Vision for Equity in Public Education

“We affirm in our actions that each student can, will and shall learn.”

- National School Boards Association

Kansas education leaders attend NSBA Equity Symposium
See page 14
KASB selects new Leadership for Tomorrow class

Twenty-seven public education leaders from across Kansas have been selected to participate in the KASB Leadership for Tomorrow Class of 2019. The class includes board members, administrators and a KASB staff attorney.

Participants are nominated to apply and are chosen through an application process that focuses on individual leadership in Kansas public education and participation in activities that promote effective governance and raise student achievement.

“This year’s leadership class is a great mix of board members, district and building-level administrators from all across the state, large and small districts, suburban and rural,” said Dr. John Heim, KASB executive director. “They are all leaders in their home districts and communities. This program provides opportunities to learn from each other and visit other districts to gain ideas they can use in their own districts.”

Leadership for Tomorrow gives board members, superintendents and administrators time to explore change theories and strategies, participate in leadership skill training and expand understanding of education key issues. Through five two-day sessions, the class will visit local schools, hear classroom presentations and participate in class discussions of issues and challenges facing Kansas education.

2019 LFT class list

- Dr. Kellen Adams, El Dorado USD 490 Assistant Superintendent
- Dane Baxa, Goddard USD 265 Director of Community Relations
- Bill Biermann, Goodland USD 352 Superintendent
- Steve Blankenship, Pratt USD 382 High School Principal
- Dorsey Burgess, South Haven USD 509 Superintendent
- Jurdene Coleman, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 Director of Education
- Troy Damman, Erie Galesburg USD 101 Superintendent
- Julie Dandreo, Ottawa USD 290 Board of Education
- Samrie Devin, Lawrence USD 497 Director of Human Resources
- Miranda Dinkel, Fredonia USD 484 Board of Education
- Raquel Greer, Mulvane USD 263 Assistant Superintendent
- Keith Griffin, Seaman USD 345 Board of Education
- Max Heinrichs, Durham-Hillsboro-Lehigh USD 410 Superintendent
- Amy Hoover, Washington County USD 108 Elementary School Principal
- Troy Keiswetter, Concordia USD 333 High School Principal
- Jill Lachenmayer, Andover USD 385 Assistant Superintendent
- Jannette Luthi, Madison-Virgil USD 386 Board of Education
- Dr. Stephanie McNemar, Colby USD 315 High School Principal
- Dr. Micky Painter, Pittsburg USD 250 Board of Education
- Dan Patterson, Lakin USD 215 Board of Education
- Dr. Mark Schmidt, Blue Valley USD 229 Assistant Superintendent
- Luke Sobba, KASB Staff Attorney
- Carrie Sowers, Atchison USD 409 Board of Education
- Tracy Springer, Jayhawk USD 346 Board of Education
- Roger Stumpf, Southeast of Saline USD 306 Superintendent
- Tammy Thomasson, Paola USD 368 Assistant Superintendent
- Matt Ward, Augusta USD 402 Superintendent

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Celebrate Public Schools

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Guidelines for Authors

KASB welcomes any articles on education. The article should be as brief as possible and written in a direct manner. Author name, title, address, phone and email should be included. Articles must be submitted electronically and will be edited to conform to KASB style. KASB reserves the right to refuse publication of any article. Email Scott Rothschild at srothschild@kasb.org for more information or to submit an article.
LEADERSHIP VOICES
Carol Pitts, KASB Assistant Executive Director for Marketing and Public Relations

Speak UP! Tell your story

A familiar buzz word these days – well, actually a buzz phrase – is ‘tell your story.’

But because we don’t know where or how to start, it is easy to just move on to the next thing on our crowded ‘to do’ list and wait for someone call us and ask a specific question.

If there was ever a time to speak up, it’s now! News media, politicos, bloggers and tweeters, to name a few, are busy speaking on your behalf. There are 286 school districts in Kansas. That means there are 286 sides to the school funding story. Unless everyone contributes, the story that emerges from all this chatter will be incomplete.

You have a huge advantage. You each have insider knowledge. You are the expert when it comes to how any change impacts your children, your classroom, your students, your school district or your community. Your community hears news reports and reads social media posts, but your perspective is critical in helping everyone gain perspective and form opinions.

So, how best to speak up? Here are three simple steps.

1. Start with WHO: You are the interpreter in the foreign land that is school finance in Kansas. Translate the dollars into people and programs that support students and student success.

   You don’t have to answer every question. The important thing is to give your community a sense of what it all means for the children in your classrooms.

2. Then focus for a little while on the WHAT: Provide just enough of the facts and numbers to give context to your story, but keep it simple.

   The big numbers are the ‘news hook’ to grab people’s attention – and it seems to be what Topeka is talking about so you need to address it - but those same numbers can quickly cause someone to tune out and miss your true message.

3. End with the WHY: Focus on answering the question ‘what’s in it for the student – the community – our state?’ and ‘Why does a strong public education system matter?’

   (Be sure to narrow your focus to specific stories and people – try to leave the philosophizing to the philosophers!)

   The final step is simple: Just share what you know, even if you don’t know much at this time.

   Issue a media release or statement. Read it at your next board meeting, share it with your staff, community leaders and parents, then use every tool you have at your disposal to push the information out into the community and across the state. At a bare minimum, share your story through:

   - District print and/or email newsletter
   - New media editorial
   - Website
   - District or Superintendent’s Blog (This is great reason to start one!)
   - Twitter
   - Facebook
   - Linkedin
   - YouTube (Record a short message to your community and share it!)

   Remember, 286 sides to the story about the impact of the new school finance plan and policy changes. Make sure your part of the story is heard. 🎥

# FundingHelpsStudents
Must acknowledge ignorance about race

Several times over the years I have attempted to write a blog about race. Each time it ends up dumped in the trash -- a series of observations with no coherent point, espoused by a privileged old white guy. This year may be the same, but at least at this early point in the blog, my intention is to share it. I’m emboldened by some new observations and the desire to give some credit where credit is due.

Let’s start with a reunion of sorts. Three high school friends got together last fall, one of whom had drifted away on a course to a successful career in the movie business. By chance, he was part of the crew making a movie in Atlanta, where another friend lives. So, I flew down from Topeka for a reunion weekend and learned some things in the process.

As I am sworn to secrecy by a large, unsmilng, bearded and tattooed man, I can only say that I got to see Michael B. Jordan film a scene in a new movie based upon the book “Just Mercy.” As we had all read the book prior to the weekend, it led to some thoughtful discussions about America’s history of race “relations” by three old white guys. I am recommending you read the book.

Our movie-making friend is an art director, which means he designs the sets. Always a perfectionist, he is really good at his job. He spends months researching and preparing and we got to see photographic evidence of his work. Walls covered with pictures of some of the horrific effects of racism in the decades of our childhood. Pictures of smiling white men and women abusing African American neighbors. The worst wasn’t graphic at all, it was a picture of an Alabama sheriff who framed a black man for murder in the 80s yet remained in elected office until just last year.

A few years ago, I heard a professor say we are all racists to some degree. He mentioned the statement I have heard friends make “I don’t see color,” as evidence that we don’t understand race. I am discovering with old age comes memory loss. My theory is nostalgia and naïveté push the memory synapse out of the way without us noticing. That is what allows us to say things like, “When we were kids, we all hung out together and nobody cared about race.” Memory being replaced by nostalgia and naïveté.

Now I’m going to give some credit. Max and Mary Heim grew up in Bunker Hill, Kansas. A fine little community, but not an ethnic melting pot. My grandfather was an ignorant racist. My mother and father made damn sure we were not ignorant on the subject of race. In junior high, my mom gave me the “Autobiography of Malcom X” and insisted I read it. I was told I would do a book report in eighth grade social studies on “Black Like Me.” My dad, a school superintendent, took me to civil rights related hearings and legislative testimony. I was the only kid in high school who had T-shirts from historically black colleges, souvenirs from his efforts at recruiting teachers.

They were easily the most woke parents of the early 1970s and I wish I could say it inoculated me from any racist thoughts, or from acts of omission I wish I could do over. One of the benefits of awareness is it can call out nostalgia and naïveté. I’d recommend you read those books.

Another book has a more recent publication date -- “The Hate You Give.” Read it and if you can, check the author’s work. I did and it was telling. No spoilers here but ask an African American friend about having the talk with their young sons. No, not THAT talk. The talk about how to act when you are pulled over by the police. The one about playing with toy guns in public. The one that has life and death consequences. Ask your African American or Latino friends about whether anyone cared about race when they were growing up.

A final word in what I hope holds together as more than just a set of observations. One might argue that slavery was over 150 years ago, or that the civil rights battle was won 50 years ago, or that by electing Barack Obama we signaled the beginning of post-racial America. Before you take a position on any of these statements, I’d suggest you watch the documentary “13th.”

My conclusion is the professor may have been right, but at the very least, we are all carrying some ignorance around our country’s struggles with racial issues. Even the most woke of us. And for the sake of our children and our country, we all need to acknowledge our ignorance and get to work learning about and from one another.
KASB launches new PinPoint system

In late January, KASB officially launched our new Association Management System (AMS), called PinPoint. So, what the heck does that mean and why should you care?

I will tell you.

An AMS is a system an association such as KASB uses to manage all of the information related to its members. More specifically, our new AMS contains information on:

- Accounts (Organizations)
- Contacts (people)
- Contact Positions (the roles people play)
- Memberships (for groups, committees and services)
- Events, Event Sessions and Registrations
- Points and Awards
- Products, Price Lists, Orders, Invoices and Payments

What is special about PinPoint is the fact that this system was designed by KASB in collaboration with the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association (OSSBA). Our three associations formed a partnership called Envise to develop this software for our purposes and also to market and sell it to school board associations in other states.

PinPoint is designed specifically for state school board associations by state school board associations. We combined our expertise and experiences to create a system that would meet our organizations’ needs better than anything an outside company could provide.

Access for member districts

In mid-January KASB asked a few district clerks to help us beta test the system. Brenda Redeker, Southern Lyon County USD 252; Amy Anderson, Washington County USD 108; and Dana Witten, Emporia USD 253 answered the call and spent some time putting PinPoint AMS through its paces. We owe them a huge thank you! Then in late January, KASB gave over 600 district and other member staff account administrator rights and invited them to log in and start reviewing and cleaning up the data for their districts. Account administrators can also manage event registrations for anyone within their organizations. Districts had been able to do this with our previous system, but the new system provides more flexibility and more capabilities for accomplishing this.

In early February, KASB notified over 5,000 district and other member staff as well as board members who had been granted individual access to the system. Now anyone who is affiliated with one of our member organizations and who has a reason to interact with KASB can log in to the system and manage their own information, as well as register themselves for events.

So, the new system allows us to do what we did with our previous system, but better. It also will allow us to do things the old system did not.

For example, in order to access members’ only content on kasb.org, you currently need different passwords or login information depending on what area of the website you are accessing. PinPoint will allow us to consolidate all of this so you only have to keep track of one set of login credentials for all things KASB-related. This will eventually include all members’ only data resources, handbooks and all other content that you receive as a benefit of your KASB membership.

In the coming months, KASB will continue to add to the functionality and uses of the PinPoint system, so keep your eyes peeled for more information!

If you did not receive a notification and think you should have, or if you have other questions about the new system, please email pinpoint@kasb.org and let us know.
School finance, KPERS and general fund

By Mark Tallman, mtallman@kasb.org

We often hear concerns that K-12 education takes up half of the state general fund budget; that this level of funding is not sustainable and that K-12 aid – partially in response to school finance lawsuits – is crowding out funding for other programs. Actually, K-12 funding has been about 50 percent of the SGF since the 1990’s.

In fact, the main school finance programs – general or base state aid, special education aid, equalization aid for local option budgets and capital outlay – has actually been declining as a share of the state general fund. However, the school portion of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System has been growing. Here, the Legislature has some options, including the “reamortization” plan proposed by Governor Laura Kelly.

KASB compared state aid for major school finance programs – general state aid, special education state aid, LOB and capital outlay aid – with payments for school district employees covered by KPERS.

As the chart above shows, combined school finance aid and KPERS funding for school districts equaled just over 50 percent of SGF expenditures in 2003. That percentage remained close to 50 percent through 2011, when it rose to 51.5 percent, before dropping back slightly below 50 percent of SGF every year until last year, 2018, the first year the Legislature began increasing general school funding in response to the Gannon decision.

But within that total, since 2003 major school aid programs dropped from 47.8 percent in 2002 to 44.2 percent under the Governor’s recommendation for 2021. At the same time, KPERS aid to school districts increased from 2.7 to 7.5 percent, pushing school aid over 50 percent in 2020 and 2021, based on the Governor’s proposed budget for 2019 and 2020 and Kansas Legislature Research Department projections for 2021, but NOT including the Governor’s proposed KPERS reamortization.

Spending about 50 percent of the state general fund on K-12 education is not new. Kansas has spent approximately half of the SGF budget on K-12 education since it implemented the 1992 school finance act. Then, the state assumed a much larger role in K-12 funding in order to reduce and equalize property taxes.

Kansas continues to rank high compared to other states in the share of funding from state sources and rank low in terms of local revenues sources. At the same time,
Emphasis on early childhood programs

By Scott Rothschild,
srothschild@kasb.org

The Governor’s Council on Education has re-started with an additional emphasis on early childhood education and the state is embarking on a year of planning to improve the quality of early childhood services in Kansas.

At the initial meeting recently of the Education Council at KASB, Gov. Laura Kelly urged the group to collaborate and come up with solid recommendations.

“None of us can do this alone. We have got to work together,” Kelly said.

The council was put into place by Kelly through executive order. It follows a similar council that former Gov. Jeff Colyer had established last year.

While many of the members of Kelly’s council are the same as Colyer’s there are some differences in scope with Kelly’s putting an emphasis on early childhood education. But she said education issues are lifelong. She told the council to work on education issues from pre-natal to post-secondary and into the workforce.

Education Council

The new council, led by former Kansas City USD 500 superintendent Cynthia Lane and Dodge City USD 443 Superintendent Fred Dierksen, has been divided into four groups that will focus on specific issues.

In addition to universal early childhood, the groups will focus on work-based learning, workforce development systems and competitive edge, which will focus on post-secondary programs tied to the state economy.

Meanwhile, Kansas education officials have approved spending about $4.5 million for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five, which was provided by the federal government and authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Community engagement sessions with local school districts, early childhood providers, business leaders and others will be held.

Amanda Peterson, director of early childhood at the Kansas State Department of Education, said the grant will allow Kansans to engage in the process of improving early childhood throughout the state.

Children’s Cabinet

In other early childhood news, Kelly announced the appointment of former state Rep. Melissa Rooker as the new executive director of the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Kim Moore, former president of the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, as chair of the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund.

Kelly said Rooker and Moore will lead efforts to expand early childhood programming.

While in the Legislature, Rooker, a Republican from Johnson County, advocated for increased school funding and early childhood education.

“I’m honored to lead this work and help implement the governor’s vision for improving the health and well-being of our children and families,” said Rooker. “Early childhood programs are critical to the development and success of Kansas children. I’m eager to build on our progress by bringing new ideas and energy to the discussion.”

Moore developed multiple-year
Cynthia Lane, former superintendent of Kansas City USD 500, Fred Dierksen, superintendent of Dodge City USD 443 and Gov. Laura Kelly recently kicked off the Governor’s Education Council initial meeting at KASB. Kelly appointed Lane and Dierksen as co-chairs.

grant making initiatives in diverse health fields including adverse childhood experiences, children’s emotional and social health, oral health and child care.

“I’ve seen first-hand the positive impact that high quality early intervention and support can have on children and families across the state of Kansas,” said Moore.

“Early childhood programs are critical to the development and success of Kansas children. I’m eager to build on our progress by bringing new ideas and energy to the discussion.”

- Melissa Rooker
Executive Director, Kansas Children’s Cabinet

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- Office of Civil Rights Parent Compaints
- Transgender Students
- School Safety & Security
- Student Records and Data Privacy
- Bullying & Sexual Harassment
- Social Media - Student & Staff Legal Issues
- School Law for Employees & Board Members
- Negotiations
- Supervision & Evaluation Basics
- Employee Leave & the Family Medical Leave Act
- Student Discipline
Try keeping up with the news stream!

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

The only thing more difficult than keeping up with education news is keeping up with how to keep up.

At KASB we constantly try to think of ways to better inform our members on what is going on under the dome of our Statehouse, across the state and nation.

Basically, we have arrived at a strategy that involves a daily email called KASB News Briefs, daily Facebook Live updates, real-time tweeting of meetings and other events, a weekly roundup of developments on KASB Live and our monthly publication, School Board Review.

I like to think our communications efforts are like a multigenerational family with grandparents (School Board Review), parents (emailed News Briefs) and children (social media). All of these family members are going in different directions throughout the day, but one place where everyone can be found at some point is our HOME page www.kasb.org.

Included in the KASB News Briefs are individual stories and blogs about education happenings and a daily education roundup. All this content is written, usually, by members of the KASB Advocacy Team. The News Briefs also include links to stories from media outlets from across the state and country that are relevant to Kansas education. And KASB is not only providing news stories in the News Briefs, but also information on upcoming KASB events, seminars and workshops.

This email is sent to school board members, administrators and policymakers every weekday, usually before noon. So, if you are taking a break for lunch and want to catch up on what is going on that day education-wise in Topeka, statewide and nationally, the KASB News Briefs are a good tool to use.

During this current Legislative Session, the KASB Advocacy Team also tries to find a quiet corner in the Statehouse around mid to late afternoon every day to do a quick Facebook Live on what has happened that day and what is coming up the next. These updates usually last about 3 to 5 minutes and can be viewed on the KASB Facebook page. In addition, we will record special Facebook Live videos during the day to cover any important developments, such as a hearing on school finance.

On Fridays, KASB conducts a live webinar in which staff members review the week’s events and discuss what is coming up the next week. These usually last about an
hour and we try to enlist special guests, such as state agency leaders or school leaders. The broadcasts are then archived and can be viewed on our YouTube channel or listened to as a podcast.

And for those folks still inclined to want to get their information from that strange substance called paper, KASB publishes the monthly School Board Review, which features columns by our president and executive director, stories on research, KASB events, issue updates, legal advice and much more. The SBR is usually 24 pages and is mailed to all our school board members and administrators as well as being available online. SBR articles also make it into our KASB News Briefs.

All these products we deliver constantly through Twitter and Facebook and on our website, www.kasb.org. We don’t expect our members to be constantly using these tools, but they are there if you want them.

We also are constantly assessing if there are better ways to communicate and would welcome any feedback in that area. What works best for you, News Briefs, School Board Review, social media, videos, something else? Should we try something else? Please send your thoughts to me at srothschild@kasb.org.
KASB and USA-Kansas first-ever Women’s Leadership Summit February 4-5 was a rousing success, participants said.

The Summit, which was held in Manhattan, was designed to inspire and energize female board of education members and school administrators for greater impact in their roles as Kansas education leaders.

USA-Kansas Past President and Augusta High School Principal Donna Zerr welcomed the attendees, who represented school districts from across Kansas. “Worry less about the glass slipper fitting and more about shattering the glass ceiling,” Zerr urged her colleagues.

Keynote speaker Denise Mills, Founder and Chief Mindset Officer of the Leader Fuel Center in Kansas City, kicked off the Summit by helping attendees take a closer look at their own beliefs about leadership, examine their unconscious biases about gender roles and uncover blind spots that hold them back. Mills urged attendees to consider how men and women have been socially conditioned to lead differently. She said women don’t need to change their leadership styles, but they do need to “flex” their styles to ensure success when working with male colleagues.

Following the keynote lunch, board members
and administrators chose breakout sessions on “My Leadership Journey” by Dodge City High School Principal and KASSP Principal of the Year Jacque Feist or “Recognizing Personal Bias” by Dr. Gillian Chapman, Superintendent of Teton County School District #1, Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Late-afternoon sessions included “Success by Intent: Achieving Bold Goals” with Mills or a panel discussion on “Mentoring Women for Leadership Roles” featuring Topeka USD 501 Board member and Mainframe Systems Programmer at Ensono Incorporated Janel Johnson; Pat Hudgins, Associate Director of Career and Employment Services, Kansas State University/former USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden Board member; Dr. Alicia Thompson, Superintendent, Wichita USD 259; Margaret Nightengale, President of the USD 214 Board of Education and Senior Vice President/Chief Lending Officer, Grant County Bank; and Leah Fliter, KASB Advocacy and Outreach Specialist/current USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden Board member.

Monday evening’s dinner conversation was facilitated by 2017 Kansas Superintendent of the Year Sue Givens of El Dorado USD 490. Givens is also a Past President of the Kansas School Superintendents’ Association.

During the dinner, Manhattan Mayor Pro-Tem Usha Reddi, a former USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden Teacher of the Year, welcomed the Summit attendees to Manhattan. KASB President-Elect Shannon Kimball of Lawrence USD 497 then introduced Kansas Governor Laura Kelly.

Kelly, who was elected to the office in November 2018 after running on a platform promising to be “the education governor Kansans deserve,” applauded attendees for their dedication to Kansas students and schools and urged them to be engaged as the state emerges from years of stagnant school funding and state budget cuts that harmed essential services.

“It was inspiring to be with this phenomenal group of women at the first annual @KASBTopeka Women’s Leadership Summit! I look forward to working together to rebuild our state, invest in our schools and expand opportunities for our children,” Kelly tweeted after the speech.

Kimball began the Tuesday program by recounting her journey from Kansas farm girl to young attorney to stay-at-home mom to school board member and local politician.

Liberal USD 480 Superintendent Renae Hickert gave a session on managing conflict and its aftermath and USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden Board Member Katrina Lewison, a retired U.S. Army Major, presented on succeeding in a male-dominated environment. Hickert and Thompson led a discussion group for school administrators while KASB President Elect Designee Lori Blake of USD 206 Southeast of Saline and Nightengale of USD 214 Ulysses oversaw a similar session for board members.

The summit concluded with lunch and closing remarks from Dr. Evelyn Hill, Director of Community Engagement for Avenue of Life in Kansas City and a former member of the Kansas City, Kansas USD 500 board of education, on “The Secret Power of Resilience.”
Equity must be embedded in schools

By Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

Kansas school board members joined 500 leaders from across the nation at the fourth annual NSBA Equity Symposium on January 26 in Washington, DC.

President-Elect Shannon Kimball (USD 497 Lawrence), was a first-time attendee. Past President/Legislative Committee Chair Dayna Miller (Basehor-Linwood USD 458), former President Rod Stewart (Washington County USD 108) and NSBA Western Region Vice President Frank Henderson (Seaman USD 345) have each attended three of the annual symposia.

“The face of our schools is changing,” NSBA CEO Tom Gentzel said in his opening remarks. “There’s much work to be done, but the one thing we can do is provide students a great public education.”

Keynoter Dr. Kandice Sumner of the Boston public school district reflected on how race, class and gender define students’ access to education and achievement.

“It’s given to you and it’s something we have no control over,” Sumner said and yet students of color continue to have limited access to higher-level courses, good teachers and appropriate funding. “Public education is not built for the current clientele it’s supposed to serve.”

“If you’re in this room it’s on you now” to have uncomfortable conversations that will lead to a more equitable future, she said.

The symposium addressed broad issues around educational equity, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); trauma-informed schools; the over-representation of students of color in special education; recognizing unconscious and implicit bias; supporting LGBTQ students; and how school boards can design a local path to equity.

Lunch keynoter and DonorsChoose CEO Charles Best discussed how crowdfunding can help address education funding inequities and closing keynoter Laura Murphy of the American Civil Liberties Union discussed the unintended consequences of technology in schools, student data privacy.
concerns and guarding against bias.

“All the sessions highlighted for me that equity work is essential, but it is also difficult to sustain and requires constant attention,” Kimball said. “There was also a common thread in several of the presentations—across topics, speakers shared the vital importance of making a connection with students.

“Relationship building plays a key role in addressing equity for students of color, just as it does in addressing achievement for all students,” she said. “Dr. Sumner referred to this as going back to the ‘good old days’ of engaging parents and teachers in kids’ lives. We are focusing on this in my district, so I appreciated hearing from multiple speakers at the symposium that we are on the right track with this emphasis.’

NSBA Chief Equity Officer Verjeana Jacobs closed out the symposium with a challenge to the gathered school board members. “Equity is the intentional dedication of resources,” she said. “How do we leave from this place and make sure we change the lives of children?”

“Each year we are fortunate to have presenters who can challenge us and show and tell us about best practices that are being utilized in districts throughout the country,” Henderson said.

“In 2017, the NSBA Board of Directors, which I serve on, created a definition for equity and set a standard that equity would be embedded in all we do in terms of policies, resolutions, conferences, publications, etc. This action has propelled districts, through their state associations, to be more mindful of their own practices and make a concerted effort to ensure equitable conditions for all students in their district. Attending the Equity Symposium has provided a continual awareness for me in my role as a local, state and national school board leader.”

Representing KASB were, from left: NSBA Western Region Vice President Frank Henderson (Seaman), Past President Dayna Miller (Basehor-Linwood); former President Rod Stewart (Washington County); Executive Director John Heim; and President-Elect Shannon Kimball (Lawrence).
New administration tries to reverse increases in neglect, abuse, foster care

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Systems charged with keeping Kansas children safe from neglect and abuse have essentially been neglected and abused at the state level, according to incoming state officials.

In hearings before various committees, officials are unpacking failures over the past several years that have led to what is being described as multiple crises in foster care, child welfare and mental health, especially among young Kansans.

Gov. Laura Kelly’s new administration says the problems have arisen because of imprudent policies and revenue shortfalls and they touch every community and school district in Kansas.

Laura Howard, the new secretary of the Kansas Department for Children and Families, had been away from the state child welfare agency for eight years during the Gov. Sam Brownback-Jeff Colyer administrations.

When she returned last month, Howard said to a legislative committee, “Systems that were antiquated when I left, are still in place.”

As Kansas tightened welfare and food assistance benefits, the number of children in foster care increased from an average of 5,237 per month in 2011 to 7,635 now. That’s a 46 percent increase.

In her State of the State address, Gov. Kelly, who had previously served as a state senator, said nothing made her angrier over the past few years than what she called the “callous disregard” some state officials demonstrated toward children and families. “Our foster care system is at a crisis point. It requires immediate and considerable attention,” she said.

Kelly appointed Howard to rebuild DCF, which Kelly said had been “decimated by ideology and mismanagement.”

Howard said that Kansas, like most states, saw an increase in foster care caseload associated with the recession. But, she added, “What is different in Kansas is we didn’t see a reversal of that a couple of years later.”

State Rep. Will Carpenter, R-El Dorado, who is chairman of the House Social Services Budget Committee said, “Our foster care
system is in shambles. There is plenty of blame to go around. From here forward we need to do a better job.”

Howard responded, saying “We can and will.” She said her goal is addressing the stability of the system, which she said has been overwhelmed.

Kansas decided to cut costs in other health care areas, leading to a decrease in the number of psychiatric residential treatment facilities, which are for children who face significant mental health problems and need long periods of treatment. So now there is a waiting list of about 150 kids for these services.

Meanwhile, Kansas suicide deaths have increased 45 percent from 1999 to 2016, which is faster than the national rate. In 2016, suicide was second leading cause of death for Kansans 15-24 years old and the third leading cause of death for the 5-14 age group.

Reports of child abuse in Kansas have also increased 45 percent since 2010, according to Dona Booe, president of Kansas Children’s Service League. “We’re not going to grow strong and progress if we don’t address this,” she said.

Budget, policy support from Governor

Coming into office in January, Kelly committed dollars and policies that advocates say are needed to reverse these trends.

She has proposed adding 55 child welfare positions and funding Family First Prevention Services that will also draw down federal grants for programs designed to strengthen vulnerable families and prevent children from entering the foster care system.

Her budget continues a school mental health pilot program that officials say has been a success and some legislators are talking about expanding. The administration is also reviewing the various diversions of welfare funds that the Brownback administration had put in place for other programs.

Kelly’s proposal to expand Medicaid, drawing down federal funds to provide health care to more poor Kansans, has been touted by advocates as a way to increase mental health services and preventative care.

Various proposals from an interim Child Welfare Task Force are also being considered by the Legislature. While school funding will gather most of the attention during the legislative session, many of these initiatives will also affect school districts and students for years to come.

“We’re not going to grow strong and progress if we don’t address this.”

- Dona Booe, President
Kansas Children’s Service League
Applications open for Apollo phase of Kansans Can School Redesign

The application window for the next phase of the Kansans Can School Redesign Project is now open.

Apollo is the fourth phase of the Kansans Can School Redesign, which was announced in 2017 in support of Kansas’ vision for education. The vision is Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

The application window will close April 5.

The first phase was Mercury 7. All Kansas school districts were invited to take part in the inaugural phase—only seven spots were available. To be considered for the project, districts had to designate one elementary school and one secondary school to be redesigned around five outcomes established by the Kansas State Board of Education that define a successful Kansas high school graduate and what Kansans said they want their schools to look like in the future. Those five outcomes are social-emotional growth, kindergarten readiness, individual plans of study, high school graduation and postsecondary success.

Each district also had to have support of their faculty, school board and the local Kansas National Education Association or other professional organization.

KSDE received 29 applications for the first phase. The seven districts, which included 14 schools, were announced in August 2017. Each district represented one of the Mercury 7 astronauts.

Gemini I and Gemini II were the next two phases of the project.

KSDE gave the remaining Mercury 7 applicants an opportunity to take part in Gemini I. Twenty-one districts accepted the challenge.

Mercury 7 districts and a few Gemini I districts launched their redesign plans in the fall of the 2018-2019 school year. The remaining Gemini I participants will launch no later than the spring of 2020.

In February 2018, KSDE announced the third phase—Gemini II: The Space Walk Begins. Nineteen school districts were announced as participants for Gemini II in April 2018. With that announcement, Kansas has 47 districts and 110 schools taking part in school redesign.

The next phase, Apollo, invites districts to designate one or more elementary and/or secondary school to be designed around the five outcomes established by the Kansas State Board of Education, the five elements identified as defining a successful Kansas high school graduate and what Kansans said they want their schools to look like in the future.

All schools selected will serve as demonstration sites for other Kansas districts. The Apollo districts must be able to launch a new school design in the 2020-2021 school year.

The selected districts will be announced at the April State Board of Education meeting April 16-17 in Topeka.

It is the goal of the State Board of Education and KSDE, to have all 286 Kansas school districts redesigned by 2026.
Apollo districts must meet expectations

To be considered for the Kansans Can School Redesign Project, districts must:

- Be able and willing to completely redesign one elementary and/or one secondary school around the vision, outcomes and definition of a successful high school graduate.
- Each district and school must provide evidence and have approval by their school board with a vote; faculty with a vote of 80 percent in each building being redesigned; and support from the local Kansas National Education Association (KNEA) or other professional organization.
- Be able and willing to launch a new school design in the 2020-2021 school year.
- Be willing to serve as a demonstration school/district for others in Kansas to study, learn and visit.

For planning purposes, if your school/district is selected to be part of the Apollo mission, you can expect the following during the Plan Year:

1. Weekly staff member time devoted to working on redesign. This includes both the biweekly, all-day regional workshops the school redesign team attends, as well as work done by the rest of the staff during the weeks between the workshops.
2. Costs for substitutes and transportation for staff attending the biweekly regional workshops and also for staff to visit other Redesign demonstration schools in Kansas.

For more information about the Apollo project, visit https://www.ksde.org.

Thinking about becoming an Apollo district?

Here are a few questions to help gauge your readiness.

1. How knowledgeable are your administrators, board, teachers and community with the Board Vision?
2. Do stakeholders agree that a collaborative culture already exists?
3. Are school administrators willing to empower teachers and to share ownership in this redesign process?
4. Is the district willing to look at the reallocation of resources in support of redesign?
5. Are you willing to allow students to have voice and choice in the redesign model?
Primary elections for board positions

2019 is a school board election year.

In some cases a primary may be necessary to reduce the number of candidates for a particular seat or, in the case of a district with all at-large membership seats on the board.

K.S.A. 25-2021 (a) requires the county election officer in school districts with a member district method of election to hold a primary if more than three qualified candidates run for the same member position. If three or fewer are running for the seat, no primary is necessary. In the event a primary is held, the number of candidates on the ballot in the general election will be reduced to two.

In school districts that use the at large method of election, K.S.A. 25-2021(b) requires a primary if there are more than three times the number of candidates as there are board members to be elected.

The primary election will reduce the number of candidates to two times the number board members to be elected. For example, if a board had three open seats, no primary would be necessary unless ten or more candidates filed to run for the seats. In that case, the primary would reduce the number of names on the general election ballot to six.

The deadline to file for election is June 1 at noon.

What you need to know about school buildings used as polling places

While we are discussing elections, districts should be aware the state law requires school buildings to be available for polling places if the county election officer requests to use them for that purpose.

Specifically, K.S.A. 25-2703a requires all unified school districts to make suitable school buildings available, provided that the election officer for the county in which any portion of the school district is located gives notice on or before January 1 of the election year that the building will be needed for any primary or general election. Notice is to be provided to the district superintendent.

Though the rule sounds absolute, the statute’s use of the word “suitable” allows for some discretion in limited circumstances. For example, if the building the election officer is requesting to use will be under construction on the date of the election, or will not be accessible due to traffic work or lack of available parking, the election officer may well conclude that the building is not suitable for that year’s elections. If any such encumbrance exists, the district should contact the election officer to describe the deficiency and to seek agreement to utilize an alternate polling location.
Clearing up misunderstandings about concealed carry in school buildings

Since the legislature and former Governor Brownback passed a law broadening citizens’ rights to carry weapons in public places, some patrons have reported confusion with the gun rules as they apply to public school buildings and other facilities. Possession of a firearm in a school building or on grounds that include instructional buildings remains illegal.

K.S.A. 21-6301 lists various activities that constitute “criminal use of a weapon.” Subsection (a)(11) of that statute says that criminal use of a weapon is knowingly:

- possessing any firearm by any person, other than a law enforcement officer, in or on any school property or grounds upon which is located a building or structure used by a unified school district or an accredited nonpublic school for student instruction or attendance or extracurricular activities of pupils enrolled in kindergarten or any of the grades one through 12 or at any regularly scheduled school sponsored activity or event whether the person knows or has reason to know that such person was in or on any such property or grounds.

Subsection 12 of the same statute says it is criminal use of a weapon if:

- refusing to surrender or immediately remove from school property or grounds or at any regularly scheduled school sponsored activity or event any firearm in the possession of any person, other than a law enforcement officer, when so requested or directed by any duly authorized school employee or any law enforcement officer;

The confusion likely arises because Kansas law states that the lawful carrying of a concealed handgun shall not be prohibited in publicly accessible areas of any state or municipal building unless that building also has adequate security measures, including armed personnel and electronic equipment such as metal detectors at all public entrances to detect and restrict the carrying of weapons inside the building. K.S.A. 75-7c20. But the same statute also says: “Nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize the carrying or possession of a handgun where prohibited by federal law.”

The federal Gun Free School Zones Act still prohibits firearms, with very limited exceptions, within 1,000 feet of a school building, but that law does not apply to individuals licensed to carry a handgun. As described above, state law does make it illegal—even for licensed carriers—to carry a gun on any school property or grounds that includes a school building that is used for student instruction. The district must also post signs advising the guns are not permitted in the building at all public entrances.

If you have questions about this issue, please contact one of the attorneys at KASB.
The Oath of Office:
Missing the forest because of the trees

It is easy to get caught up in all the things a local board of education member must do. There are various rules with intricate nuances that must be followed to remain in compliance with the law. In the pressure to focus on the micro-level requirements, board members can often lose sight of the macro-level requirements.

In a sense, the board can miss seeing the forest because of the individual trees. One very important and frequently overlooked forest is the requirement to file the board members’ oaths.

K.S.A. 25-2023 requires that each board member file an oath of office with the county election office. Many times, board members will take the oath at a meeting, but neglect to file it properly. To combat this, K.S.A. 25-2024 outlines a time requirement for filing the oath. Thirty (30) days after a certificate of election has been issued, the county election officer shall send a letter to any delinquent board members who have not filed their oath. If after sixty (60) days of an issued certificate of election board members have still not filed their oath, the county election officer shall send a letter to the clerk of the local board of education prompting compliance with the statute.

Upon first reading, it may appear that after initial failure, the burden shifts to the county election office to ensure compliance. However, it is the continued obligation of the board to remain in compliance with the law. Both board members and clerks have a responsibility to make sure their oaths have been correctly taken, subscribed and filed in compliance with K.S.A. 25-2023, 25-2024 and 54-106.

Clerks, if you are unsure if your full board have oaths on file, contact the county elections office immediately. Should you find you are missing some oaths, please take steps to get them filed. As a reminder, these oaths are public records and subject to disclosure under the Kansas Open Records Act (K.S.A. 45-215 et seq.).

Please contact the KASB Legal Department if you have any questions concerning this topic or any others!
Collaboration matters for student success

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) just celebrated its third anniversary and a fair question to ask is: What has changed? After all, when Congress passed the legislation on a broad bipartisan vote, it sent a powerful message about the need for the federal role in education to be reduced in favor of leadership at the state and local levels.

Those of us who argued that the U.S. Department of Education was being unduly prescriptive, even stifling, worked hard to secure enactment of ESSA, which not only acknowledged the concerns but made a concerted effort to remedy them.

We can be thankful that Washington has placed an emphasis on the very local creativity and innovation that has driven public education to be such an important contributor to the success of our democracy for so many years. Some would argue that ESSA was simply restoring something that should not have been disturbed in the first place. In any event, the reality is we now clearly have the ball and an open field to carry it. With this newfound focus on local district leadership, we need to consider what those in the school system can do to have the greatest positive impact on student achievement.

Certainly, school boards play an especially vital role by setting the vision, adopting policies, allocating resources and providing accountability. They represent the community’s ownership of the public schools and are its representatives in ensuring that the education system is producing a strong return on the public’s investment. Superintendents, as the chief education and executive officers of the system, translate those goals into action by assembling and leading staffs that deliver needed results. The importance of boards and superintendents working closely together cannot be emphasized too strongly; they comprise the most important team in any district and their ability to work well together is tied directly to the effectiveness of the school system.

This fundamental notion is at the heart of a recent “Call to Action” by the National Labor-Management Partnership, consisting of NSBA, AASA (The School Superintendents Association), the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

The paper cites decades of research demonstrating the benefits of collaboration on student outcomes and enhancing school transformation. One example: Studies have shown that decisions shared by school leaders at all levels can mitigate teacher turnover and low student achievement, even in high-poverty schools. This must happen by design, not simply through the goodwill of the persons involved—that is, school boards need to establish an expectation of collaboration and support a culture that sustains it.

Working together for important shared goals really does matter. Knowing that is one thing; ensuring that it happens every day is at the heart of impactful school leadership.

- by Thomas J. Gentzel, NSBA Executive Director & CEO. This article first appeared in the February issue of ASBJ.
KASB Workshops & Meetings
Through June 2019

Registration details
www.kasb.org/training

• Job Description Workshops
  • Newton 03.13.19
  • Topeka 04.02.19:

• Human Resources Academy
  • Newton 03.14.19
  • Topeka 04.03.19

• School Law: 05.29-30.19 (In Conjunction with USA-Kansas Annual Conference Wichita)

• Clerks/Treasurers
  • Hays 06.25.19
  • Topeka 06.27.19

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

KASB Season Pass gives you unlimited registrations to workshops and seminars for your board and entire staff!

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