping the entire process transparent and all stakeholders informed and involved.

“We took 18 months from our first discussion to board approval,” he said. “Our message, particularly to our existing technology staff, was that we just need to do technology a different way. We assured them no one was losing their job.”

K12itc offers several options to KASB members looking for assistance with technology. K12itc’s Albert system bundles all aspects of a school’s information technology into one package, delivered for a predictable monthly fee. While K12itc has responsibility for equipment, infrastructure, connectivity and maintenance, the district’s staff is integral to the system.

A district technology committee, comprised of a cross section of teachers, administrators, other staff and three board of education members, was given the task of developing recommendations to present to the board of education for improving the district’s approach to technology.

BOLD class participates (left to right) Shelly Swayne, Russell County USD 407 Superintendent; Jim Goracke, Sterling USD 376 Superintendent; Deanna Scherer, Atchison County USD 377 Principal; discuss the Opaa! presentation with KASB’s Craig Wilford, Leadership Services Field Specialist.
“Perception is reality,” he said. “It is essential to know what a true cross section of your patrons is thinking before you begin to develop a facility improvement plan.”

Once the plans are developed, Nobles recommends a pre-election survey six to eight months before the election.

Patron Insight can then use the results to help the district structure winning ballot proposals, identify how best to communicate with the district’s patrons and identify biases that exist in the district’s voters that could impact the outcome of any election.

Without data, lunch can eat your lunch

BOLD members also received assistance from KASB Prestigious Partner Opaa! Food Service Management.

Steve Adams and Jack Koehn from Opaa! are both retired school superintendents from Kansas and have years of experience in all phases of school operations. They led the class through a series of scenarios to illustrate the challenges of managing an efficient operation that is as close to self-supporting as possible.

Koehn pointed out that schools use data in every other area to make decisions, so why not food service? He illustrated how to uncover key data points, such as the meals served per labor hour.

“The goal is not about making money,” Adams said, “but a well-managed program can help keep the district from having to supplement the program with funds that could be used to support other needs.”

Most Kansas schools operate their own food service program. New regulations, such as requiring districts to have a food service manager who meets the highly-qualified criteria, staffing shortages and the rising food costs make the school food service program a challenge to operate efficiently.

The key to a successful program is a skilled director who can manage costs and staffing, understands compliance issues while providing nutritious meals that fuel kids for success, Adams said.

More and more districts are looking for answers and options, and of the 59 districts that use a management company, Opaa! works with 55 of them. There are many reasons why contracting for this service makes sense, but it isn’t the right answer for every district.
More revenue, many demands in Kansas

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

When Gov.-elect Laura Kelly declared victory, she said Kansans wanted change “not only in the direction of our state, but a change in tone.”

And given the results of the election — change is what Kansans are going to get from Topeka.

A new administration, some 30 new state House members, a couple of new statewide officeholders and several new state senators will be in place as the 2019 legislative session gets under way in January.

Having served in the Legislature the past 14 years, Kelly brings a deep knowledge about the state budget, school finance and the inner workings under the dome. It is the first time in 32 years that a Kansas governor will come into office directly from the Legislature. Mike Hayden was the last one, getting elected governor in 1986 when he was the state House speaker.

K-12 priority

Kelly has said her top priority is to provide the additional inflationary adjustment to school finance to satisfy the Kansas Supreme Court on K-12 funding adequacy. Resolution of this issue early in the session would also give school districts a jump on planning for the next school year rather than having to wait for legislative or court action in the late spring and summer.

Given the state’s financial rebound after legislators repealed Gov. Sam Brownback’s tax cuts, there seems to be enough revenue, at least in the short term, to provide the additional school funding without having to consider a tax increase.

Budget experts increased the revenue estimate for the current fiscal year by $306 million, or 4.4 percent, and the state’s projected ending balance is a healthy $905...
millon, or 12.6 percent, which easily surpasses the state-required 7.5 percent and is way above recent years when officials ignored the ending balance requirement as state revenues tanked.

**Medicaid chances**

Kelly has also said she wants to accept federal funding to expand Medicaid, a move that supporters say will provide health care for an additional 150,000 low-income Kansans and help local hospitals and the economy. Legislators approved the change to Medicaid in 2017 but Brownback vetoed it. Opponents say while expanding the program would be overwhelmingly funded by the federal government, the portion of state dollars required could result in a growing commitment.

With Kelly as governor, the Medicaid issue is sure to arise again, although a moderate Republican and Democratic coalition in the Legislature that pushed for more health care has been weakened by about a half dozen losses during the 2018 election cycle.

**Many demands**

There are also numerous other demands on state spending. State agencies have requested $1.5 billion in additional spending over the next three years. State hospitals, child welfare, the prison system and higher education all struggled with budget difficulties after the Brownback tax cuts.

But with state revenue on the upswing, everyone seems to want to cut taxes again.

Some Republicans have pushed for state income tax cuts, while Kelly and others have said they want to reduce the sales tax on food. Kansans pay one of the highest tax rates on food of any jurisdiction in the country when state and local taxes are combined. In most states, groceries are exempt from state sales tax or taxed at a reduced rate. Removing the state sales tax from groceries would reduce grocery bills by $400 million per year.

However, some budget experts have urged caution on both sides of the ledger — spending and tax cuts — noting that the Kansas revenue picture, while positive now, could turn negative again if a recession were to hit. History shows that since World War II, the country has experienced a recession about every 6.5 years. It has been nine years since the Great Recession.
By Leah Fliter, Ifliter@kasb.org

With the close of the 2018 general election season, Kansas school leaders are turning their sights toward the 2019 legislative session. A new Governor — Democrat Laura Kelly, who ran on a pledge to be “the education governor” — will have to reach across the aisle to work with a Republican-controlled Legislature whose leaders have not always been friendly to public education.

Furthermore, the House of Representatives will welcome 30 new members, roughly one fourth of that body.

So, what should school board members and other advocates do to prepare for a session that will feature not only a legislative response to the Gannon VI school finance decision but also debates on Medicaid expansion, higher education funding, a new state transportation plan and persistent problems in the Department of Children and Families and the state prison system?

Here are some tips from KASB’s Advocacy staff:

• If your school district has a new member of the Legislature, arrange to meet him or her as soon as possible to begin building a relationship. Offer legislators a tour of your school buildings, introduce them to key administrators and staff, and help new lawmakers understand your school district, its budget and how you serve students. KASB staff will be happy to meet new members WITH you, if you wish.

• Ask to meet formally with both new and returning lawmakers before the session to discuss issues of concern. This could be at a local board meeting, a regional forum, or individually with school district leaders. KASB has several resources members can use to explain K-12 public education issues.

• The “Commitment to Success” booklet provides a general overview of K-12 education issues and the KASB Legislative Committee report gives a good outline of important issues.

KASB has already released several support materials presenting the history, progress and challenges of K-12 education and responding to common questions about school finance, student achievement, school spending and staffing.

KASB online resources

You can find these documents on the KASB website at www.kasb.org. Click on the Advocacy tab at the top of the page, then click Key Resources. This page, highlighted in the illustration below, includes links to presentations, documents, KASB videos and podcasts, and blog posts on education issues.
KASB expands communication efforts to support state’s local school districts

Education leaders are continuously called upon to act on or respond to public policy that could impact Kansas schools and students. That is why KASB continues to expand ways to reach members with important and in-depth news as quickly as possible.

During the 2019 Legislative Session, which starts in January, KASB will conduct a weekly KASB Live webinar at 12:30 p.m. on Fridays to wrap up the past week of legislative action. These broadcasts will usually run about 30 minutes to an hour and include the ability for viewers to ask specific questions of the KASB panel.

During the week, look for Facebook Live updates from the Statehouse, in addition to posts on Twitter to stay up-to-date on developments that affect public schools in Kansas.

The daily KASB News Briefs provides a wide-range of news from Topeka, around the state and nation, in addition to updates on KASB seminars, workshops and other events.

Meanwhile, the monthly School Board Review includes news, features and columns on the top education, legal, administration and leadership issues confronting school board members.

In addition, blogs from KASB Executive Director John Heim (I’m From Kansas) and KASB Associate Executive Director for Advocacy Mark Tallman (Tallman Education Report) provide in-depth analysis of just about everything that touches upon public education.

A good place to start accessing information from KASB is to visit kasb.org.

KASB’s mission is to be the voice for public education in Kansas, serve and collaborate with members with the end goal being improving student success. KASB’s ability to inform members is a key part of that mission.

If you have suggestions on ways KASB can improve its communications efforts, please contact Communications Editor Scott Rothschild by email at srothschild@kasb.org.

Stay informed about education-related issues by subscribing to the KASB Live Podcasts, watching KASB Live reports on Facebook, and reading reports and blogs from KASB staff. Everything is accessible through KASB.org.
State, national events can help school leaders advocate for public education

By Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

KASB’s upcoming Advocacy in Action seminar and the National School Boards Association’s Advocacy Institute will equip Kansas school board members with the information they need to champion Kansas K-12 public education in Topeka and Washington, D.C.

Kansas has a new Governor, Democrat Laura Kelly, and a slightly more conservative state legislature that will remain under Republican control. Of the 125 seats in the Kansas House of Representatives, 29 will be new to the legislature.

KASB Advocacy in Action

KASB’s Advocacy in Action seminar on Jan. 16 and 17 in Topeka will give attendees the opportunity to meet with their newly elected state lawmakers and take advantage of briefing sessions on hot topics like the Gannon school finance case, the state budget and education funding, dyslexia, special education and more. The seminar also includes a school safety track with sessions on the new state safety standards, crisis plans and drills, statewide mental health pilot programs, and the outlook on future state grant funding for school safety efforts.

Be sure to attend the Wednesday evening reception honoring our state legislators and State Board of Education and invite your local lawmakers to join you.

On the federal front, Kansans elected two new members of the Congressional delegation that represents the state in Washington, D.C.

Republican Steve Watkins defeated Democrat Paul Davis in the battle for the 2nd Congressional District seat vacated by retiring Rep. Lynn Jenkins. That district encompasses 25 counties in eastern Kansas from the Nebraska line to the Oklahoma border. Democrat Sharice Davids defeated Rep. Kevin Yoder in the general election race for the 3rd Congressional District, which represents the Kansas City suburbs. Incumbent Representatives Roger Marshall in the 1st Congressional District (western Kansas) and Ron Estes in the 4th District (the Wichita area) were reelected to two-year terms.

NSBA Advocacy Institute

NSBA’s Advocacy Institute, January 27-29 in Washington, D.C. will feature issue updates for the 116th Congress that convenes in 2019, grassroots advocacy training sessions and the chance for Kansans to go to Capitol Hill to discuss K-12 public education with Reps. Marshall, Watkins, Davids and Estes and Senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran.

The Advocacy Institute will include insights into how education policy will be affected by the relationship between the Republican-controlled White House and U.S. Senate and the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.

The Institute will also feature the kickoff of NSBA’s signature advocacy effort for 2019, the reauthorization and modernization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law, enacted in 1975, is the main federal legislation providing funding for special education. It was last reauthorized in 2004. Although the 1975 law promised Congress would pay for 40 percent of the excess cost to educate students with disabilities, appropriations have consistently fallen short, leaving states and local school districts to make up the difference. NSBA and other education advocates hope to showcase how IDEA has helped students succeed, work for full funding of the law, and urge Congress to streamline or simplify some aspects of the law.

Fliter to speak at NSBA seminar

KASB Advocacy and Outreach Specialist Leah Fliter will participate in a panel discussion on Jan. 27, at the NSBA Advocacy Institute. “The Mid-Terms Are Over; Now What?” will feature Filter and state school board advocates from Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland and New Jersey offering attendees an insightful look at what the 2018 elections meant for public schools across the nation.
KASB, USA-Kansas to host Women’s Leadership Summit

Scheduled
Feb. 4 & 5, 2019
in Manhattan

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

A new professional development opportunity for women board of education members and district administrators will be held Feb. 4 and 5 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan, Kansas.

Keynote speaker will be Denise Mills, chief mindset officer for Leader Fuel Now. Mills, based in Kansas City, which facilitates executive women’s round tables, manages Lean in Circles and delivers customized leadership development programs for women across the U.S. and in other countries. Her most recent work is with the Committee of 200, a national network of women leaders in business in Fortune 100 companies.

Featured speakers for the Women’s Leadership Summit will include Sue Givens, El Dorado USD 490 superintendent, 2017 Kansas Superintendent of the Year and past president of the Kansas School Superintendents Association, and Shannon Kimball, Lawrence USD 497 board of education member and president-elect of KASB.

The final general session will be presented by Dr. Evelyn Hill, director of community engagement for Avenue of Life in Kansas City and a former board of education member of Kansas City USD 500. Dr. Hill’s most recent book, “The Unstoppable Women’s Guide to Emotional Well-Being,” was published this past fall.

The Women’s Leadership Summit is offered by KASB and USA-Kansas for the development and advancement of women in leadership roles in public education in Kansas. Several breakout sessions will include topics of interest to both women board members and administrators.

An evening networking opportunity and dinner will be held at the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan.

To register for the summit, see kasb.org/training.

Mercury 7 schools meet with KASB Board, Legislative Committee

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

KASB’s Board of Directors had a front row seat to presentations by three of the KSDE School Redesign Schools during its early November meeting in Topeka.

Staff from Twin Valley USD 240, Olathe USD 233 and Wellington USD 353 presented overviews of their redesign projects, sharing the processes they are using to involve all staff and their respective communities along with how the changes will affect student learning.

The November meeting at KASB also included the KASB Legislative Committee meeting to finalize its recommendations for 2019 Legislative Priorities.

The KASB Board of Directors also finalized its strategic priorities for the Association, began a review of board policies and received updates on the annual conference and NSBA-related news. The board heard a report from staff on Envise, the partnership between the Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska school board associations formed to develop management solutions such as PinPoint AMS, a new customer relations management system being developed and marketed to other state school board associations across the U.S.

The KASB Board of Directors will next meet Jan. 17, 2019 in Topeka.
Looking at the Data
Ted Carter, KASB Chief Data Officer

Distributions, deviations, ranges, oh my!

Recently, I shared an article on averages and how they can be misleading. This article will expand on that and talk about how the nature of the data being represented can have a huge impact on the averages being discussed.

Previously, we talked about the mean (the mathematical average calculated by adding up all the numbers and dividing by the count of numbers), the median (the middle number in a series of numbers), and the mode (the most commonly occurring number). The things we will talk about today could impact all three of these types of averages, but we are going to focus on the mean, since it is the most commonly reported average calculation.

**Distributions**

When you see an average, it is natural to assume that this “middle” number has numbers arranged around it in some consistent fashion. This arrangement of numbers is called a “distribution,” and thinking that this distribution is consistent means we are assuming it is a “normal distribution.”

This is what a normal distribution looks like:

![](image1)

This one is based on hypothetical student scores with a mean of 52.4.

The normal distribution is sometimes called the bell curve, because as you can see, the bars resemble a bell – tall in the middle, then tapering on the sides.

But what if the distribution of your scores is not normal? Take a look at this chart:

![](image2)

This one still has a mean of 52.4, but as you can see, the distribution of scores is much different, with a higher frequency of high scores. This one would be considered “negatively skewed” because the “tail” on the lower side is longer.

The one below, still with a mean of 52.4, is “positively skewed” because more scores fall in the lower half of the distribution:

![](image3)
So, when looking at reported averages, it is important to ask questions about how the numbers are distributed. The three charts above represent very different sets of student scores, but if you are only looking at the average (mean), you would never see these differences.

**Standard deviations**

Along with thinking about how the scores are distributed on a curve, it is also important to think about the average amount by which each score differs from the reported average (mean). This is called the standard deviation. The standard deviation tells you how much variation there is in your numbers.

In the examples provided above, each with a mean of 52.4, the normal distribution has a standard deviation of 10.9, meaning each score differed from the mean an average of 10.9 points. The negatively skewed distribution, on the other hand, has a standard deviation of 22.8, and the positively skewed distribution has a standard deviation of 21.9, meaning on average these two sets of numbers differed more from the mean than the scores in the normal distribution.

Higher standard deviations indicate the average (mean) reported is less representative of any one number in the sample.

**Ranges**

The third thing to keep in mind is the total range of scores. The range is the distance between the highest and lowest numbers in your sample. Again using our distributions, the range for the normal distribution is 29 to 73, 9 to 83 for the negatively skewed, and 21 to 95 for the positively skewed sets of numbers. In other words, our normal distribution represents a tighter range of scores than the other two.

This is not necessarily the case for all normal distributions, however. Consider the chart below left. This one is still normally distributed, and still has a mean of 52.4, but the range is 5 to 100, meaning the scores are much more spread out than they are in the first normal distribution we looked at. And because the range is longer, the standard deviation is also higher — it is 26.0 for this distribution compared to 10.9 for the other normal distribution.

Though I have presented each of these three notions separately, the distribution, standard deviation, and range all interact, and all three need to be considered when looking at reported averages.

**Charts and graphs versus tables**

One final note on the topic of charts and tables. It is easy to manipulate data sets to get a chart to look like you want it, like I have for this article. When being presented data in a chart or graph, it is always a good idea to see if you can also get to the data in tabular format. Charts and graphs can seem more intuitive, but they are usually created with a specific point in mind and can be misleading. Therefore, here is the data used for the four frequency charts.

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**Research & Analysis**

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LFT Class of 2018 completes program

By Carol Pitts, cpi tts@kasb.org

TOPEKA – Twenty-six education leaders from across Kansas recently completed a year-long leadership development class sponsored by the Kansas Association of School Boards.

KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2018 were chosen last January through a nomination and application process focusing on individual leadership in public education and participation in activities that promote effective governance and raise student achievement.

A combination of site visits, group reflection and collaboration projects were used during the four sessions. The goal is to give the participants time to explore a broad spectrum of issues and concerns related to public education and student achievement.

The class visited McPherson USD 418 and Twin Valley USD 240 in March, Hugoton USD 210 and Liberal USD 480 in May and Wichita USD 259 and Wellington USD 353 in September.

Many of the districts visited are part of the Kansas Department of Education’s Mercury 7 school redesign initiative.

During its July 2019 session hosted by Manhattan-Ogden USD 383, the Leadership class observed a joint active violence training partnership between Manhattan-Ogden USD 383, the Riley County Police Department, Riley County Emergency Services, Kansas State University Police Department and other law enforcement partners.

The final session for this year’s class took place November 29-December 2 during the KASB Annual Conference in Overland Park.

The group met for a half-day to first reflect on the programs they observed through this school visits and presentation from the year and identify how the redesign programs in each district. The class then worked in groups to review data from their respective districts and frame messages for both internal and external stakeholders regarding the need for redesign and change.

Class members then joined KASB Annual Conference early bird sessions on Friday and the KASB Annual Conference sessions on Saturday and Sunday. Class members were recognized during the second general session on Saturday for their participation and completion of the program.

KASB Leadership for Tomorrow 2018 Graduates

Tonya Bell, Neodesha USD 461, Board of Education
Doug Berryman, Augusta USD 402, Board of Education
Quentin, Breese, Concordia USD 333, Superintendent
Dr. Julie Cannizzo, Goddard USD 265, Assistant Superintendent
Paige Crum, Haysville USD 261, Board of Education
Bill Day, Lyons USD 405, Superintendent
Dr. Scott Friesen, Inman USD 448, Superintendent
Susan Grey, Valley Falls USD 338, Principal - Pre-K through High School
Julie Hedrick, Wichita USD 259, Board of Education
Tony Helfrich, Pratt USD 382, Principal-Liberty Middle School
Jason Herman, Olathe USD 233, Principal - Olathe North High School
Kristina Lemman, Colby USD 315, Board of Education
Cathy Macfarlane, Paola USD 368, Board of Education
Bryce Matteson, Haven USD 312, Board of Education
Jim McMullen, Olathe USD 233, Executive Director General Administration
Brett Nelson, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383, Principal Marlatt Elementary School
Dr. Steve Noble, Seaman USD 345, Superintendent
Denise O’ DEA, Washington Co. USD 108, Superintendent
Dr. Leticia Porter, Bonner Springs-Edwardsville USD 204, Director of Elementary Education/HR
Shanna Rector, Salina USD 305, Executive Director Administrative/Student Services
Ron Rosales, Wichita USD 259, Board of Education
Jamie Rumford, Scott Co USD 466, Superintendent
Joan Simonneau, Burrton USD 369, Superintendent
Angie Stallbaumer, KASB Lead Attorney/Policy Specialist
Clark Wedel, Haven USD 312, Superintendent
Rachele Zade, De Soto USD 232, Board of Education
The Kansas Association of School Boards is accepting nominations for the Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2019. Any past graduate of the program can nominate colleagues. Individuals can self-nominate and current KASB members can also submit a nomination.

Leadership for Tomorrow is open to KASB member districts’ school board member or school administrator.

The program is highly interactive and participation is limited. Building-level leaders are encouraged to apply. Board members and district-level administration will be given first priority.

KASB Leadership for Tomorrow includes time to explore change theories and strategies, gain training in leadership skills and expand understanding of education key issues for effective governance and raising student achievement. Visits to schools, classroom observations and presentations provide a foundation for class discussions.

Deadline for nominations is Jan. 18, 2019. Once nominated an application and further instructions will be sent to the nominee, and all applications to participate will be due Feb. 1, 2019. Participants will be notified by Feb. 6, 2019.
Evaluate public relations activities

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

During the past 10 months we have talked about public relations activities practiced at the central office level. While most PR activity occurs at the school building level, those utilized by the central office are critically important from the standpoint of developing understandings that engender advocacy.

About every three years PR activities should be evaluated. Something similar to a focus group is an effective low-cost evaluation method, and it doesn’t require much time.

Barry Flinchbaugh, long-time professor of agricultural economics at KSU, believed community power structure could be charted on a pyramid where the very few really important community decision makers are clustered at the peak of the pyramid. These few individuals, termed “kings” were followed by a small group of individuals that Flinchbaugh termed “kingmakers.” The kingmakers were followed by a little larger group termed “involved” community leaders. Next were “interested” citizens, and at the base of the pyramid were people he termed as “uninterested” in community matters.

Given that workable model, the school superintendent and Board should identify about a half-dozen community members known to be kingmakers and involved leaders. These people are then invited to join the superintendent and a couple Board members to spend an hour reviewing central office PR activities aimed at achieving public understanding of the school district and hopefully help interested people become active education advocates. Your staff PR person should be included.

After choosing and inviting the conferees, send them copies and explanations of each activity to be evaluated. Include the meeting date and time, a list of invitees, an agenda, and explanation of what you want the evaluators to do. A late morning meeting should conclude with lunch catered by the school cooks.

About every three years PR activities should be evaluated. Something similar to a focus group is an effective low-cost evaluation method, and it doesn’t require much time.

Of course you could meet and lunch downtown, but its good PR to meet on school turf and eat school lunch. Who knows, school lunch for your conferees may be their first since graduation!

Simple meeting agenda

Here’s a proven outline that can be easily modified to suit your unique needs:

- Meet in the Board or conference room
- Have coffee, tea, and water available
- Introduce the conferees
- State briefly why you have convened the group
- Introduce the first activity in the evaluation packet along with your rationale for using the particular activity
- Listen to what your conferees have to say about its effectiveness as a central office PR activity, how it could be modified and improved, or whether it should be discarded as ineffective
- Continue to review each activity unitized by the central office

Incidentally, this evaluation model works well at the school building level except evaluators need not be the visible leaders and kingmakers in the community. Rather, the school principal and PR staff person could choose a half-dozen or so well-regarded parent leaders representing the school site council, the PTO, and the athletic boosters club.

Remember once again, we are trying to develop public understanding aimed at helping community leaders become visible advocates for education.

Eleventh 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.
Wyandotte High School educator named 2019 Kansas Teacher of the Year

Whitney Morgan, an English language arts and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher at Wyandotte High School, Kansas City, Kansas, Unified School District 500, was named the 2019 Kansas Teacher of the Year on Saturday, Nov. 17, during a special ceremony in Wichita.

Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson made the announcement at a gathering of 400 people during the Kansas Teacher of the Year Banquet at the Marriott Hotel, in Wichita.

“It is my honor to present the 2019 Kansas Teacher of the Year designation to Whitney,” Watson said. “She is truly a remarkable teacher and very deserving of this honor. Whitney is a great example of the quality teachers we have in Kansas. I want to wish Whitney and the members of the 2019 Kansas Teacher of the Year team success as they represent Kansas education in the coming year.”

Morgan was named the 2019 Kansas Teacher of the Year from a field of eight finalists. Throughout the coming year, all of the finalists will work as a team to advocate for education and teaching.

Selected from a pool of more than 100 nominations, the other 2019 finalists are:

- Signe A. Cook, a fifth-grade teacher at Park Elementary School (Great Bend USD 428)
- Jennifer S. Brown, a first-grade teacher at Sheridan Elementary School (Geary County USD 475)
- Nicole L. Corn, a kindergarten teacher at Sunset Hill Elementary School (Lawrence USD 497)
- Sharon L. Kuchinski, a social studies teacher at Leavenworth Senior High School (Leavenworth USD 453)
- Megan Clark, an art teacher at Clear Creek Elementary School (De Soto USD 232)
- Lan T. Huynh, a third-grade teacher at Christa McAuliffe Academy (Wichita USD 259);
- Tim “T.J.” Warsnak, a social studies teacher at Halstead High School (Halstead-Bentley USD 440)

Morgan began her career as an English and ESOL teacher at Wyandotte High School in 2013. She received her bachelor’s degree in secondary education with a minor in nonprofit leadership in 2012 from Kansas State University. She currently is working on obtaining her master’s degree in English from the Middlebury Bread Loaf School of English in Middlebury, Vermont.

Kurt Auleta, senior vice president of distribution and sales operations for Security Benefit Corp., presented Morgan with a $4,000 cash award.

In addition, Morgan will receive the Kansas Teacher of the Year Lifelong Learning Scholarship to attend participating universities free of charge as long as she continues teaching in Kansas; and The Hubbard Foundation Kansas Teacher of the Year Ambassadorship. The ambassadorship provides funds for travel and other necessary expenses incurred by the Kansas Teacher of the Year. Morgan is now a candidate for National Teacher of the Year.
NSBA advice for handling public school observances of religious holidays

The holiday season brings more than peace and goodwill in the public schools. It also delivers questions about the legality of certain religious observances or practices and the inclusion of religious materials at school and school-sponsored events.

The following questions and answers are intended to guide districts in confronting the most common issues concerning this tricky area of the law. Any more specific issues can be directed to KASB’s legal staff.

Q. Is religion in any form permitted in public schools?
A. The Supreme Court has ruled that public schools may not sponsor religious practices (Engel v. Vitale, 1962; Abington v. Schempp, 1963) but may teach about religion. While having made no definitive ruling on religious holidays in the schools, the Supreme Court let stand a lower federal court decision stating that the recognition of holidays may be constitutional if the purpose is to provide secular instruction about religious traditions rather than to promote the particular religion involved (Florey v. Sioux Falls School District, 8th Cir., 1980).

Q. Do religious holidays belong in the curriculum?
A. The study of religious holidays may be included in elementary and secondary curricula as opportunities for teaching about religions. Such study serves the academic goals of educating students about history and culture, as well as the traditions of particular religions within a pluralistic society.

Q. When should teaching about religious holidays take place?
A. On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise for discussion of religious holidays while studying different cultures and communities. In the secondary curriculum, students of world history or literature have opportunities to consider the holy days of religious traditions. Teachers find it helpful when they are provided with an inclusive calendar noting major religious and secular holidays with brief descriptions of their significance.

Q. How should religious holidays be treated in the classroom?
A. Teachers must be alert to the distinction between teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, and celebrating religious holidays, which is not. Recognition of and information about holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories and generally agreed-upon meanings. If the approach is objective and sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion, this study can foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in belief. Teachers should avoid asking students to explain their beliefs and customs. An offer to do so should be treated with courtesy and accepted or rejected depending upon the educational relevancy. Teachers may not use the study of religious holidays as an opportunity to proselytize or to inject personal religious beliefs into discussions. Teachers can avoid this by teaching through attribution, i.e., by reporting that “some Buddhists believe...”

Q. May religious symbols be used in public school classes?
A. The use of religious symbols, provided they are used only as examples of cultural and religious heritage, is permissible as a teaching aid or resource. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic program. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not encourage or discourage such creations.

Q. May religious music be used in public schools?
A. Sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday. The use of art, drama or literature with religious themes also is permissible if it serves a sound educational goal in the curriculum but not if used as a vehicle for promoting religious belief.

Q. What about Christmas?
A. Decisions about what to do in December should begin with the understanding that public schools may not sponsor religious devotions or celebrations; study about religious worship or practice.
Q. Does this mean that all seasonal activities must be banned from the schools?

A. Probably not, and in any event such an effort would be unrealistic. The resolution would seem to lie in devising holiday programs that serve an educational purpose for all students—programs that make no students feel excluded or identified with a religion not their own. Holiday concerts in December may appropriately include music related to Christmas and Hanukkah, but religious music should not dominate. Any dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of the holidays. Nativity pageants or plays portraying the Hanukkah miracle are not appropriate in the public school setting. In short, while recognizing the holiday season, none of the school activities in December should have the purpose or effect of promoting or inhibiting religion.

Q. What about religious objections to some holidays?

A. Students from certain religious traditions may ask to be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays. Some holidays considered by many people to be secular (for example, Halloween and Valentine’s Day) are viewed by others as having religious overtones. Excusal requests may be especially common in the elementary grades, where holidays are often marked by parties and similar non-academic activities. Such requests are routinely granted. In addition, some parents and students may make requests for excuses from discussions of certain holidays even when treated from an academic perspective. If focused on a limited, specific discussion, such requests may be granted in order to strike a balance between the student’s religious freedom and the school’s interest in providing a well-rounded education. Administrators and teachers should understand that a policy or practice of excusing students from a specific activity or discussion cannot be used as a rationale for school sponsorship of religious celebrations or worship for the remaining students.

Q. May students be absent for religious holidays?

A. Sensitive school policy on absences will take account of the religious needs and requirements of students. Students should be allowed a reasonable number of excused absences, without penalties, to observe religious holidays within their traditions. Students may be asked to complete makeup assignments or examinations in conjunction with such absences.

Q. What steps should school districts take?

A. In a pluralistic society, public schools are places for persons of all faiths or none. Schools may neither promote nor denigrate any religion. In order to respect religious liberty and advance education, we recommend that each school district take the following steps:

• Develop policies about the treatment of religious holidays in the curricula and inform parents of those policies.

• Offer pre-service and in-service workshops to assist teachers and administrators in understanding the appropriate place of religious holidays in the schools.

• Become familiar with the nature and needs of religious groups in the school community.

• Provide resources for teaching about religions and religious holidays in ways that are constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.

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Screening movies at school

The holiday season brings questions about showing movies to the student body as a reward.

In the past, we have suggested the following handbook language: “Videos and or movies shall be reviewed for their appropriateness for the grade level at which they will be used. Videos may be shown if all copyright guidelines have been followed and if they are specifically related to the curriculum (See ECH). Showing movies for the purpose of entertainment is prohibited without prior permission from the principal.”

The question of taking away from instructional time for entertainment purposes is a local issue; obtaining the proper license to show a movie to a large group is another. Boards and administrators who ignore copyright law or allow the teachers to do so may be putting the district at risk. Rights can be obtained from some companies and through library purchase of a movie with district funds. If requested, KASB can provide additional policy guidance.
KASB joins state school board associations from around the U.S. in celebrating School Board Recognition Month in January 2019.

KASB has created a website that includes a logo and other resources to get you started, including a customizable certificate of appreciation, a sample media release and tips to get others involved.

Find all the resources at www.kasb.org/thankBOE. And be sure to follow #thankBOE during January!

Resources available for 2019 School Board Recognition Month

Additional workshops and training opportunities may be added. Watch KASB News Briefs or see kasb.org/training for additional information.