It takes a village

It’s a school board election year in Kansas

See our special pull-out section to guide citizens through a decision to become a candidate.

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Special report:
From inside an active shooter drill

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Kansas public schools: Marching forward

Educating 90 percent of Kansas students, public schools have helped Kansas and the United States reach the highest levels of educational attainment ever, measured by high school and college completion, for all major ethnic groups.

Because higher educational attainment prepares people for higher paying, more secure jobs, these improvements have raised incomes for hundreds of thousands of Kansans, increased yearly earnings by an estimated $7 billion dollars and reduced poverty by nearly 50,000 individuals, compared to 1990.

Public schools have prepared more students for success by changing to meet the needs of those who haven’t been as successful in the past: those in poverty, who have faced past discrimination, with disabilities, with mental and physical health issues, from families who have not experienced higher education.

- KASB Associate Executive Director for Advocacy Mark Tallman.

Kansas Board of Directors

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Celebrating Public Schools

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Long hours, hard work, but the pay ... Yes, the pay is zero. But serving on a school board can be the most satisfying experience of a lifetime. Find out if you have what it takes to serve your community in KASB’s special pull-out section on the ins and outs of being a school board member.

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.

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What do Kansans want for their children? They want them to have the skills needed to succeed and be happy. Achieving that balance in the public school system is at the heart of the Kansans Can mission and school redesign program.
Some of the most important things in schools cannot be measured

Greetings fellow board members. I trust that you are all enjoying a well-deserved Spring respite from what has been a bruising winter. Spring flowers are in bloom and Kansas school kids can again enjoy outside recess.

As I write to you today, our districts are in the midst of testing season. This is no doubt a time of great importance for schools and the institution of public education in general.

Though its prominence in our decision-making processes is often maligned in the public discourse, we all acknowledge that testing has its place. In order to account for our efforts, we are required to demonstrate students’ acquisition of concepts and skills according to the standards established by the Kansas State Department of Education. This is because teaching and learning is at the heart of the mission for every single one of our districts. Our students demonstrate what they’ve learned and the skills that they’ve acquired through district and state assessments. For these obvious and basic reasons, testing is important.

However, for our district employees on the ground with our students, there is much more to our institution’s success than just teaching and learning. This fact was reinforced for me this week, as I visited an elementary school not unlike any other school in Kansas: beautiful children streamed into their classrooms, backpacks in tote; teachers and staff there welcome students as they walked through the doors.

As I walked through the hall to the front office, I was struck by the sounds of a little girl crying. Now, as a father of an elementary school girl, I’ll admit that my senses are finely tuned to the cries of a little girl. But this crying was different; it was wrenching and guttural. As my paternal instincts pulled me over toward the situation, I discovered a beautiful third-grade girl – my daughter’s age – in tears. As I was making my way over to the student, I saw a teacher glide in to console her. Over a period of about 15 minutes, I watched as this teacher, the principal and the staff at the school consoled this student to the point where the crying had ceased, she had regained her composure, and she was then ready to return to the classroom to learn.

As it turns out, this student’s parents had recently split up and her family was in turmoil. Any semblance of stability in the life of this girl’s family had dissipated overnight. But for the care and dedication of the school staff, the family situation that this student brought to school with her would have inhibited her ability to learn.

So, while we’re all focused on student achievement and the state assessments this spring, we should all take a moment to thank our employees for their daily work that we can’t measure.

While this was one particular instance, it is not a phenomenon unique to this one school. All over Kansas, our students are grappling with many real-life issues. What this instance clearly illustrates to me, as a decision maker whose work focuses on the institution at the macro-level, is that today’s education professionals must focus on more than just teaching and their students’ learning. In order to empower students to acquire the proper concepts and skills, teachers must tend to students’ social and emotional needs. While we all know this intuitively, this example of the third-grader preparing for testing season at a Topeka elementary school, offers a real-life example.

So, while we’re all focused on student achievement and the state assessments this spring, we should all take a moment to thank our employees for their daily work that we can’t measure. As a board member and a father, I cannot overstate my gratitude to our educators for all of the work they do — that which is demonstrable through state assessment results, as well as that which isn’t. On that early March day in a Topeka school, at least as far as this beautiful third-grade girl is concerned, it was the most important work undertaken.
School leaders’ goals for Kansas students:

Happy, fulfilled, giving, prepared for employment

What do Kansans want for their children?

Commissioner of Education Randy Watson and Deputy Commissioner Brad Neuenswander told 600 educators at the Kansans Can and Do Symposium recently that the State Board of Education tried to sum it up as follows:

they want kids to be happy, have a sense of fulfillment, give back to others and have at least two educational credentials: a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree or certificate that allows them to earn a middle class living.

Those goals are embodied in the State Board's Kansans Can outcomes, which call on all school districts to raise the high school graduation rate, increase postsecondary success, improve kindergarten readiness, provide each student an individualized, career-focused plan of student, and address social and emotional needs.

Those goals reflect the input of over 2,000 Kansans in meetings around the state four years ago, when 70 percent of community members and 81 percent of business leaders said non-academic skills are the biggest needs of students, as well as the on-going responses when parents, educators, community members are polled.

The problems: suicide rates by youth are rising. Thirteen percent of seniors last year failed to complete a diploma. Less than half of Kansans are completing a credential beyond high school.

The reason, said the two leaders, is not a lack of effort, but that schools “are out of balance.” Schools are still structured around academic content with too little formal attention to the non-academic skills parents and employers says are important and leaving too many students unengaged or damaged by non-school factors.

“Look at models for ideas, not to copy,” advised Watson.

- Randy Watson
Commissioner of Education

“The system is begging us to do something different,” said Watson. “It’s not the students that have to change. It’s the adults.”

- Randy Watson
Commissioner of Education

According to the Commissioner, those four principles will eventually be merged in the still-new state accreditation system called KESA (Kansas Education Systems Accreditation). “At some point, redesign stops being redesign, because it is what everyone will be doing,” he said.

The two leaders cautioned that there is no single path to effective school design. “We (at the state education department) don’t have the answers,” said Neuenswander. “Our goal is to remove roadblocks and help lead you through a process that matches the goals of your community with your students’ needs.”

“Look at models for ideas, not to copy,” advised Watson.
9:37 a.m. a person walked into the front office of Washburn Rural Middle School. Suddenly shots ring out. The shooter had incapacitated the office staff and moved out into the commons area. A blond woman in a gray hoodie - she shouted out a name - looking for someone. She started shooting again; running through the hallways as smoke filled the air and the smell of gunpowder permeated our noses. In one hallway two students were shot, injured and screaming for help. In another, four. Down another hall two, one fatally. Shots continued to ring out.

A call went out to 911.

A Washburn Rural Police Department Officer responded from the high school. Less than 10 minutes later, he had found and eliminated the shooter.

Local law enforcement continue to arrive.

In a very short amount of time the outside parking lot was filled with police cars, fire trucks, ambulances and more! A command post area was designated and set-up started.

Law enforcement teams began to rush in the doors and down the hallways, past the screaming, crying victims who just wanted help, reaching out for the team’s legs as they pushed by. The sole purpose of the law enforcement teams was to ensure the shooter was no longer a threat and there were no other immediate threats in the building.

Once the scene was secure, many more law enforcement teams, with fire and EMT’s attached, were escorted into the building. They began to render aid to the wounded and remove them from the building to a designated triage area. Other teams of law enforcement started their classroom to classroom search and began to escort any students and staff they found to safety.
Active shooter drill tests response to events we hope will never happen

This was an exercise—a coordinated exercise by the Shawnee County Emergency Management (SNCOEM) Department that took place over spring break.

It was a coordinated effort between SNCOEM, the Auburn-Washburn USD 437 School District, Auburn-Washburn USD 437 Police Department, Shawnee County Sheriff’s Office, Kansas Highway Patrol, Topeka Police Department, Topeka Fire Department, Mission Township Fire Department, Topeka Airport Authority, American Medical Response, Shawnee Heights Fire Department, Shawnee County Health Department and Stormont Vail Health.

It was an exercise in planning almost a year. “It all began with a grant SNCOEM received from the Northeast Kansas Homeland Security Council for equipment, training and practice,” said Director of SNCOEM Dusty Nichols.

After the grant was received, Nichols reached out to USD 437 to see if they would participate. They received a quick yes.

The purpose of exercises such as this “is to test plans to make them better,” said Nichols. “It is evident 437 puts students first.”

Auburn Washburn USD 437 staff, parents and students were all given the opportunity to volunteer or observe the exercise. Other agencies were also invited to observe.

Staff were assigned classrooms in certain parts of the middle school. They each had a student or students in the classroom with them. Some students were actors in the active shooter scenario. They had simulated bullet wounds and blood, as well as rips and tears in their clothing.

Three of the staff I talked to said they heard the first shot ring out but could not tell where it was coming from. The sounds bounced and echoed around the hallways. They heard more shots and screaming. The number of shots heard varied from three to 15. One teacher was so far away he didn’t hear any of the shots or the screaming.

In one pod, a series of four interconnected classrooms, there was a student, Aiden, another student and a teacher. They ran after the first shot and escaped out the back door of the school.

A teacher, Amber, and her two students, hunkered down in place in the corner of the classroom out of the door’s sight-line. One of her students wanted to leave, but she kept them there because there wasn’t any way to know for sure what was going on and where it was happening.

Amber said, “after what seemed like 20 minutes and things quieted, we left the classroom, moving slowly, peaking around corners and went out the most direct outside door.”

The first “text alert” from the district went out to parents within eight minutes of the start of the incident. A second “text alert” was sent once the site was secure and contained reunification location information. The reunification location is a secure location where parents should go to pick up their kids.

If there is an incident at one school, all the other district schools go into secure campus mode. They were testing this system district-wide during the drill as well.

Two Auburn Washburn computer technicians were volunteer participants. Darin Dalrymple and Stacy Scott were staged in the library with one other staff person and three students.

Continued on page 8

Officers clear the hallway before allowing fire and rescue to look for injured people.
Active shooter training

Continued from page 7

Above: A Topeka police officer stands guard while Fire and EMT tend to an “injured” student. Left: As part of the exercise, anyone cleared from the building was escorted out, hands on head.

Scott said “We first heard gun shots ... and saw her [the shooter] come in and start shooting. We went into a small office and hid in there. When the last shot was far away...we went to the front entrance of the library and straight out the front entrance of the school. “

Scott said before everything began Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott McWilliams stopped by each staging location. Participants were able to ask questions about the meaning of certain things and what to do.

After the exercise was over, Dr. McWilliams and KCEM took staff/students around to see the areas where the actors playing injured students were staged and explained how the exercise worked.

A student, Thomas, was in the art room (B1) in the far corner of the school. He said they heard a gunshot followed by a scream, more shots, more screams...two screams in total. The teacher ushered them into the back closet. They spent the whole duration in the room’s closet – until evacuated by police.

Thomas said, “I felt it was very realistic – they probably did the best job they could have – especially with being escorted out of the scene with blood on the floor. We were told to put our hands on our heads and escorted out the front entrance. It felt very real.”

Thomas went on to say “When someone first came in and said ‘police department’ we all thought it might be the shooter(s). When someone came back we heard radios and thought it was actually the police.”

Rachel, who portrayed a victim, said “as a victim......being one of the first people the shooter shot at ... was scary – this is a real thing that actually happens and I knew that in my head to tell myself this is fake – but when you are in the moment – you tell yourself the wounds hurt to keep yourself in the moment.”

During the open forum after the exercise one student asked, “What is the thing you want students to do when this situation occurs?” Auburn Washburn USD 437 Director of Operations Rich Jones said “Follow directions of the adults in the room – do exactly what the teachers say. We have been doing training with the teachers this entire year. Your teacher will make the run, hide, fight decision. Your job is to help them once they’ve decided. Follow the directions of your teacher.”

In response to a question from an audience member about how an operation works, Rescue Task Force member Sergeant Kiley Rice of the Shawnee County
Sheriff’s Office said “I don’t know anything until the bad guy runs his play. I have to make sure no one else continues to be harmed and killed. That is the number one priority – nothing else – when first on scene – I HAVE to make that happen – I have been trained for this from baby cop 101.”

As someone in attendance and who was able to shadow the director of SNCOEM, it was an eye-opening experience. The planning and preparation that went into this was extraordinary and overwhelming. It was well thought out, well planned and well executed. The sheer number of law enforcement, fire and others on site was just incredible.

The volunteers and observers all did exactly what they were asked to do. The student actors were amazing. I wanted to stop taking photos and help them. It looked, sounded and smelled real. Several times I found myself against a wall watching the action unfolding around me and forgetting to keep snapping pictures.

All of the participants of this exercise took away a great deal of knowledge and helpful information to use going forward. Much of the process can be used whether it is an active shooter or recovery from a natural disaster.

It is something I know I and those there will never forget and hope to never have to do in real life. I have a new-found respect and appreciation for the training and work our law enforcement officers, first responders and school personnel do every day. Saying thank you doesn’t seem like nearly enough.

Andrea Hartzell represented KASB at the Active Shooter Drill at Washburn Rural Middle School. She shares her experience through this story and photos.
KASB board visits programs at Topeka 501

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

KASB’s Board of Directors recently were treated to a day of learning about improvements, hopes and dreams at Topeka USD 501.

During their quarterly meeting, board members were greeted by KASB President Patrick Woods, who is a member of the Topeka school board, and Topeka Superintendent Tiffany Anderson, who has led the district since July 2016 after having improved student achievement in various posts over a 24-year education career.

The day included a tour of the district’s new Topeka Center for Advanced Learning and Careers (T-CALC); a presentation on the Scott Dual Language Magnet School and then an augmented reality tour at the Kanza Education and Science Park.

At T-CALC, students are able to embark on numerous career pathways, including environmental sciences, teaching, architecture, baking and pastry, web and digital communication, engineering, medical, and emergency fire and management.

Led by Principal Tim Murrell and Assistant Principal Melissa Seacat, T-CALC provides business partnerships and internships to prepare students for college and careers.

At Scott Elementary, students are immersed in English and Spanish from pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade. The school has become so popular it has a waiting list.

All students are paired with a student of the opposite native language to assist in the acquisition of the target language. Principal Pilar Mejia led a presentation that featured several fifth-graders from Scott who showed board members their language skills, transitioning easily between English and Spanish.

“Such amazing students,” said KASB President-Elect Shannon Kimball. She said the presentations were a “great visit and learning opportunity.”

The Kanza Education and Science Park features an electric substation, built in partnership with Westar Energy (now Evergy) and other educational resources where students can learn more about science, technology, engineering and math.

Kevin Cole, who represents KASB Region 3 and is a member of the Labette County USD 506, said of the visit to Topeka, “Amazing programs, people doing amazing things. The Topeka community should be proud of the experience students receive.”

Top: KASB Board of Directors toured Topeka USD 501’s Topeka Center for Advanced Learning and Careers (T-CALC). Middle: The meeting included an augmented reality tour at the Kanza Education and Science Park. Bottom: Students from Topeka’s Scott Dual Language Magnet School demonstrated their abilities in Spanish and English.
The locally-elected school board is responsible for maintaining, developing and operating local schools. School boards establish a vision for the public education system in their community, are responsible for hiring and evaluating the superintendent of schools, establish a yearly budget and adopt policies, curriculum and handbooks - among many other responsibilities!

The qualifications for effective service as a board member are many, even though the actual legal requirements are few. School boards elections are nonpartisan. Terms of office for a school board are staggered so seats don’t become open all at once.

School board members must be registered voters in the school district and cannot be an employee of the board on which they are a member. If board members are elected from certain areas of the district rather than at-large, they must live in the area of the district from which they are seeking office.

School board elections are held the first Tuesday in November of each odd-numbered year. A primary election must be conducted if more than three people file for the same school board position. Newly elected board members take office the second Monday in January following the election and serve four year terms.

"One of the most satisfying things I get to experience every year is high school graduation. Few things in life are better than seeing the enthusiasm and the energy of the young minds that the district has developed and is now sending out into the world to make a difference."

Curt Herrman
Manhattan USD 383 Board of Education
KASB Board of Directors Region 4 Vice-President

2019 Election Cycle
Filing and Election Dates

Filing Deadline

- Monday, June 3, 2019

Primary election

- Tuesday, August 6, 2019

General election

- Tuesday, November 5, 2019

So You Want To Be A School Board Member
What does it take to be a... 

It takes vision!

Creating a clear vision with high expectations for teaching and learning involves making choices, not only about where the district is headed, but also about how it will get there. For this reason, establishing a vision may be the most difficult responsibility any school board faces.

This involves:
- Keeping students as the focus of the work of schools;
- Adopting a shared vision based on community beliefs to guide local education; and
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to the shared vision and mission by using them to guide decision-making and communicating them to others.

“...we have lofty goals with Kansans Can; we have to fully fund it now. I see a lot of push back and that is why we have to advocate for public education.”

Art Gutierrez
Emporia USD 253 Board of Education
KASB Board of Directors Region 2 Vice-President

It takes advocacy!

School boards serve as the leading advocate on behalf of students and their schools in the community. Both individually and collectively, school board members need to remain informed of issues at the local, state and national levels.

In a time when children come to school with more challenges than ever before, schools acknowledge they cannot meet all these needs alone. Instead, they collaborate with families, community organizations and other public and private agencies to benefit both the children and the community they serve.

The advocacy role is increasingly important for school board members. Informing citizens about the schools’ accomplishments, challenges and needs is an essential part of school board leadership. Through their actions, board members represent the community and help foster understanding and support for the schools.

Specific responsibilities for school boards include:
- Seeking others who can help expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of the whole child;
- Advocating for children and families and establishing strong relationships with parents and other mentors to help support students;
- Leading in celebrating the achievements of students and others in education; and
- Promoting school board service as a meaningful way to make long-term contributions to society.

These responsibilities mean school boards cannot work in isolation. They must bring together the entire community (parents, community groups and others concerned about education) in effective and responsible ways to initiate and sustain lasting school improvement.

“We need to be actively involved to provide a true and accurate picture of our public school system and be able to take a stand for all Kansas students, present and future.”

Frank Henderson, Jr.
Seaman USD 345 Board of Education
KASB Past President
NSBA Board of Directors Western Region Director

It takes teamwork!

To accomplish the mission and goals of the school district, it is important that board members work as a team and cooperate with other board members. Decision-making authority is vested in the board of education, not in individual members. A board member should:
- Have a broad background of experience and knowledge and a sincere desire to serve the community;
- Be visionary, able to understand the forces of societal change and plan for the future;
- Be tolerant and without prejudice, respecting diverse points of view;
- Understand education today is complex and simplistic approaches will not meet today’s challenges;
- Be willing to invest the time and energy required for meetings, phone calls, conversations, visits to schools, professional development seminars and workshops;
- Be willing to be part of a team, supporting group decisions;
- Listen for real consensus and not confuse a few vocal constituents with a majority feeling;
- Learn and grow as you become more aware of your responsibilities.

“It takes teamwork!”

Special Section - April 2019
So You Want To Be A School Board Member

It takes commitment!

- Commitment to serving the public with time and energy committed to meetings, phone calls, conversations, visits to schools and professional development seminars and workshops.
- Commitment to public education with a belief in the importance of public education and a commitment that every child is deserving of an outstanding education.

Boards of education guide the vision for the local school district, keeping student success as the primary focus of each decision. The decisions you make as a member of the board impact the future of the children in your community and the economic future of our state and nation.

The board must create an environment and organizational framework that encourages innovation and supports staff members in a process of continuous improvement of education.

It takes accountability!

The genius of America’s education system is that local boards are directly accountable to the communities they serve.

Board members share the responsibility with educators for the success of their students, but the board is ultimately accountable to the local community to set high academic standards, operate with transparency and integrity and hold the system accountable for student success.

Effective boards engage in continuous assessment of all conditions affecting education. These should include:

- Monitoring student achievement by receiving regular reports on student progress and needs.
- Evaluating progress toward the achievement of district long- and short-term goals and ensuring policies and allocation of resources effectively support the district vision;

- Using student achievement data and all other available information as a basis for making program corrections and modifications as needed;
- Keeping the public informed on the status of the district’s programs and students’ progress;
- Ensuring all functions of schools as institutions of teaching and learning fit together harmoniously;
- Providing for appropriate staff training and participating in board training opportunities;
- Evaluating both superintendent and board performance;
- Encouraging curricular and assessment innovation; and
- Fulfilling governance responsibilities as required by state and federal law.

Hiring the Superintendent of Schools and Setting Policy

The day-to-day operation of the district is the superintendent’s responsibility, and selecting and retaining the right superintendent of schools for the district is a critical board decision. Hiring the right superintendent can mean having a school system in which children learn, administrators and teachers working together and parents are satisfied and supportive.

Perhaps no single decision a board makes has more impact than the selection of the superintendent. Kansas law states the superintendent manages the district on a day to day basis, subject to the rules and regulations set by the board of education.

Boards of education adopt policies support the work of the school board by setting guidelines that transform vision into reality. Board policies ensure compliance with the most current case law, rules and regulations.

Once a policy is adopted by the board, the superintendent is responsible for implementing the policy.

The board and individual board members should refrain from becoming involved in the day-to-day operation of the schools.

“I’ve continued to try to help state and federal legislators understand our Kansas public education system. I believe public schools are so important to our way of life. We are educating children for their future. As a member of my local board of education, I strive to improve public education and take care of our students.”

Susan Walston
Haysville USD 261 Board of Education
KASB Board of Directors Region 6 Vice-President

Commitment to serving the public with time and energy committed to meetings, phone calls, conversations, visits to schools and professional development seminars and workshops.

Commitment to public education with a belief in the importance of public education and a commitment that every child is deserving of an outstanding education.

So You Want To Be A School Board Member
The Kansas Constitution makes public education a state responsibility while providing for the operation of public schools by local boards elected by citizens of the school district. Each board consists of seven members. The only exception is Fort Leavenworth USD 207. As a military base school system, the district serves only kindergarten through ninth grade students, and the governing board is composed of three residents of the base appointed by the commanding officer of Fort Leavenworth.

Close to 2,000 men and women guide Kansas public school systems, employing more than 70,000 Kansans and serving nearly 500,000 children. Board members receive no pay for their service, only the satisfaction that comes from providing an indispensable public service!

The mission of public schools is to educate each child to his/her fullest potential. The local board, an integral part of representative government, acts on behalf of the people of each community to translate that mission into reality.

Contact your local school district to learn more about what it takes to become a member of the board of education.

Other resources to explore include:
- Kansas Association of School Boards board election website: kasb.org/legalpolicy/boardelections/
- National SchoolBoard Association website: https://www.nsba.org/SERVICES/school-board-leadership-services/key-work

Brenda Jones
Kansas City USD 500 Board of Education
KASB Board of Directors Region 13 Vice-President

“I have 22,000 kids. They are all my babies. Making that connection with students means everything.”

When did your current term begin?

- **January 8, 2018**
  - **Elected Nov. 7, 2017**
  - **Current Term**
    - Term expires on the second Monday in January 2022 (January 10, 2022)
    - If seeking re-election, must file by noon on June 1, 2021
    - If a primary is necessary, it will be held on the first Tuesday in August 2021 (August 3, 2021)
    - The general election will be held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November 2021 (November 2, 2021)
    - If elected, board member will take office the second Monday of January 2022 (January 10, 2022) and serve until the second Monday of January 2026 (January 12, 2026)

- **July 1, 2015**
  - **Elected April 7, 2015**
  - **Current Term**
    - Term expires on the second Monday in January 2020 (January 13, 2020)
    - If seeking re-election, must file by noon on June 3, 2019
    - If a primary is necessary, it will be held on the first Tuesday in August 2019 (August 6, 2019)
    - The general election will be held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November of 2019 (November 5, 2019)
    - If elected, board member will take office the second Monday of January 2020 (January 13, 2020) and serve until the second Monday of January 2024 (January 8, 2024)
KASB board receives updates from staff

The KASB Board of Directors received numerous briefings during its quarterly meeting, which was held at the Topeka USD 501 Center for Advanced Learning and Careers on Sat. March 23.

KASB Executive Director John Heim said a task force within KASB is exploring possible changes to KASB’s annual convention. This will include research and a survey of members conducted by Patron Insight, Inc. and looking at how other state school board associations conduct their conventions.

KASB Assistant Executive Director Brian Jordan briefed the board on long-term planning; Associate Executive Director Mark Tallman provided a legislative update; Assistant Executive Director Randy Weseman and KASB Accountant Amanda Rollenhagen gave the board a budget overview; Assistant Executive Director Donna Whiteman presented a primer on the fiduciary responsibilities of board members and board member Frank Henderson Jr., who is the NSBA western representative and a member of the Seaman USD 345 board, provided insights into what was going on at NSBA.

KASB making several staffing changes

The KASB Board of Directors recently announced several staff changes that will take effect July 1.

Brian Jordan, who is currently head of Leadership Services, will become Deputy Executive Director. Doug Moeckel, the current Deputy Executive Director, will continue as a Leadership Services Field Specialist.

Two new staffers are joining KASB. They are Sue Givens, who is currently superintendent of El Dorado USD 490, and Britton Hart, who is the current principal of Emporia High School, Emporia USD 253.

Givens will take over as a Field Service Specialist for Leadership Services, replacing Craig Wilford, who is retiring. Hart will join as Director of Leadership Services and Partnerships.

KASB Executive Director John Heim said the changes will strengthen KASB as a leading voice for public education, serving members of governing boards for unified school districts, community colleges, area vocational-technical schools and cooperatives, interlocals and regional service centers.

Heim praised Moeckel, saying, “Doug has been instrumental in the success of KASB. He is ready to take a step back and hand off to Brian as we continue to serve our membership in their pursuit of student success.”

Heim said as Jordan changes position he will continue work overseeing Leadership Services. And Heim looked forward to the additions of Givens and Hart, who are well-known, award-winning educators. Heim also lauded the work of Wilford, especially his focus on cultural diversity.

In 2017, Givens was named Kansas Superintendent of the Year and Emporia State University Distinguished Alumni. In 2018, she received the KSSA Distinguished Service Award. In addition to El Dorado, Givens has served in the Pratt, Garden Plain, Stafford, Topeka and Burlington school districts.

Hart was named Principal of the Year at Emporia High School in 2016; Outstanding Administrator of the Year in 2018 by the North Central Music Educators Association and Track and Field Coach of the Year in 2005 while at Olathe North High School, Olathe USD 233.

Both educators have also held leadership positions in various education organizations.
What the heck is a Likert scale?

I am confident I know what a Likert scale is.

5 = Strongly Agree
4 = Agree
3 = Neutral
2 = Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree

Chances are you’ve encountered a question like the one above countless times over the years. This is what is called a Likert scale, named after its inventor Rensis Likert; an American psychologist who first used the scale in 1932. Since then, countless variations of this type of scale have been used on surveys and questionnaires around the world.

According to Wikipedia, a Likert scale is “a psychometric scale commonly involved in research that employs questionnaires… When responding to a Likert item, respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements. Thus, the range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given item.”

The five-point scale shown above is the most common form of a Likert scale, but there are others. Some surveys have four-point scales that leave out the “Neutral” option – these are referred to as “forced-choice” questions because they don’t give the respondent the option to remain neutral. Some surveys include more options, some less.

We know these scales are used widely, but are they used correctly?

The answer, unfortunately, is that it is very common for people using items like this to report results in a way that is not statistically appropriate.

Let’s say I included the question above on a survey, and I wanted to report out the results. I could present information on how frequently each option was chosen, like in the graph at the right.

Graphs like this one are called frequency distributions, or histograms.

Still using frequencies, I could also say that:

- 30% of respondents chose “Strongly Agree”
- 13% chose “Agree”
- 23% chose “Neutral”
- 3% chose “Disagree”
- 30% chose “Strongly Disagree”

Or in simpler terms:

- 44% chose “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
- 23% chose “Neutral”
- 33% chose “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”

Up to this point, we are using the data correctly and everyone is happy.

However, often you will see people report the results of such a question like this:

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = “Strongly Disagree” and 5 = “Strongly Agree,” the average score for the question was 3.1 with a standard deviation of 1.6.

No doubt this sounds impressive, and if you had to pick, you might think it would be the most statistically appropriate of the group. But it is not.

The problem is that Likert scales with each point labeled are what statisticians call “ordinal data.” This means that the items have an order or sequence to them, but it is not necessarily true that the distance between items is consistent across the scale. Scales that have items with an equal distance between them are called “interval data.”
As I said earlier, this mistake is made often, particularly by people who create, administer, score, and report on surveys who don’t have a strong statistical background. The mechanics of doing a survey are not difficult, but if you have not been trained to ask the questions and use the answers appropriately, it is easy to make mistakes.

If you believe me that it is inappropriate to report averages on these Likert-type questions, then what can you do about it?

There are two ways to fix this problem. The first is just to use the frequencies when reporting results for Likert-type questions. However, many are not satisfied with this because they feel the frequency reporting is too cumbersome and they’d really like to be able to report a single number for each question.

The second solution, which would allow you to report the average numerical value for each question, is to revise the items by removing all the labels but the two used for the end points. Using this method, our original question would look like this:

I am confident I know what a Likert scale is.

5 = Strongly Agree
4
3
2
1 = Strongly Disagree

Or, you can actually just present the question with the instructions to “Rate your level of agreement with the following statement, with 5 = “Strongly Agree” and 1 = “Strongly Disagree.”

Because the points in between the ends are not labeled, we conceptually recognize that they are supposed to have equal distance between them. We will still see the middle point as “Neutral,” but we will see the other points as “halfway between Neutral and Strongly Agree/Disagree,” which is not quite the same thing as “Agree/Disagree.”

The next time you see a survey, look at how the questions asking for level of agreement are worded, and think about how you would expect to see the results reported. Likewise, the next time you read about the results of a survey, look at how the data is presented and, if available, look at how the questions were presented. You will be surprised at how often data for these Likert-type questions are reported incorrectly.

Before you stop reading for fear of things getting too heavy, think about this question:

Is the distance between “Neutral” and “Agree” the same as the distance between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”?

As it turns out, research suggests the answer to that question is no. Conceptually, the distance between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” is much shorter than the distance between “Neutral” and “Agree.”

I am a visual thinker, so it helps me to draw pictures. To illustrate what I’ve just said, you can say that when you use averages and standard deviations, you are assuming the scale looks like this:

When in reality, it looks more like this:

I could tell you about all the studies that have been done on this subject, but only the very nerdy numbers folks like myself would really care, so I will skip it. Suffice to say that a lot of research has been done in this area, and the general consensus is that Likert questions with all points labeled result in ordinal data, not interval, and therefore it is inappropriate to report averages for this data.

You might be asking yourself, “So what?”

The answer is this: If you see a question like the one I showed at the beginning of this article, and then you see an average or mean and maybe even a standard deviation reported, you will know that the wrong statistic has been used, and you will further know that the numerical average provided doesn’t really mean anything.
Bringing a school bond issue to a successful public vote and then carrying through with the construction projects requires years of planning and expert assistance.

That was the message from education, financial, architecture and construction leaders to KASB’s BOLD class of school leaders recently.

“There is a lot of time and energy that goes into a bond issue,” said Basehor-Linwood USD 458 Superintendent David Howard, whose rapidly growing district has had two approved bond issues since 2015.

Howard said to win voter approval, school districts must enlist the help of community leaders to explain the needs of the district and how the bond issue will address those needs. District leaders must be as transparent and forthright with voters as possible, provide information at every opportunity and realize that some voters will always be opposed. And, Howard joked, it doesn’t hurt to have a winning high school football team.

Howard said school boards should make the investment to hire a firm, such as Patron Insight, to conduct a pre-election survey to gauge how stakeholders feel about the district and what it would take to form a successful bond issue. Knowing the mood of voters is critical because a defeat at the ballot box adds to the expense of the next bond issue effort since construction costs increase three percent to four percent per year.

In addition to identifying projects, the bond process includes assembling a project team, which includes an architect, financial planners and builders.

Dustin Avey and Clayton Kelley, of PiperJaffray, said financial planners help districts provide a mill levy and taxpayers cost analysis, structure the bond issue and conduct the bond sale.

Avey, managing director of PiperJaffray, explained how financial planners can help districts invest bond proceeds which can help districts accomplish even more with the bond issue.

Mark Franzen and Elizabeth Johnson, of HTK Architects, explained how the architect will work with the district through the planning, construction and life of the project.

“These buildings are like kids to us,” Franzen said.

Darin Headrick, of McCownGordon Construction, said hiring a construction firm is unlike buying a car or pencils.

“You should hire who you feel the most comfortable with, who you trust the most and who you want to deal with on a daily basis for several years,” Headrick said.

Headrick explained the three major construction delivery methods — design, bid and build; construction management agency and construction management at risk. He recommended construction management at risk because the construction manager assumes all the risk for construction performance.

The professionals urged BOLD participants to research and do their due diligence before selecting financial planners, architects and construction companies because school officials must focus on educating children and not have to spend an inordinate amount of time overseeing the bond projects.

KASB’s BOLD program stands for the Business Operations Leadership Development program, which focuses on developing knowledge on building and facilities master planning, technology planning, finance strategies, procurement processes, school security, risk management and human resources. BOLD includes six training sessions that were developed by KASB leadership staff, KASB partners and experts from across the state.

Donna Zerr, principal of Augusta High School, and a member of the BOLD class, said the BOLD sessions have been excellent.

“We have learned material that you would not learn in college classes or from a webinar, etc. It is information that is pertinent to our current positions and also if we seek other district-level jobs, the
sessions are so relevant then as well,” Zerr said.

She added, “This last session was thorough and complete including hiring an architect, knowing the financial specifics, and obtaining a construction management company for a school bond issue. It was so beneficial to hear from the actual businesses who are in the middle of current school bond issues across our state.

“The best aspect of BOLD is people from large districts to small districts are represented so all perspectives are shared. It’s the greatest professional development I’ve ever had.”

Kellen Adams, assistant superintendent for business and operations for El Dorado USD 490, said the BOLD sessions have been helpful.

“First is the networking and relationships - not just of my peers in other districts, but also of those working for KASB as well as others that we have met throughout the various presentations. Further, there has been a good amount of affirmation as it relates to my current position about the processes and procedures that we are currently putting into practice.

He appreciated the emphasis on learning about bond projects. “While I have now been through a $36 million project from the sale of bonds through the punch-list, I have never been through anything related to the vast amount of work prior to the vote. Learning from the past experiences of others who have been through the process from conception to a ‘YES’ vote was extremely beneficial.”

Members of the BOLD Class

- Kellen Adams, executive director of fiscal and support services, El Dorado USD 490
- Susan Beesen, superintendent, Centre USD 397
- Richard Bell, assistant superintendent of personnel and operations, Maize USD 266
- Ben Boothe, director of secondary education, Gardner Edgerton USD 231
- Justin Burche, assistant superintendent/interim high school principal, Osawatomie USD 367
- Juanita Erickson, superintendent, Neodesha USD 461
- Vince Evans, assistant superintendent of student support services, Wichita USD 259
- Jim Goracke, superintendent, Sterling USD 376
- Angela Holloway Payne, superintendent, Stafford USD 349
- Michael Janzen, assistant superintendent at Circle USD 375
- Troy Langdon, principal at Fort Larned USD 495
- Jake Potter, director of public relations, Leavenworth USD 453
- Deanna Scherer, principal, Effingham USD 377
- Shelly Swayne, superintendent, Russell County USD 407
- Bryce Wachs, superintendent, Fort Larned USD 495
- Matt Ward, assistant superintendent, Augusta USD 402
- Cathi Wilson, superintendent/principal, Oxford USD 358
- Donna Zerr, principal, Augusta USD 402

Left: Basehor-Linwood USD 458 Superintendent David Howard speaks about putting together a successful bond package.

Below: Members discuss bond information during recent work session. From left to right are Richard Bell, Maize; Deanna Scherer, Effingham; Donna Zerr, Augusta; and Shelly Swayne, Russell County.
LFT class hears from two Gemini districts

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org, & Carol Pitts, cpi tts@kasb.org

During the first session of KASB’s 2019 Leadership for Tomorrow class, class members learned about the diversity of Kansas school districts and ways to make informed, reasonable decisions that will affect student success.

As part of a get-to-know-you exercise, the class of 27 board members and administrators from across Kansas lined up from smallest enrollment district to largest; then from smallest to largest district in area and from the district with the lowest poverty rate to the one with the highest rate.

The exercise showed the variance in Kansas’ 286 districts. Members also noted that size, location and poverty rates also affected the ability to recruit and retain teachers and drive student success. Class members also noted that even when poverty rates are similar, districts could face different challenges based on whether they were urban or rural.

LFT also heard from leaders and students at the hosting schools — Beloit USD 273 and North Ottawa County 239. Both districts have been realigning school operations as part of the “Gemini” portion of the Kansans Can School Redesign Project.

At Beloit Junior-Senior High, students presented findings from an energy and conservation program in which they designed an efficient wind turbine and analyzed the school building’s energy use and proposed ways to save energy. Trane Corp, supports students and teachers in the BTU Crew program.

Beloit Junior-Senior High Principal Casey Seyfert said the community and students are much more involved in decisions that affect the schools. As part of the Gemini redesign, Beloit students built and run a coffee shop, there are student-led conferences, character education, bullying prevention, more personalized learning and project-based learning and student involvement.

All students at the school are involved in extra-curricular activities and recently the library received a major facelift with new bookshelves and furniture, such as couches, chairs, tables, desks, computers and computer chairs. Last year, the school added new classes such as earth and space science, digital media creation and graphic design. Students in these classes produce the school’s banners and promotional material.

The class’ second day began at Minneapolis High School with a discussion of how competing values impact district decisions. The key, the class decided, is to create time for dialogue where both sides of the issues can develop understanding of each other’s points of view.

The remainder of the morning the class learned about North Ottawa County schools and their district’s redesign program. Chris Vignery, superintendent of schools, said the path to redesign is a journey, not a destination.

Trista Boeve, a junior at Beloit Junior-Senior High School, explains energy use patterns at the school.

Members of KASB’s Leadership for Tomorrow discuss school issues during the group’s opening meeting in Beloit.
Staff do the “heavy lifting,” he said, and he stressed the importance of having the support of the board of education, parents and the entire community.

At Minneapolis High School, the class visited the Entrepreneurship Program under the direction of Lana Reinhart, business technology teacher. Students enrolled in the program develop a business plan and learn how to operate a small business.

Once all expenses are deducted from any proceeds, students get to keep a portion of their earnings, Projects this year include “4-Reel Imprints” embroidery for hats, shirts, and blankets, and Landon Wilson Marketing, a successful vinyl banner printing company.

A visit to three classrooms at the Minneapolis Elementary School gave the leadership class time to hear from sixth grade students on the pros and cons of Summit learning, a technology tool used by North Ottawa County.

Third-graders presented reports on their exploration of area agriculture, and kindergarteners shared diaries they are creating around a project about the insects, animals and their environments.

The project includes monthly visits to Rolling Hills Wildlife Park and working with ‘buddies’ from fifth grade students who are helping the students write and illustrate their books. The final part of the project will be a last visit to the zoo where the kindergartners will serve as tour guides for the buddies.

The next session for Leadership for Tomorrow will be May 2 and 3 with visits to Coffeyville and Neodesha school districts.

LFT members spend some time in the Minneapolis Elementary School kindergarten classroom (left) hearing about their special projects; and observe an FFA project at Minneapolis High School (below) that produces eggs used for the school’s ‘second chance’ breakfast program.
Requirements for making up snow days

By Ashley Rohleder, KASB Attorney

Many districts have had to close frequently this winter due to high snowfall and extreme cold. While these necessary closings are important to the safety and wellbeing of students, there is also the catch that Kansas statutes require minimum hours that students must be in school each year, in K.S.A. 72-3115.

In Kindergarten, students must attend no less than 465 hours each school year, 1,116 for first through eleventh grade, and 1,086 for twelfth grade. Most districts build additional days into the school year to account for this time, but in especially bad weather years, those days are not sufficient to meet the minimum hours set out by the state.

When schools do not meet that minimum hour requirement, the time must be made up. Some schools have chosen to add minutes at the end of each day for the next weeks, while others will carry on past their scheduled end date. In turn, this raises the question of if these make up days are in conflict with the negotiated agreement, and the days it requires of certified staff. Snow days do not count as work days by these staff members, so, they may be required to work on days that the school designates to make up for snow days.

Legal training opportunities available via video!

Professional Negotiations Training: This KASB training video for professional negotiations focuses on complying with the Professional Negotiations Act, identifying topics for the notice letter, and preserving the board’s management authority on non-mandatory topics for school board negotiators only. The 40-minute video satisfies the state’s legal requirement for annual negotiations training.

Teachers’ Contract & Nonrenewal: As the school year winds to a close, it’s time to renew or non-renew teacher contracts. Under the Kansas law, teachers’ contract automatically roll over for the next school year unless the board of education takes affirmative action to nonrenew them on or before the third Friday in May. This video will review the legal steps that school districts must take if the board decides to nonrenew a certified teacher’s contract.

Contact Leslie Garner, lgarner@kasb.org or 800.432.2471 for more information or to receive the links.

These articles are provided by the KASB Legal Services team and are not intended to be legal advice. If you have any questions, please contact KASB at 800.432.2471.
Nine nifty tips for a communication tune-up

Whether you call it customer service or public relations, at the heart is good communication. These “Nine Nifty Tips” are a good review of what it takes to put people at ease and make them feel welcome in your office or school.

1. Be a good listener. Ask questions and concentrate on what the individual is really saying. Listen to word choice, tone of voice and most importantly how they feel. Beware of making assumptions by thinking you intuitively know what someone wants, thinks or feels.

2. People react with emotion, not logic. They are not always good at telling you exactly what they are looking for. A good place to start is by assuming good intentions and asking three questions BEFORE you respond to anything. That will give you time – and them – a chance to reflect a bit before continuing the conversations.

3. Make people feel important and appreciated when they visit or meet with you. Treat them as individuals. Use their name and find ways to compliment them, but be sincere. People value sincerity. It creates good feeling and trust. Most people are very sensitive and know whether or not you really care about them. Thank them every time you get a chance. Your words and actions should be congruent.

4. Help people understand your system. Take time to explain how your system works and how they can simplify interactions with you. For example, do you prefer a call or email, and what do they prefer in response? But be careful that your communication preferences don’t reduce the human element of your organization.

5. Know how to apologize. When something goes wrong, apologize. Deal with problems immediately.

6. Give more than expected. The support and involvement of parents and the community are key to student success, so think of ways to elevate the experience someone has when they interact with you above what they may experience elsewhere.

7. Return phone calls and emails as soon as possible. If you have promised to call someone back with information, but you don’t have the information yet, make the call anyway just to inform the person of the status. This is an easy way to build trust and show your commitment to good communication.

8. Follow-up with a personal note if and when appropriate. This can be done via email, but a personally-written note that is mailed to their home or office will leave a lasting impression.

9. And lastly, appreciate the power of “Yes.” Always look for ways to help. When someone has a request (as long as it is reasonable) look for every way possible to tell them you can do it.

Read more from the KASB Marketing and Public Relations blog at https://kasb.org/blog-source/kasb-pr-and-marketing/

KASB staff will present at conference

KASB’s Advocacy and Outreach Specialist Leah Fliter and Communications Editor Scott Rothschild will present an engaging session at NSBA’s Annual Convention in Philadelphia, March 30-April 1.

The session, “Going Viral: Using Live Video to Boost Your Organization’s Visibility,” will demonstrate how KASB’s use of live video has expanded its influence in the advocacy, marketing, legal and leadership arenas. They’ll share insights on using free applications such as Facebook Live and Twitter.

The session will also feature a live video visit to the KASB studio for a discussion KASB Government Relations Specialist Rob Gilligan and KASB Associate Executive Director Mark Tallman on how the association assembled an affordable in-house studio that allows the staff to produce high-quality video broadcasts and podcasts.
KASB Risk Management Group provides access to insurance and other risk management solutions that are the best in the industry and the right fit for Kansas public schools. As part of your professional association, their sole purpose is in service to public education and student success. KASB’s presence in these and other markets keeps prices competitive. Districts and organizations using our programs find major savings.

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- Advising Schools in Suicide Prevention, Response & Liability Concerns
- Service, Therapy and Comfort Animals in Schools: Legal/ Practical Guidance