Is at-risk funding at risk?
Details on page 12
Training offered for new board members

KASB’s Foundations of Boardmanship 1.0 is geared for newly elected or appointed board members and includes a variety of topics focused on the roles and responsibilities of the elected board.

So far close to 300 board members and mentors have attended trainings held in Wichita as a pre-conference to the 2019 KASB Annual Conference, during the Advocacy in Action Seminar in Topeka in early January, and in Hays and Girard/Greenbush. There are several more opportunities through February to attend one of the workshops.

Feb. 8, Garden City, Board Office
Feb. 15, Topeka, KASB
Feb. 29, Haysville

For more information and to register, visit kasb.org/training-events/workshops/

Photos: New school board members in Kansas attended one of several Foundations of Boardmanship held recently in Topeka. KASB’s Brian Jordan, at right, leads the session.

KASB Board of Directors

Region 1: Jason Winbolt, Spring Hill USD 230, winbolt@usd230.org
Region 2: Art Gutierrez, Emporia USD 253, art.gutierrez@usd253.net
Region 3: Kevin Cole, Labette County USD 506, kecole86@gmail.com
Region 4: Pam Dankenbring, Marysville USD 364, pdankenbring@usd364.org
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Celebrating 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 Rothchild at srothschild@kasb.org for more information or to submit an article.

COLUMNS

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With new board members, comes new perspectives that will help inform our advocacy as we face new challenges. Now is not the time to relax.

5 I’m From Kansas
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COVER STORY

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Just when you thought school finance debates would be placed on a back burner, a new state audit has some legislators questioning how schools use $400 million in at-risk funding. But other legislators and educators are saying the audit missed the mark.
New year, new voices but no time to relax

I recognize that new restrictions on at-risk funds could completely upturn the balance of our current district budget and, in reality, make it even harder for our teachers and staff to meet the needs of our students when their needs are perhaps at their most severe.

State Board Recognition Month

In January, we celebrated School Board Recognition month with a proclamation by Governor Laura Kelly highlighting “the dedication and commitment of local school board members” and calling on all Kansans to “join in working for a public education system that meets the needs of our state’s children today and in the future.” Many new faces answered that call for the first time this past month, as boards welcomed newly sworn-in board members to their ranks.

My thanks to Governor Kelly for recognizing and honoring the volunteer work of local school board members, and to all in our communities who have stepped up to serve and support our public schools. I look forward to seeing what we can do together this legislative session to bring experience and new perspectives to the table, and to answer Governor Kelly’s call with enthusiasm for the great work that happens in each of our districts every day.

The start of the new year and the new semester coincides with an opportunity for new (or renewed) resolve and fresh perspectives on the many opportunities and challenges facing our students and our schools.

My local board welcomed three new members at our first January board meeting — I am excited to work with them, learn from them, and add their talents, knowledge, and perspectives to our work together. My district stands to benefit greatly from the experiences and perspectives of these new board members. I look forward to seeing where their fresh resolve takes us.

In turn, I am a mentor for one of the new board members. I will be sharing with her what I hope are helpful lessons learned from my years of service, including the importance of building a positive board culture that encourages professional learning and advocacy, and introducing her to the many resources available through KASB to support her in this new role.

As the 2020 legislative session ramps up, we will need renewed resolve and the knowledge we gain from new voices on our boards to inform and continue our advocacy in support of public schools with the same intensity that we have seen over the past several years. Now is not the time to relax.

I am entering this legislative season with less worry about constitutional funding than in years past, but with fresh concerns over whether the conversation sparked by the Legislative Post Audit report on at-risk funding will become a proxy for continuing efforts to pull back from court-approved funding commitments.

I would like to center my own advocacy efforts around other issues, such as the myriad challenges my own district faces in providing adequate supports for students’ social, emotional, and mental health needs. But I recognize that new restrictions on at-risk funds could completely upturn the balance of our current district budget and, in reality, make it even harder for our teachers and staff to meet the needs of our students when their needs are perhaps at their most severe.

So, I will be watching closely the committee hearings and other information that comes out of Topeka about the at-risk audit, and I encourage you to do the same. I also encourage you to speak up loudly and often on the legislative issues that could impact your students. Your voices and your perspectives—returning and newly-minted board members alike—need to be heard in the Capitol. Take advantage of the resources that KASB provides to support this work.
How can we best serve at-risk children?

Recently, I was arguing education with a friend (and winning) when he went low with “you’ve been out of it too long, you don’t understand.” Ouch! For a person who spent 27 years as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent that seemed like a low blow. Upon reflection, in my 10 years as Executive Director at KASB, my connection to the classroom has greatly diminished. I had fallen victim to the age-old belief that schools, and classrooms, are exactly what they were when I was in them.

The most recent public example of this can be seen in the Legislative Post Audit report on at-risk funding. The two major findings in the report are that (1) Schools are spending far more money on at-risk students than what has been allocated by the state. No surprise there to education policymakers who during budget development every year have to make choices about how to best serve all students with limited funds. And (2) the Kansas State Board of Education didn’t follow the prescription for guidance and monitoring of the funds. This finding appears to stem from a basic misunderstanding of what schools, and classrooms look like today. It seems LPA fell victim to the same thinking I did.

In my reading of the report, two major misunderstandings jump out: 1) What is an at-risk child, and 2) How do we best serve them?

Defining an at-risk child is understandably confusing. Decades of educational research reveals that children from poverty do not perform as well in school as their peers. Because we need an easy number to audit when allocating funds, receiving a federal free lunch has become the proxy for poverty, and therefore at-risk. When legislators think about at-risk, they think about students on free lunch, because that is what it means in their world.

In reality, the research bears out in real life. A high percentage of students in poverty are at-risk of failure in our schools. Anecdotally, we know that many of those students perform well. Poverty is just one variable in what can put a student at risk. We also know that students with economic advantages can be at-risk. School districts from Kansas’s wealthiest county have worked together to improve mental health services after noting a high rate of suicides in their schools, sometimes without any “at-risk funding” at all.

What is an at-risk student? A homeless child living in their parent’s car is at-risk. An Advanced Placement Calculus student living in a five-bedroom house but suffering from debilitating depression and anxiety is at-risk. A student with dyslexia struggling with phonemic awareness is at-risk. A student whose home is clouded with domestic abuse is at-risk. A child consistently being bullied in the halls is at-risk. A student addicted to nicotine at age 13 is at-risk. The programs to serve all of those different students look very different and have to be fluid and flexible.

The question of how to best serve at-risk children is also complicated. One only has to look at recent projects assigned to the State Board to understand that the nature of schools and at-risk definitions are changing. Just in the last few years we have seen the State Board grapple with Emergency Safety Interventions, bullying, dyslexia, vaping, pre-K, transitions, and student mental health. The Legislature has asked the State Board to address these issues because of their concern about at-risk children. The State Board has worked diligently to help schools with these issues because they care about at-risk children. And they recognize that addressing at-risk issues can take on many forms.

The State Board’s work on these, and many other issues, is obvious because of the statewide implications. Less obvious is what happens in schools and classrooms every day. The first line of intervention for at-risk children is the classroom teacher. Through differentiation and multi-tiered systems of support, teachers personalize learning in their classrooms in ways that are hard to understand for those who have not been in a classroom recently. Students move in and out of specialized instruction hourly and daily based upon specific skill deficiencies. These methods rely

Continued on page 11
Looking at the Data

Big data provides big opportunities

It is possible that some of you have heard the term “Big Data” in a random UPS or IBM commercial. The corporate world has long known about and leveraged Big Data for years to achieve such things as effectiveness, efficiency, and a competitive advantage to rivals.

Big Data in education has received little research or notoriety, but as technology increases throughout classrooms and districts, a raging river of data is flowing underneath your feet. It is up to you whether you listen and respond to this data to improve your district.

Big Data can be broken down into four core components, which can be referred to as “The Four V’s.” These are as follows.

**Volume**

The sheer volume of data flowing in districts on a daily basis is mind-boggling. Before computers, many district administrators, office workers, teachers, and so on had stacks and stacks of paper piled high on their desks. Products like WordPerfect, Lotus, MS Excel, and MS Word revolutionized the volume of data with which we could handle, essentially converting stacks of paper into a disk or thumb drive that fits in our pocket. Technology like Google Drive and Dropbox changed the access to the cloud of all our documents to anywhere on the planet. For example, Google offers 15 gigabytes for free for any account.

This is roughly equivalent to 5,000 documents (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, pdf, etc.) per gigabyte or 75,000 total documents. In the pre-computer education world it would take an entire career to produce this volume of data on paper.

**Velocity**

Coupled with the sheer volume of data we work with, the velocity or speed at which the data flows is also astonishing. The simplest analogy is with email. For many, district email is a suitable substitute for playing phone tag or coming to consensus electronically (rather than convening a meeting). There is an appealing ease and practicality of email as well as a documentation trail. The disadvantage of email is the velocity of data immediately at your attention. Like many, as the velocity and volume of email data increase, potential anxiety increases. Perhaps this is a very time-sensitive email that requires an immediate response or it is another spam email from the Nigerian prince offering you millions. Regardless, this data velocity requires pieces of your finite attention span.

School districts operate in a cyclical fashion. There are milestones throughout a school year which mimic corporate life (e.g., Q1 or Q4 reports and deadlines). In our world, stock performance or marketing metrics do not really exist. Rather, we have demands around negotiations, entering grades, staff evaluations, and State data submissions; and then the cycle repeats itself the following year. Most, if not all, of these district milestones must be based on data instead of administrator intuition or opinion. In smaller districts perhaps the velocity of these data demands is more manageable, but it can be a significant challenge for larger districts. For example, how do we

Presently, we can capture, scan, and save nearly everything we produce, but to what end? Some believe we have become digital hoarders with our electronic documents and emails. We attempt to organize our documents and spreadsheets into folders. We integrate external sources of data from the State or things we research on the Internet in the hope of informing our decision-making. The challenge becomes how to use our voluminous data (and data collaboratively shared by others) in an effective way.

**It is up to you whether you listen and respond to this data to improve your district.**

This month, KASB’s Chief Data Officer Ted Carter welcomes guest columnist Aaron Kipp. Mr. Kipp, Director of Assessment & Demographics at Topeka Public Schools, has decades of experience with transforming data into action. He uses his background in programming, database design, and systems theory to create useable reports from a variety of data sources. His knowledge of data trends and statistics provides a unique perspective for educational leaders.
use data to ensure every high school student is on-track for graduation? Any number of events from failing a critical assignment, teacher grading practices, or home life challenges can create issues for a potential graduate. Tracking this daily velocity of student data is a notable challenge for any district. How do we as educators interrupt and get students back on track in response to anomalies in the data?

**Variety**

Combining the volume and velocity of school district data with variety creates some challenges for school districts. The variety of data may include things like assessment scores, attendance rates, pass/fail rates, discipline, teacher observations, nurse visits, staff turnover, state and federal audits, and so on. Much of this qualitative data is stored in a student information system, financial system, HR system, or some cases data warehouses. However, there are qualitative data that add context and color to many district systems. Examples of these qualitative factors can include student home life events, teacher life events, FMLA, the impact of teacher absences, district financial pressures, changes in leadership, district culture, and community partnerships.

The variety of data that we are exposed to can be overwhelming, but also can provide beneficial opportunities. From a systems perspective, this variety of data can affect one another. It is like the analogy of the series of gears that are all connected and one turn of a small gear affects the whole system. Board members, school leaders, principals, and the like should look at the variety of data coming into their system. Patterns may begin to emerge and either reveal support or divergence from your gut instinct. However, due to the complexity of this wide pool of data, human capacity and technology must exist to extract this actionable intelligence.

**Veracity**

The last “V” of Big Data, veracity, was added later in the Big Data definition. The simplest definition of data veracity can be seen as the trustworthiness of the data. Currently, we have so many current electronic outlets to consume data and information. For example, would you be more likely to trust demographic data about your county from the census bureau or Wikipedia? Some simply use whatever website is first in a Google search. The Internet and social media were catalysts in adding this 4th “V” of Big Data. Veracity has become an issue because individuals can consume data based on source preference or convenience. Social media data and information can spread like wildfire, so monitoring your presence there is critical.

There is not a clear right or wrong here, only that you should be educated in trusting the source and type of data. Some teachers, for instance, require peer-reviewed journal articles in writing, which ensures good veracity. Another example are data reports from a student information system (SIS). Hopefully the SIS source is trustworthy because your district adopted it. However, how often do you question the accuracy or usefulness of the reports? Software updates occur quite frequently in the background which have the potential to skew output reports.

**Big Data Opportunities**

District strategic planning can be very effective by leveraging Big Data, particularly in mapping out data-driven action steps. Woven throughout these action steps, you should see mentions of data, but now look at it through the lens of Big Data. To what degree is your district managing the volume, velocity, variety, and veracity of data that drive critical decisions?

Two areas are critical in this pursuit: people and technology.

First, districts must have the people or human capacity to leverage Big Data. This can look a variety of ways from the staff person who knows statistics and data analysis to someone with particular skills in Excel. If you do not have someone internal, outsourcing may be a viable option.

Second, a solid and reliable technological foundation must exist. Big Data lives in technology, so file storage, the ability to run relevant reports, and uptime are critical. Big Data is here whether you are ready or not. It is not a fad that will pass. How prepared are you to make your district operate better for the students, staff, and community?
Beveridge is Region 15 representative

How long have you served on your local school board and why did you decide to become a board member?

As of January 2020, I am starting my second four-year term on the Olathe School Board. I have been serving as vice president since July of 2019. When my wife and I were expecting our first child, we moved from Chicago, Illinois to Olathe, Kansas, and one of the main reasons was our admiration for the school district. I ran for school board as someone who felt the district did so many things well and I wanted to support the district as we help students prepare for their future.

What do you do outside of being a board member?

My wife, Jill, and I have three children in the school district and we spend much of our time with them and their activities. I also own an environmental consulting company, Solid Ground Environmental, which provides environmental consulting services to local and regional banks and developers.

What experiences or skills do you bring to the table that will help improve your local school district?

I love public policy and budgets. My favorite time of year is budget time as we get deep dives into our finances at the school district. Politics is a passion of mine and I follow events in Topeka and Washington D.C. closely and how decisions made can and will affect our school district.

What is the top goal you have this year for your local board and what would you like to focus on as a member of the KASB Board of Directors?

I am most excited about our dual language immersion program Olathe will be starting up in the fall of 2020 at two of our elementary schools. I would like to see this program succeed and grow so that every child in our school district has the opportunity to learn two languages during their primary education. As a KASB Board member, I would like to continue to focus on legislative issues, making sure we do not slip backwards on state funding and continue to share our stories of success with Kansas legislators.

When you were growing up, who was an adult you looked up to and why?

The easy and best answer is my parents; I wouldn’t be where I am without them. But I’d also like to say as I get older I so appreciate my Grandpa Ed. Like so many in his generation, he worked hard, didn’t need any accolades, never complained, and he always had a smile on his face every time I saw him.

Who was your favorite teacher or school staff member and why?

My favorite teacher was Mr. Osborne, my high school biology teacher. He is the reason I graduated with a degree in biology at KU. He made biology interesting and always kept us on our toes with his sense of humor.

If you had a chance to speak to your 18-year-old self, what would you say?

Find books you like and read more. As an adult, I love to read, but I didn’t know that at the time because I didn’t take time to figure out what types of books and subjects I like. Now I’m playing catch-up on all the books I should have read in high school and college.

What is a saying or quote that you live by?

It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.
Dankenbring now represents Region 4

How long have you served on your local school board and why did you decide to become a board member?

I have served on the USD 364 School Board for two years and have filled the position of president for six months. I serve as our governmental relations person and on the finance and negotiations committees.

What do you do outside of being a board member?

I am a district administrator for Kansas Farm Bureau, the largest grassroots agricultural advocacy organization in the state. In that position, I serve as a direct liaison to the 10 county Farm Bureaus in the organization’s 5th District as well as working on various projects and activities at the state level. I have two adult children and a Westie named Stella. In my spare time, I love to read personal growth books, listen to podcasts, and garden in the summer.

What experiences or skills do you bring to the table that will help improve your local school district?

I consider myself a lifelong learner so in that capacity I am always willing to broaden my skill set and knowledge base. The last 15 years have allowed me to hone skills in conflict resolution, personnel management, fiscal responsibility and budgeting, consensus building, along with volunteer management. These skills are all valuable in assisting the BOE as we work to make a positive impact on the District and make decisions in the best interests of the students.

What is the top goal you have this year for your local board and what would you like to focus on as a member of the KASB Board of Directors?

USD 364 is currently in a search for a new superintendent and also in the beginning stages of construction on a new agricultural/technical skills complex. My goal is to help lead the district to positive completions of both those tasks. My focus at the KASB Board level is to continue the tradition of KASB being the go-to source for information and education for our member districts in whatever form that looks like as we move into the future.

My focus at the KASB Board level is to continue the tradition of KASB being the go-to source for information and education for our member districts in whatever form that looks like as we move into the future.

Who was your favorite teacher or school staff member and why?

My favorite teacher was my high school biology teacher, Mr. Dave Sampson. He connected with the students, had high expectations for us in the classroom, but was extremely humorous and allowed us to be kids too. He made all the students feel included, welcomed, and important.

If you had a chance to speak to your 18-year-old self, what would you say?

I would tell my 18-year-old self that all the things that were so important in high school become so much less important as you spread your wings and follow your adult life path. High school does not define who you are or who you will become.

What is a saying or quote that you live by?

“Your journey is not the same as mine, and my journey is not yours, but if you meet me on a certain path, may we encourage each other.”
Complete census count critical for state

Counting has already started in the 2020 U.S. Census, beginning in January in the Native village of Toksook Bay, Alaska.

And while that is some 3,000 miles from Kansas, the importance of an accurate count is crucial in determining how billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated to local schools and governments for the next 10 years.

“Everyone is affected in some way, which is why a complete count is critical. Kansas cannot afford to be short changed,” Gov. Laura Kelly recently said.

Kansas receives about $6 billion annually through dozens of federal programs, such as Title I, IDEA special education, school lunch programs and more. Based on Kansas’ population, that means that for each person counted in Kansas in the 2010 Census, Kansas received about $2,000 per person per year in federal funds.

“No matter where you live, you need to be counted,” said U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham. “From the most remote parts of our country to the most urban, there is too much at stake — we are working to make sure everyone can respond and have the opportunity to shape their communities’ future.”

In addition to dispersing funds, the Census determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives.

While the 2020 Census count officially started with a special operation in Toksook Bay and other remote areas of Alaska, the rest of the nation will be invited to respond for the first time to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail.

Invitations to respond will reach most of the estimated 145 million households across the country between March 12 and March 20. For more information about the 2020 Census, visit 2020census.gov.

Road to the 2020 Census

2020 Census Operational Timeline

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<td>March: Census Bureau delivers questions to Congress</td>
<td>April: Open 6 regional census centers</td>
<td>October: Full implementation of the communications program</td>
<td>October: Partnership specialists begin working for Census Bureau</td>
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<td>January: Begin enumeration in remote Alaska</td>
<td>February: Group Quarters Operation begins</td>
<td>March: Update Leave begins</td>
<td>March: Internet Self-Response begins</td>
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<td>April 1: Census Day</td>
<td>May: Nonresponse Followup begins</td>
<td>December 31: Deliver apportionment counts to the President</td>
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Key census activities start in 2018 and continue through 2021

- January-March: Open 40 area census offices
- June-September: Open remaining 208 area census offices
- August: Conduct in-field Address canvassing
- March 31: Complete delivering Redistricting Summary Files to all states (PL. 94-171)
on smaller classes, specially trained teachers, and teacher aides for their success. These methods are evidence-based and produce strong results for all children, but how does one assign specific dollars to them?

A major initiative across Kansas is meeting the social and emotional needs of students. Schools have provided training in trauma-informed practices and invested in counselors and social workers. If a classroom teacher gets specialized training to assist the at-risk students in their class, and if counselors and social workers work with all students, not just those from impoverished homes, allocating the funds in the right line items may not match an LPA auditor’s expectations, but they are serving the needs of all at-risk students.

When we walk by a fifth-grade classroom and the students are all on-task and engaged, it looks easy. What an untrained eye doesn’t see is the planning, the relationship building, the training, and the skills involved in making that happen. Trying to categorize all of that art and science into a line-item budget may not always look the way a non-educator thinks it should. But locally elected boards of education are accountable to the voters to make the hard decisions to make sure all students in their care reach their potential.

My friend challenged my thinking by telling me things are different now. I plan to visit some classrooms and find out more. I challenge you to do the same before you judge whether schools are using their resources effectively.
Is at-risk funding at risk?

School funding debate continues
This time over at-risk funding

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

After years — really decades — of short-changing schools and court battles, the 2020 legislative session was supposed to provide something of a breather on K-12 funding issues.

But that didn’t happen.

After release of a state audit on at-risk funding, some critics of increases in school funding have raised alarms that the annual $400 million appropriation dedicated to help struggling students who are at risk of failing isn’t being properly used by schools.

Just days into the new legislative session, House and Senate education committees summoned education leaders to talk about the audit, with some legislators promising more discussion, and possibly legislation, on the issue.

The brouhaha over at-risk funding started in December when the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit released its evaluation of at-risk funding.

After reviewing at-risk spending and services in a sample of 20 school districts, auditors said:

Most at-risk spending was used for teachers and programs for all students and did not appear to specifically address at-risk students as required by state law;

Most of the at-risk practices approved by the State Board of Education did not target at-risk students and were not clearly evidence-based.

This didn’t set well with a number of legislators.

Rep. Kristey Williams, R-Augusta, who is chair of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee, said that in the Gannon school finance litigation, the state was taken to task by the Kansas Supreme Court for the number of students not doing well on state assessments. At-risk funds, she said, were meant to help those students with programs that went “above and beyond” regular education.

But Kansas State Department of Education officials strongly denied the allegations from the audit.

KSDE says it approves evidence-based practices for at-risk students through its review and approval of schools’ Local Consolidated Plans.

And the agency also disagrees that it’s wrong to spend at-risk funds on the salaries of regular education teachers, saying in the audit response “... at-risk students are regular education students and receive the majority of their at-risk supports in a regular education classroom
by a regular education teacher and support staff including tiered interventions, personalized learning, differentiated instructional strategies, and at-risk support programs. It is our understanding that the intent of the law was to provide evidence-based best practices to students in the regular educational setting along with specific at-risk programs, such as summer school, before school, and after school programs.”

As Brad Neuenswander, deputy commission of the Kansas State Department of Education, explained at one committee meeting, “You don’t purchase summer school. You hire teachers to do evidence-based practices,” at summer school.

While legislators, educators and auditors argue over what the law says and whether it has been complied with, a couple of items in the audit have gotten less attention but may be the most important aspects of at-risk funding to classroom teachers, principals and ultimately at-risk students.

The 20 districts reviewed in the audit received $125 million in state at-risk funding but reported spending $162 million to provide at-risk services and most districts serve more students than they received state funding for because funding is not tied to services.

Funding is tied to the number of students who receive a free lunch (about 38 percent of student enrollment statewide) while about 49 percent of students receive at-risk services.

So, local districts are making up the shortfall. Of the 20 reviewed districts that was about $37 million, while statewide, locals are making up about $80 million for the total program.

At one meeting with legislators, State Board of Education member Jim Porter urged cooperation between the Legislature and education field on what is by all accounts a complicated issue — helping at-risk students succeed. “We want every student in the state to be successful and we want funds used effectively,” Porter said.

![Jim Porter, Kansas Board of Education](image)

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At one meeting with legislators, State Board of Education member Jim Porter urged cooperation between the Legislature and education field on what is by all accounts a complicated issue — helping at-risk students succeed. “We want every student in the state to be successful and we want funds used effectively,” Porter said.
Show your love for public schools during Kansas Public Schools Week

By Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

Kansas public schools have a great opportunity to showcase all they do to support Kansas kids during Public Schools Week, February 24-28.

Public Schools Week is the brainchild of the national Learning First Alliance organization, which includes the National School Boards Association. It’s a week for school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents across the U.S. to highlight the importance of public education in their communities and with lawmakers. Nine out of 10 students in the United States – and Kansas – attend public schools.

KASB, the Kansas State Department of Education and the members of the Kansas Learning First Alliance (KLFA) are sponsoring a Kansas Public Schools Week event at the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka on Wednesday, February 26 and urge Kansas educators and allies to participate in social media campaigns and other actions throughout the week.

Although the Gannon school finance case has been addressed by the state Legislature, lawmakers will be watching to ensure the additional funds funneled to schools over the next few years are being used to address the achievement gaps that were the genesis of the lawsuit.

“Kansas public schools are entering the decade with a renewed sense of hope and purpose,” said KASB President Shannon Kimball. “Public Schools Week is the perfect moment to show your love for public schools.”
Week offers us the chance to demonstrate our commitment to educational achievement and excellence.”

Activities could include your school board taking “The Pledge for Public Schools” found in the toolkit posted here: kasp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PublicSchoolsWeek2020Toolkit.pdf. The toolkit also includes sample Twitter and Facebook posts along with images suitable for those platforms and for Instagram. If you’d like to use photos of local students in your posts, make sure to comply with privacy protections.

Districts could host school visits for community members and media; board members can send thank-you messages to lawmakers for their support of public education, and parents could write letters to the editor of the local newspaper.

“Communities are stronger, and schools are better when we all work together to support public schools. Public Schools Week offers Kansas public schools the opportunity to highlight the great things they do for our students,” said Kansas School Public Relations Association President Michele Jones.

Statehouse activities on February 26 will include Senate and House resolutions honoring Public Schools Week along with displays by KASB, KSDE, KLFA and other public-school advocates.

“While many of us know that our local public schools are doing a wonderful job with our students, we may not take the time to tell our teachers and administrators we stand with them and the work they do,” said Kansas Learning First Alliance Chair Dr. Laurie Curtis. “Public Schools Week is the perfect opportunity to offer our support and make a public statement of our confidence in the educators in our state.”

"Out of the public school grows the greatness of a nation."
- Mark Twain
Andover middle school math teacher receives national Milken Educator Award

Carly Bowden, a math teacher at Andover Central Middle School, received the 2019-20 Milken Educator Award during a surprise ceremony Jan. 9 at the school.

Dr. Jane Foley, Milken Educator Awards senior vice president, was joined by Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson, Deputy Commissioner Dale Dennis and Andover Unified School District 385 superintendent Brett White for the announcement.

Bowden is among 40 honorees nationwide for 2019-20.

“Carly represents the exceptional educators here in Kansas,” said Watson. “Her ability to engage her students in meaningful, personalized learning is what every educator should aspire to achieve. I want to congratulate her on being named a Milken Educator. I also want to thank the Milken Family Foundation for giving us the opportunity to recognize Kansas’ outstanding teachers.”

Bowden is a seventh-grade math teacher at Andover Central Middle School. She received her bachelor’s degree in math education in 2015 from Emporia State University.

Bowden has received numerous awards and honors, including being a Horizon Award Winner in 2017. She is a Capturing Kids Hearts champion leader, serves on the building leadership team and coaches the Andover Central Middle School track and cross country teams.

“Carly is an exemplary educator who inspires her students to love math,” said White, superintendent of Andover USD 385. “She engages them in hands-on lessons that are relevant and meaningful to their lives. Students appreciate the creativity that Carly shows and the thorough manner in which she teaches concepts. Carly builds outstanding relationships with students, and truly makes a difference in their lives.”

Kansas joined the Milken Educator program in 1992, and Bowden is the 67th Kansan to be named a Milken Educator. More than $1.6 million has been awarded in Kansas since the program began.

The Milken Award recognizes exemplary elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists who are furthering excellence in education. The award alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Since its inception in 1987, the Milken Educator Awards have recognized more than 2,800 educators with awards totaling $70 million. The Milken Family Foundation, headquartered in Santa Monica, California, has directed more than $140 million to the initiative, including awards and professional development opportunities.

In addition to receiving $25,000, Bowden also will become a member of the National Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,800 distinguished educators and leaders from across the country. She also is invited to attend a Milken Educator Forum in Indianapolis from March 26-28, 2020, where 2019-2020 recipients will network with colleagues and exchange ideas with state and federal leaders on the future of education.
On Jan. 24, Deputy Commissioner of Education Dale Dennis and award-winning songwriter and producer Nicolle Galyon were honored as Kansans of the Year by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas.

Galyon, who is from Sterling, has been one of the most successful songwriters of the past decade, whose songs have been recorded by numerous artists.

Dennis, who has served for more than 50 years at the Kansas State Department of Education, is an icon in public education and is viewed by many as the foremost expert on school finance, providing guidance to superintendents across the state.

We thought we would share some of the tweets and sentiments of those who honored Dennis during the banquet in Topeka.
Meeting the law on board meetings

KASB thought it might be a good to go over some of the frequent questions about board meeting times and places. First and foremost, it’s important to note that a board can only have a “meeting” if there is a quorum of board members. On a seven-member board, a quorum is four members. Once a quorum has been established, the board is free to transact district-business.

One of the most frequent questions KASB gets is whether a board can hold a meeting outside of its traditional meeting place or outside the district itself.

A board can hold a meeting in any location that is generally accessible to the public if notice of that location is provided to those who have requested it under the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA). If you are dealing with a last-minute (under 24 hours) change of location, you will need to conspicuously post the change of location and direction to the new location. You would also need to provide notice of the change to the individuals who requested notification of meetings under KOMA. The best practice would be post someone at the traditional location to direct members of the public wishing to attend the meeting to the new location.

However, while the board can hold a meeting anywhere that is generally accessible to the public, the board can only take binding action if it is meeting within the district boundaries. The only exception to this is if multiple districts are meeting together to consider consolidation. In that situation, binding action may be taken within the boundaries of any district effected by the consolidation.

Another frequent question KASB receives is whether a board can hold a meeting via telephone or other electronic means.

Yes, a board can hold a meeting via the internet or conference call, so long as the public has access to the meeting. Speaker phone, Zoom meeting, and Skype are all acceptable methods of meeting, provided the public can access the meeting and listen. It’s important to note that if a meeting is being held via these means, it is not required that the public be allowed to communicate or actively participate in the meeting.

With some boards setting all meeting dates and times for the 2020 board back in July 2019 and other boards setting dates and times in January 2020, there is a little confusion about whether the 2020 board is bound to the dates and times set in July 2019 or if the 2020 board can change those meeting dates and times. Yes, the board can change the time, date, and/or location of a regular board meeting but it can only do so by passing a motion prior to the change. If a change to time, date, and/or location is made, the board should notice such changes as mentioned in the first paragraph.

If you have any questions concerning meetings or KOMA issues, contact a KASB attorney.

Dual public offices may create conflict of interest

Boards should ensure that no member holds another public office that may come into conflict with his or her duties as a school board member. The legal term for the doctrine that prohibits anyone from holding two public offices in which the duties and responsibilities of one may conflict with the duties and responsibilities of the other is “incompatibility of office.”

The doctrine rests on conflict of interest principles. The conflict at issue must be more than a physical impossibility to discharge the duties of both offices. Offices are incompatible when performing duties for one in some way interferes with performing the duties of the other.

The Attorney General’s office has issued several opinions on this topic. According to its opinions, a person may not concurrently serve as a school board member and a county commissioner.

Though the offices of board member and county commissioner do not involve any supervisory authority of one over the other, the attorney general rested its conclusion on the “overlapping constituencies” served by both political bodies.

In a separate opinion, the Attorney General concluded that school board members also may not serve on the city council of the city in which the school district resides (Kan. A.G. Op. No. 83-9).

If a board member has questions about serving the public in multiple capacities—either as an elected official or as a public employee—please contact the attorneys at KASB to discuss the issue.
Evaluation, non-renewal deadlines approach

Boards and administrative staff must soon begin the process of determining if any nonrenewals of certified staff are needed prior to the continuing contract deadline of the third Friday in May (May 15, 2020).

As a part of this process, administrative staff should have timely, honest, and accurate evaluations of certified staff. At least the first round of evaluations should already be complete for this year if the school has any certified staff in their first or second year of employment with the district. For certified staff in the third and fourth year of employment, the evaluation deadline is quickly approaching (February 15, 2020).

Keep in mind, the deadline falls on a Saturday this year so evaluations should be done prior to that date. Just in case this process has you a bit confused, here are some frequently asked questions concerning evaluations.

Q. How often must employees be evaluated?
A. For employees in their first or second year of employment in the district, they must be evaluated at least once each semester by the 60th school day of the semester. For employees in their third and fourth years of employment in the district, they must be evaluated at least once a year by February 15. For employees with more than four years of employment in the district, they must be evaluated at least once every three years by February 15 of the year in which the evaluation occurs. K.S.A. 72-2407 et seq.

Q. May we evaluate employees more often?
A. The statute only sets the minimums, not maximums. However, if the board wishes to evaluate teachers more often than required by statute, it must negotiate for the right to do so, and the negotiated agreement must reflect the staff’s agreement to the additional formal evaluations.

Q. Who is responsible for evaluating our personnel?
A. The board is responsible for evaluating the superintendent or the director of the area vocational-technical schools. Primary responsibility for evaluation of other employees rests with the administrative staff.

Q. What happens if our staff fails to evaluate in compliance with our policy and/or the statute?
A. The law provides that the contract of a certificated person cannot be nonrenewed on the basis of incompetence unless an evaluation which is in substantial compliance with the board’s policy on evaluation has been made prior to the notice of nonrenewal. To date, however, the courts that have considered this issue have concluded that the evaluation statute cannot be read to override the board’s authority to dismiss a teacher for any reason which is not in violation of constitutional rights.

Q. What happens if our staff fails to evaluate teachers by the statutory deadline in any given year?
A. The question of whether evaluations of teachers which are completed after the February 15 statutory deadline are invalid and must be removed from an employee’s personnel file was answered negatively by the Kansas Supreme Court in Marais de Cygnes Valley Teachers’ Association v U.S.D. No. 456, 264 Kan. 247 (1998). In this declaratory judgment action, the teacher’s association sought to have tardy evaluations of three tenured teachers invalidated on the basis they were not completed by the statutory deadline, February 15. In each case, the teacher had been placed on a written improvement plan as a result of receiving at least one “must improve” rating on their evaluation. The Kansas Supreme Court concluded the language of the Evaluation of Certificated Personnel Act which states evaluations after the second year of employment “shall” be completed by February 15 was directory, not mandatory. Noting the overriding purpose of the Act is to provide a systematic method for the improvement of school personnel and the educational system, the court refused to interpret the Act in a manner contrary to this expressed goal.

Additionally, the court noted the Act contains no provisions which would require the remedy of invalidating evaluations. The court did not address the question of whether a tardy evaluation could be used to support nonrenewal of a teacher. In an unpublished opinion involving the nonrenewal of a tenured teacher, the Court of Appeals concluded that an evaluation completed by February 28 was in substantial compliance with the statutory language. ☞️

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.
Registration open for 2nd annual Women’s Leadership Summit in March

By Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

Registration is open for the KASB and United School Administrators-Kansas 2020 Women’s Leadership Summit in Manhattan on March 24 and 25. For more information and to register, go to kasb.org/WLS2020.

The second annual summit features award-winning author Sarah Smarsh and Dr. Helen Fagan, CEO and Founder of the Global Leadership Group. Also speaking will be the Honorable Chief Marla J. Luckert, Chief Justice, Kansas Supreme Court and Melissa Rooker, exec director Kansas Children’s Cabinet.

Current female school board members and school administrators will learn and network about timely topics including recognizing and overcoming bias, managing leadership transitions, balancing work and healthy lifestyles, self-confident communication and communication strategies for the board and leadership teams. The summit is also a great opportunity for aspiring leaders, especially classroom teachers who desire to move into building and district leadership positions.

Speakers and panelists will include state-level and local female leaders from across Kansas. The event features a wide range of presentations designed to help attendees make a greater impact as a leader in Kansas public education. Three special focus sessions will be held the second day for board members, superintendents and building/teacher leaders.

The reception Tuesday evening will feature Miss Kansas Annika Wooton. She will create a painting during the reception to be auctioned off that evening. Proceeds will benefit the Janet K. McEntarfer Memorial Scholarship in Education and Community Service, Miss Kansas Foundation.

Smarsh, a Kansan who writes and speaks on socioeconomic class, is the author of “Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth,” a 2018 nonfiction finalist for the National Book Award and the Kirkus Prize. Smarsh writes in Heartland about the crucial impact Kansas public schools had on her life and career path. She’s also the host of “The Homecomers” podcast.

Fagan is a nationally known leadership, diversity and inclusion scholar. In addition to her work with the Global Leadership Group, she is an Assistant Professor of Practice in Leadership Engagement at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Director of Leadership Engagement at the Rural Futures Institute, a university-wide institute at the University of Nebraska; and a qualified Executive Coach.
2020 Horizon Award winners announced

Thirty-two first-year educators from Kansas were recognized for their outstanding teaching skills through the 2020 Kansas Horizon Award program.

The 2020 Kansas Horizon Award recipients were announced in January by the Kansas State Department of Education.

The first-year educators will be honored at a special ceremony during the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN) State Education Conference on Feb. 14 in Topeka.

The Kansas Horizon Award program, sponsored by KSDE, allows all school districts in the state an opportunity to nominate one elementary and one secondary teacher for the award. To be eligible for the award, teachers must have successfully completed their first year of teaching and have performed in such a way as to distinguish themselves as outstanding.

The program is a regional competition with four regions corresponding to the state’s U.S. congressional districts. Four elementary and four secondary classroom teachers may be selected for the award from each region.

Region 1 winners
- Elly Dice, North Lyon County Elementary School, North Lyon County USD 251.
- Christina Frost, Council Grove Elementary School, Morris County USD 417.
- Mariannet Herrera, Western Plains High School, Western Plains USD 106.
- Lillian Lingenfelter, Peabody-Burns Middle School, Peabody-Burns USD 398.
- Carrie Pilkington, St. George Elementary School, Rock Creek USD 323.
- Lisa Pluff, Manhattan High School, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383.
- Caroline Riggenbach, Plum Creek Elementary School, Buhler USD 313.
- Kyle Van Vogelpoel, Rock Creek Junior-Senior High School, Rock Creek USD 323.

Region 2 winners
- Chad Aberle, West Middle School, Lawrence USD 497.
- Kaylee Barber, Washburn Rural High School, Auburn-Washburn USD 437.
- Tristan Bartley, McLouth Middle/High School, McLouth USD 342.
- Heather Corley, Anderson County Junior-Senior High School, Garnett USD 365.
- Sidney Doty, Berryton Elementary School, Shawnee Heights USD 450.
- Allison Flinn, Oskaloosa Elementary School, Oskaloosa USD 341.
- Tawni Schraad, Randolph Elementary, Topeka USD 501.
- Scotti Twombly, Hiawatha Elementary, Hiawatha USD 415.

Region 3 winners
- Emily Baden, Nike Elementary, Gardner Edgerton USD 231.
- Samantha Collins, Chisholm Trail Middle School, Olathe USD 233.
- Katie Cox, Turner Middle School, Turner USD 202.
- Blake Fingalsen, Rhein Benninghoven Elementary, Shawnee Mission USD 512.
- Bennett Johnson, Heritage Elementary, Olathe USD 233.
- Paige Lankford, Blue Valley West High School, Blue Valley USD 229.
- Matthew Lundy, Spring Hill High School, Spring Hill USD 230.
- Emily Moore, Overland Trail Elementary, Blue Valley USD 229.

Region 4 winners
- Victoria Bay, Andover Central Middle School, Andover USD 385.
- Keegan Hallmark, Andover Middle School, Andover USD 385
- Kacie Johnson, El Dorado Middle School, El Dorado USD 490.
- Chasym Lindeman-Thimesch, Cloud Elementary School, Wichita USD 259.
- Crystal Logan, Mulvane High School, Mulvane USD 263.
- Kelley Lowe, W.D. Munson Primary, Mulvane USD 263.
- Mollie Mills-Weis, Newton High School, Newton USD 373.
- Kali Stearns, Circle Towanda Elementary, Circle USD 375.
Education leaders make presence known at Advocacy in Action Conference

More than 100 education leaders from across Kansas attended the Advocacy in Action Conference, Jan. 15-16 in Topeka.

The annual meeting, conducted by KASB and USA-Kansas, included speeches by Attorney General Derek Schmidt and Secretary of State Scott Schwab, and visits to the Statehouse where board members met with legislators and attended committee meetings.

The two days were also filled with breakout sessions led by experts on state, national and local district issues, such as bullying, Medicaid, federal policies, vaping, mental health and more.

The event also featured a State of the State viewing party, reception with legislators, review of Gov. Laura Kelly’s budget and training sessions.
On facing page, top: A Facebook Live preview of Gov. Laura Kelly’s State of the State address; middle: School leaders from across the state discuss issues before the 2020 Legislature; bottom: KASB Executive Director Dr. John Heim welcomes new board members, mentors and superintendents to KASB Foundations of Boardsmanship held the same day in Topeka.

This page, above: School board members and administrators boarded buses to the Statehouse to visit with legislators and attend committee meetings; left: Sheldon Weisgrau, senior policy advisor for the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, leads a session on Medicaid expansion and how it will affect Kansas families; bottom: Kansas Children’s Cabinet Executive Director Melissa Rooker presents findings of a statewide needs assessment on early childhood services.
February - March - April 2020

Foundations of Boardsmanship
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Workshop
02.08.20 | Garden City, Board Office
02.15.20 | Topeka, KASB
02.29.20 | Haysville, The Learning Center

Prepping for Negotiations
Times vary by location. Please refer to kasb.org/training for details.
02.05.20 | Concordia, Cloud Community College and Gypsum, SE of Saline USD 306
02.14.20 | Topeka, KASB
02.24.20 | Colby, District Office
02.25.20 | Oakley, ESC and Hays, The Venue

Women’s Leadership Summit
03.24-25.20 | Manhattan, Hilton Garden Inn

Spring Regional Roundtables for Boards and District Leadership
5 p.m. Registration  5:30-8:30 p.m. Roundtable
03.30.20 | Stafford, High School Commons
03.30.20 | Hiawatha, The Fisher Center
04.01.20 | Sublette, Education Service Center
04.01.20 | Topeka KASB
04.02.20 | Colby, City Limits Conference Center
04.07.20 | McPherson, The Cedars
04.07.20 | Girard, Greenbush Education Service Center
04.08.20 | Beloit, NCKTC
04.08.20 | Haysville, The Learning Center
04.09.20 | Olathe, Education Center

Human Resources Academy
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Workshop
03.31.20 | Girard, Greenbush ESC
04.02.20 | Hays, The Venue

Bullying: Students and Adults, Prevention and Intervention
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Workshop
03.04.20 | Hays, The Venue
03.05.20 | Topeka, KASB
03.07.20 | Goddard, District Conference Center

Addressing Social and Emotional Needs Four Part Series
Please note: Registration closed for this series.
Wichita, Alvin A. Morris Center
01.08.20 Part I; 02.05.20 Part II; 03.11.20 Part III; 04.08.20 Part IV

Developing Cultural Proficiency
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Workshop
02.19.20 | Wichita, Alvin A. Morris Center

Understanding and Maximizing School Funding for School Boards
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Workshop
03.04.20 | Topeka, KASB
03.05.20 | Scott City

School Finance for Board Clerks
8:30 a.m. Registration  9 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Workshop
04.01.20 | Topeka
04.01.20 | Garden City
04.02.20 | Colby

Spring Board Clerks Support Session
11 a.m. Registration  11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Meeting
04.01.20 | Topeka
04.01.20 | Garden City
04.02.20 | Colby