Reopening schools in August?

Keeping all students and staff safe, regardless of:

- Ability
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Income
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
KASB announces restructuring plans

KASB Executive Director Dr. John Heim has announced a restructuring plan designed to enhance the association’s mission to support a culture of collaboration and service, be a voice for education and provide leadership for student success.

Goals of the plan are to improve member engagement, cooperation between and within KASB departments; refocus advocacy, policy and legislative support; and improve staff focus and morale.

The most visible change in KASB structure is the creation of a new membership engagement department, which will separate some current functions from the current Advocacy and Communications Department and add new functions.

Here is a list of personnel and title changes resulting from reorganization and other actions:

- Assistant Executive Director for Risk Management Rod Spangler becomes Assistant Executive Director for Risk Management and Member Engagement.
- Associate Executive Director for Advocacy, Communications, Research and Marketing Mark Tallman becomes Associate Executive Director for Advocacy.
- Controller Amanda Rollenhagen becomes Director of Finance and Operations.
- Leadership Services and Partnerships Director Britton Hart becomes Director of Leadership Services.
- Governmental Relations Specialist Leah Fliter becomes Director of Governmental Relations.
- Printer Mike Pape has retired.

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
Region 5: TinaRae Scott, Morris County USD 417, tscott@cgrove417.org
Region 6: Greg Tice, Renwick USD 267, gt@sptarchitecture.com
Region 7: Darin Holecek, Ellsworth USD 327, holecek5@hotmail.com
Region 8: Gary Yost, Otis-Bison USD 403, yost.gary@yahoo.com
Region 9: Brad Bergsma, Goodland USD 352, brad.bergsma@nwktc.edu
Region 10: Lara Bors, Garden City USD 457, lara.borslaw@gmail.com
Region 11: Mike Seitz, Blue Valley USD 229, mseitz@bluevalleyk12.org
Region 12: Laura Guy, Shawnee Mission USD 512, lguy@clearcreek.com
Region 13: Valdenia Winn, Kansas City USD 500, valdenia.winn@kckps.org
Region 14: Stan Reeser, Wichita USD 259, stanwreeser@gmail.com
Region 15: Joe Beveridge, Olathe USD 233, joebev@gmail.com
Ex Officio: Frank Henderson, Jr., Seaman USD 345, hendersf@msn.com

President
Lori Blake
Southeast of Saline USD 306, lcblake520@gmail.com

Past President
Shannon Kimball
Lawrence USD 497, skimball@usd497.org

President - Elect
Brad Bergsma
Goodland USD 352, brad.bergsma@nwktc.edu
Celebrate Public Schools

IN THIS ISSUE

6 Educational attainment
Mark Tallman, KASB Associate Executive Director of Advocacy, looks at the differences in educational attainment by race. Progress has been made but there is still more to be done.

11 Equity conversations
The Kansas Equity Series started with calls for changes in the public school system to dismantle institutionalized racism.

14 Survey said!
Read about the key takeaways from KASB members to a recent survey about how the association is doing.

16 Federal assistance
KASB is working on several fronts to encourage Congress to approve stimulus funding for public schools.

19 Re-opening schools
School leaders are facing an unprecedented array of challenges in preparing for the next school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

20 KASB Regionals
KASB will provide both on-site and online options for our members to meet and discuss important public education issues in July.

21 Legal issues during pandemic
The KASB Legal Department offers school boards timely advice on new issues arising during the pandemic.

COLUMNS

4 President’s Perspective
Incoming KASB President Lori Blake shares her thoughts on racial inequities. “I hope we can walk kindly with one another and practice sitting in uncomfortable spaces listening to each other with compassion and grace.”

5 I’m From Kansas
KASB Executive Director John Heim urges education leaders to take the journey of introspection. Chances are you’ll wind up respecting even what you don’t understand.

COVER STORY

12 Protecting transgender students
Transgender students need schools and teachers to treat them with respect and empathy. It could be a matter of life and death.
As I start this journey as your President of KASB, our country is thrashing about into a mosh pit filled with frenzied citizens. Some are waving their hands peacefully in union with humankind to express solidarity and others are raging with fists pumped ready to fight anyone that gets in their way; filled anger that cannot be calmed with reason, a mass of humanity, thrown together without a common song. The melody of these voices crying out for justice, peace and equality bring me great sadness and stir my soul into action. I feel compelled to move away from the wall swayed by the song and dance to move shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues, friends and family.

At times, I also feel like my voice is muted and unmeaningful. I have spent the last few weeks reading to seek an understanding that will never be felt like my biracial niece and her Black father, an understanding that my coworkers live with every day, an understanding that will teach the next generation a way to acknowledge our roots and find a way forward. That is the obligation I feel which is most important, finding a way forward, together. And it’s not just the systemic racism that we’ll need to address. We are still dealing with a pandemic and how to proceed in the uncertain months ahead.

When I applied to fill the role of President of KASB, I was focused by listening to national and local leaders taking the risk to share their own stories and lifting others’ who are too afraid of the repercussions.

I am reading books like Robin DiAngelo’s “White Fragility” and August Channing Brown’s “I’m Still Here: Being Black in a World of Whiteness.” I am watching videos like Tyler Merritt’s “Before You Call the Cops” and the 2019 movie “Just Mercy.”

We all can learn and as local education leaders, we must have the tough conversations and bring those whose perspectives are different than our own to the decision-making table. In our classrooms, we must acknowledge inequality and teach our history, even when it’s ugly.

While a pandemic and racial riots are not related, our response as educators should be. We must work to form relationships of trust and once that has been established, we can get somewhere. I hope we can all walk kindly with one another and practice sitting in uncomfortable spaces listening to each other with compassion and grace. When we hear each other’s lyrics of life, we can write a new song that resolves the dissonance into harmonies our grandchildren can dance to in the future together.
In my 1975-76 senior English class at Hutchinson High School, we learned a lot of things that were honestly not very meaningful at the time. As I get older, I think about some of those lessons, quotes, and ideas. We learned Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” at a time when examining one’s life generally didn’t go past thinking about what was for breakfast.

Sometimes examinations are forced upon us like pop quizzes, and one in my life began over 30 years ago. It requires some context. As a group of high school friends, our small crew was like any group, I guess. We were disposed to have fun, get into mischief, participate in some sports, debate and forensics, know what band was playing at Century 2, and plan for what to do on the upcoming weekend. I would have never thought of myself or my friends as bullies, at the time. Sadly, this perception was far from accurate.

When the Eagle Scout of our group, the one who studied the most, went to church every Sunday, was always there when we needed a hand, stayed out of trouble, and generally served as our conscience came out as gay in his 20’s, we all faced a cognitive challenge. We could contemplate and own all the mean, hateful, gay slurs we had thought were so funny in high school and college, many or even all of them occurring in the presence of our closeted gay friend, or we could decide to condemn a guy who we all loved and admired.

Memories are stories we tell ourselves, and who doesn’t want to be the hero of their own stories? But another thing we learned from reading Melville’s Billy Budd in senior English was that all heroes have a fatal flaw. Failing to acknowledge our fatal flaws either requires some serious mental gymnastics or implies perfection. When I think back on things I said and did, and how my gay friend must have felt, I know my fatal flaws were ignorance, lack of empathy, and disrespect. I feel embarrassed and deeply sorry for my actions.

My story’s true heroes are my friend and the other kids we called names because we thought them different from us. One could argue that it was a different time, our culture has evolved, we know more now, and that we didn’t understand. That argument dismisses a 2,000-year-old axiom most of us grew up with: The Golden Rule.

Do I still struggle with understanding why some people are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender? Of course, I do, and I always remember what a Church Bishop said in a sermon on the subject in my Emporia church 20 years ago, “Can someone explain why I find my wife attractive, why when I look at her it fills me with feelings I can’t describe? No? Then how can I possibly understand what someone else feels when they look at someone they love?” Because of a self-examination journey, I realize that it isn’t my business, let alone for me to judge who my LGBT friends and family members love. My duty is to love them as I do myself.

Polls say 70-80 percent of Americans agree with the recent Supreme Court decision that one cannot be fired for their sexual orientation. That means many of you readers will agree, and others may strongly disagree with my conclusions. The church I grew up in is fracturing over these issues. I don’t claim to know any more than anyone else. I have done what my English teacher taught us, write what you know; and that some best stories are about a hero’s journey. I’m no hero, but I am telling the story of what I know, my journey, not to convince you of anything except to take a journey of your own. Maybe we will end up in the same place; perhaps we won’t.

I learned a lot from the English teacher who I now understand was also gay. He lived by the Golden Rule and treated me with respect and dignity even when it was not earned. Though the court did not directly order this, students in our schools deserve to be taught with the same dignity and respect that the Supreme Court ordered for our staff and that we want for ourselves.
Despite progress, big differences remain in educational attainment by race

Recently, increased national attention has been focused on issues of race and social justice, generating a great deal of commentary and reflection in educational circles. Many school districts and organizations, including KASB, have issued statements affirming a commitment to equal opportunity and justice.

Such statements indicate both a dissatisfaction with the current situation and a desire for change. But as the saying goes, you are unlikely to get different results if you keep doing the same things.

I am 60 years old. I can’t remember a time when this nation hasn’t been talking about the ideals of equality, what that means, how we are falling short of those ideals and why. I’ve spent nearly 40 years working for educational groups that say they are committed to those ideals. We are saying it again.

A starting point is to look at the status and progress (or lack of progress) in our educational outcomes. Here is what I have found. Kansas (and the United States) HAVE made progress in narrowing differences by race. Something HAS been working. But that progress has been slow.

These differences are an issue of social justice. They are also an economic issue. Kansas is not producing enough individuals with the higher skills to provide the workforce we need; and individuals without those skills will struggle to earn a living, keep employed and out of poverty. Perhaps most worrying, it becomes an economic trap: children from low-income families are less likely to succeed in school, meaning they will be likely to struggle economically when they become adults with families of their own.

Enrollment Trends

Kansas public school head count enrollment overall remained stable at around 450,000 from the mid-1990’s to 2006, and since increased to about 500,000. But the racial composition of Kansas students has changed much more dramatically.

Although White students remain the majority, the number of White students has declined from 380,00 to 330,000, or from 85 percent of the total to less than 65 percent. Black enrollment declined slightly, from about 37,000 to 35,000. Hispanic enrollment has quadrupled from about 22,000 to over 100,00. Finally, other groups, including multi-racial students, have increased from 5,000 to almost 50,000.

Enrollment Trends

Kansas Public School Enrollment Trends

(Note: there are many different terms used to describe racial and ethnic groups: White, Caucasian, Black, African American, Hispanic, Latino, etc. This report uses whatever name is used in the particular data source. For example, the above chart has the terms used by the Kansas State Department of Education.)

These changes in student enrollment have implications for analyzing overall student achievement in Kansas. Groups that have been less successful on educational measures have been increasing faster than the majority group which has historically had higher achievement.

Adult educational attainment

Kansas and the United States have always had large disparities in educational attainment by race. The longest-term measure is completion by high school and bachelor’s (four-year college) degrees by persons over 24.

The earliest data for individual states from the U.S.
Census is from 1940, approximately halfway between the end of the Civil War, the emancipation of slaves and the civil rights amendments to the U.S Constitution, and the present day.

In 1940, 29 percent of white Kansans had graduated from high school, almost double the rate of 16 percent of black Kansans.

In 2017, the most recent year posted in the U.S. Digest of Education Statistics, Kansas high school completion for whites was 94.4 percent and for blacks 84.4 percent.

Over those years, Kansas always had higher white high school completion than the U.S. as a whole. Kansas had more than double the national average for black high school completion, but the difference narrowed until 2017, when the U.S. average moved ahead of Kansas for the first time.

In 1940, 4.7 percent of white Kansans had completed a four-year bachelor’s degree, more than double the 2.3 percent of black Kansans. In 2017, Bachelor’s degree completion was 36.9 percent for whites and 21.9 percent for blacks.

Bachelor’s completion for white Kansans was slightly below the U.S. average in 1940 and 1950 but moved slightly higher than the U.S. average in 1960 and has remained there. Bachelor’s completion for black Kansans has consistently been slightly higher than the U.S. average except in 2010.

In nearly 70 years, white high school completion rates more than tripled from 29 percent to nearly 95 percent, while black rates increased fivefold, from 16 percent to 84.4 percent. College completion for white Kansas increased nearly seven times over, from 4.7 to 36.9 percent, and back college completion increased nearly nine times over, from 2.3 percent to 21.9 percent.

Put another way, black high school completion rose from 55.2 percent of white high school completion to 89.4 percent in 2017. Black completion of bachelor’s degrees rose from 48.9 percent of white in 1940 to 59.4 percent in 2017.

(Note: the census reports from 1940 only include White and Black races. In more recent years, other groups have been added.)

In 2017, Whites had the highest overall high school completion in Kansas, with Asians and Two or more races close behind. Hispanics had the lowest level.

In 2017, Asians had the higher rates of bachelor’s degree completion in Kansas and nationally. In Kansas, Whites were next, followed by Two or more races. Hispanics had the lowest college completion rates.

**High school graduation**

Adult high school completion is the percentage of everyone in an age group who has completed a high school diploma or equivalent. The high school graduation rate is the percentage of a particular graduating class that completes a high school diploma with a specific period of time. There are several different formulas that may be used to calculate a graduation rate.

*Continued on page 8*
Since 2010, Kansas and other states have been using a formula called the Adjusted Cohort Graduate Rate (ACGR). The Kansas State Department of Education reports racial and ethnic group rates by males and female. It measures the percentage of each year’s high school freshmen who graduate from high school four years later.

Looking at the three largest racial ethic groups in Kansas, Whites had the highest four-year graduation rates in 2010 and continued to do so in 2019. However, Black and Hispanic Kansans made more progress, particularly non-White females. There is a larger gap between Black and Hispanic males and females than between White males and females.

High school dropouts

The high school dropout rate is another education measure. A drop-out is a student who leaves the school system in grades seven through twelve and either has discontinued schooling or is not known to be continuing; has transferred to a GED program; or transferred to a correctional facility where educational services are not provided.

The dropout rate is not simply the inverse of the graduation rate for several reasons. First, the annual dropout rate is calculated using one year of data, while the graduation rate used four years of data. Second, the dropout rate is calculated on grades seven through twelve, while the graduation rate is based on a cohort of ninth through twelfth grades. Finally, a student who drops out at any point between seventh and twelfth grade could return to school and graduate even if it takes longer than four or five years. (That is a reason the high school completion rate for adults is slightly higher than the graduation rate.)

However, a high percentage of dropouts do not graduate, and the same disparities about racial groups for graduation are found for dropouts.

In 1994, the dropout rates for White males in Kansas was 2.9 percent and for White females 2.4 percent, while the dropout rate for Blacks was over twice as high: 6.1 percent for Black males and 5.5 percent for Black females. Hispanic dropout rates were even higher.

Twenty-five years later, those rates had been cut by more than half. In 2019, the dropout rate for White males was 1.4 percent and White females 0.9 percent; for Black males 2.8 percent and females 1.8 percent, and for Hispanic males 2.3 percent and females 1.5 percent. As with the graduation rate, Black and Hispanic students have made more progress in reducing the drop-out rate than Whites, but still trail.

State Assessments

As required by federal law, Kansas and other states give state tests in reading and math to all students in public schools in grades three through eight and one high school grade every year (10th grade for reading and math).

Kansas scores students taking the tests at four levels. Level 1 indicates that a student shows a limited ability to understand and use the mathematics or English Language Arts skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness. Level 2 indicates that a student shows a basic ability to understand and use these skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness. Level 3 indicates that a student shows an effective ability to understand and use these skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness. Level 4 indicates that a student shows an excellent ability to understand and use these skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness. The goal is to get student to levels three and four to have the widest opportunity for postsecondary success and career options.

The difference among the three major racial/ethnic groups in Kansas is higher on state tests than graduation or dropout rates. When looking at an average of math and ELA scores for all grade levels, about 40 percent of White students score in the top two levels. That is about 2.5 times the rate of Black students and about twice the percentage of Hispanic students score at these levels.
At the other end of the scale, about 23 percent of White students score at the lowest level, compared to about 50 percent of Black students and 40 percent of Hispanic students. Overall, state assessment scores generally declined from 2015 to 2017 or 2018 and improved slightly in 2019. At the lowest level, Black and Hispanic students declined more than White students, then improved more than White students over the past two years.

These results are the average of math and English Language Arts for all grades tested. Results for students in high school, which are tested in math and ELA at grade 10 are lower for all groups, and the gaps are slightly greater. For White high school students, a little more than 30 percent of White students score in the top two levels, compared to less than 10 percent for Black students and 13 percent of Hispanics.

**ACT College Readiness Test**

Another measure of educational outcomes is the ACT test, which is measures student preparation or “readiness” for postsecondary studies. Most students take the test as high school juniors but can also take it as sophomores and seniors. Results are provided annually for students in each graduating class, regardless of when those students took the test.

In recent years, approximately 70 to 75 percent of Kansas graduates took the ACT. Those numbers were expected to increase when the Kansas Legislature began providing funding to allow all students to take the test at no cost. The impact of that change was expected to be first report for 2020, but the free tests were not given due to the COVID pandemic.

For decades, ACT has provided “composite scores” for the academic areas of English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. Since 2006, ACT has calculated a “college ready benchmark,” which is a score that indicates the student is likely to be successful in beginning college courses in the areas.

ACT’s report “The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2019” for Kansas finds large disparities by race in the percentage of students meeting those benchmarks. Note the following chart from that report.

About half of White students’ tests met three of four benchmarks, compared approximately 40 percent of students scoring in the top two levels for all grades of the state assessments and about 30 percent on the high school state assessments.

About 20 percent of Hispanic/Latino students met three of four ACT benchmarks, compared about 20 percent in the top levels of the state assessments for all grades and about 15 percent on the high school tests. Finally, about 13 percent of Black students met three of four benchmarks, compared to about 15 percent in the top two state assessment levels for all grades and about 10 percent on the high school tests.

Over the past five years, performance of White, Black, and Hispanic students dropped on the ACT, while Asian student performance increased. (American Indian and Hawaiian/Pacific Island students are such small groups that there is considerable fluctuation from year to year.)

**What comes next?**

This data shows how different groups are doing on key educational measures in Kansas. School leaders can find information on their own school districts for graduation rates, drop-out rates, state assessments and ACT scores from your district or the Kansas State Department of Education’s Data Central portal. What it doesn’t show is WHY these differences occur, and what to do about them. That will be the subject of future consideration.
KASB Board creates equity committee

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

The KASB Board of Directors recently approved forming a committee that will work to ensure equity in Kansas public education.

KASB President Shannon Kimball said recent deaths by African-Americans at the hands of police and others and worldwide demonstrations against institutional racism have shown more needs to be done to make education equitable.

“We all have felt the impact of everything that has been going on in our country the past several weeks. We just cannot be silent on these issues as an association,” said Kimball, who is a member of the Lawrence USD 497 school board.

Board member Frank Henderson, who has been working on equity issues on the national level, said laying a foundation for equity advances is important because “it does take a lot of work to put things into practice and place.” Henderson is a member of the Seaman USD 345 board, a past president of KASB and currently serves as Secretary-Treasurer of NSBA. He said NSBA is working on a project called Disabling Institutional Racism in Education, or DIRE.

Board member Kevin Cole said even school districts that are overwhelmingly white need to learn about equity and racism issues because the workforce is generally diverse. Cole is a member of the Labette County USD 506 school board.

Kimball said the working group represents a first step in what will hopefully be a permanent effort to continuously improve equity in public schools.

During its quarterly meeting in June, the board also:

- Approved recommending to the Delegate Assembly changing the KASB Constitution to have the terms of the association president and president-elect start on the second Monday in January instead of July 1. This will align those terms with the same date of the terms of local board members.
- Approved recommending a two-stage Delegate Assembly process in which officers will be elected and policies reviewed at the annual convention and the Legislative Committee report will be finalized in January at the annual KASB Advocacy in Action conference in January.
- Approved providing for the possibility of having an in-person and virtual annual convention and an entirely virtual convention in the event of further health problems caused by COVID-19.
- Approved the budget for next fiscal year.
- Heard reports from Leadership Services, Advocacy, NSBA, KASB’s pandemic response, new training and workshops and building issues.
- Discussed legislative priorities. Some of those included protecting the school funding formula, full funding of special education, equity, increasing diversity among teachers, opposing vouchers, increasing mental health training and maximizing early childhood funding.
Kansas Equity Series calls for changes

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Nearly 500 people recently tuned in to the start of the Kansas Equity Series: A Dialogue on Race and Equality.

And they heard five leading African-American education leaders in Kansas say the current national conversation about race and equality provides an opportunity for public schools to increase efforts to ensure that minority children have the same access to a quality education as white students.

“The future of this country depends on what happens in our schools,” said Dr. Anthony Lewis, superintendent of Lawrence USD 497.

Lewis was joined by Dr. Tiffany Anderson, superintendent of Topeka USD 501; Dr. Reginald Eggleston, superintendent of Geary County USD 475; Dr. Charles Foust, superintendent of Kansas City schools and Frank Henderson, board member Seaman USD 345, former president of KASB and NSBA Secretary-Treasurer. The free event was facilitated by Patrick Woods, former president of the Topeka school board and former KASB president, and G.A. Buie, executive director of USA-Kansas.

The wide-ranging, hour-long conversation was sponsored by Topeka USD 501, USA-Kansas and KASB. The next dialogue in the series has been scheduled for July 7 and will feature Dr. Alicia Thompson, superintendent of Wichita USD 259, and Blake Vargas, superintendent of Caney Valley USD 436.

During the first installment, educators said the recent demonstrations against institutional racism in policing and education have awakened many people in the United States.

“Now, it’s like the blinders are off,” said Faust. “The nation knows there are inequities.” Faust said educators must focus on data to determine problems and then align programs and professional development to address those problems. He added schools must also ensure there are no financial barriers for students who want to take high-level academic courses in high school.

Anderson said it is important to have schools with teachers and administrators “that reflects the diversity that we have.” She urged educators to make sure their curriculum includes up-to-date African-American history. She also said sometimes the traditional ways of doing things must be changed. For example, many parents can’t make teacher-parent nights. She said Topeka schools do home visits virtually and added, “We have parent conferences at the ballgame, the grocery store.”

Henderson said school boards should embed equity in all aspects of education, focusing on resources, curriculum, hiring effective educators and ensuring a supportive school climate. “There are so many challenges that so many students bring into the classroom and we need to be mindful of those,” he said.

Eggleston encouraged educators to instill high expectations for students and communicate those expectations to the students and parents. He said it shouldn’t be perceived as a problem if a student is not prepared to advance to the next grade. “It’s OK to go backwards in order to go forward,” he said.

Lewis said sometimes curriculum and resources don’t fit certain student populations. He told of the time when he was an educator in Alabama, that a writing prompt on a test was about visiting the beach. He said nearly all his students had never been to the beach, so he changed the prompt to writing about a visit to a relative’s house.

All the educators said schools need to work hard at changing practices, noting studies that show students of color are much more likely to be disciplined than white students for the same behaviors.

At the conclusion, Woods said the comments reflected a “clarion call to do something different than what has always been done.”
When Adam was a high school student, he had a teacher who always called him ‘Miss’ and then his last name.

“I ended up transferring out of his class and not taking AP English,” said Adam, who is now a junior English major at the University of Kansas. Adam said he thought the high school teacher was purposely not recognizing his gender identity.

Kansas public schools were the first in the nation to approve social and emotional learning standards for students, but when it comes to what are often called the most vulnerable students — those who are transitioning from one gender to another — the results have been mixed.

Some Kansas school districts have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity as a protected class but most do not. There may be momentum building to consider non-discrimination policies at schools since the decision in June by the U.S. Supreme Court that says businesses cannot discriminate against someone because they are LGBT. The question arises, should the same protections apply to students as well?

Dr. Peg McCarthy, a clinical psychologist and former Topeka USD 501 school board member, says every district should have a non-discrimination policy to protect transgender students and staff and act against those who violate the policy.

“If you do not have a formal policy and regulation, then it is wholly dependent on the individuals in their positions. Some of them (individuals) are great, and some are not at all,” McCarthy said.

All schools — at least in theory — strive to nurture a school climate in which students, families, teachers, and staff foster a sense of safety for all students.

For Cameron, most of his difficulties in transitioning occurred while a student in private school where he would wear the boys’ uniform instead of the girls’ uniform.

“I wore the standard boy uniform. I got in trouble with it a lot. I didn’t wear the skirts or anything; it raised a couple of red flags with some of my teachers,” he said. Cameron then chose public school and came out as a freshman. Most teachers at the public school “were really great,” he said, but one didn’t want him in her class, so she transferred him to another. She later ended up leaving the district, he said.
Concerns about bathrooms, sports

Sometimes opponents of accommodating transgender students focus on which bathroom the student will use.

Dr. Peg McCarthy said a non-discrimination policy that extends to transgender individuals can state that all children have the right to use a private bathroom or changing area to be comfortable. “There is absolutely no evidence ever of a student being assaulted or having any of their rights violated by a trans student in a locker room or bathroom. It’s far more likely for the trans student to be bullied,” she said.

Another issue that has come up is that transgender athletes could put girls at a competitive disadvantage in school sports.

In this area, the Kansas State High School Activities Association has approved a policy that provides guidance for local school districts and says the school is responsible for determining the appropriate gender team for participation by the student. Once a student is identified as transgender, they will participate in that gender category for sports, the policy says. In the event of a dispute over the student, the KSHSAA executive board will make a final ruling.

McCarthy, who works with transgender adolescents throughout northeast Kansas, said non-discrimination policies for gay and transgender students would help districts, large and small. Gender questioning students are about 5 percent of the population and transgender students, probably 1 percent to 2 percent.

“When you assert a strong position that is pro student, in general, families are good with that if they trust you as leaders,” she said.

Adam said teachers, even if they don’t understand the issues surrounding young people who are transitioning, need to be empathetic to transgender students who in many cases are having difficult times, not only at school but at home.

“It’s really important to listen to them and believe them when they tell you things,” Adam said. “It can be the difference, honestly, between life and death.”

‘When you assert a strong position that is pro student, in general, families are good with that if they trust you as leaders.’

- Dr. Peg McCarthy, clinical psychologist

Cameron said the best advice he could give teachers is “listen to your students.”

He added, “talk with them, communicate with them — I would like to be called this name and these pronouns and do your best to respect that. Everybody makes mistakes some time, but they (students) need you right now. Other kids are going to look up to the teacher and you need to be setting a good example,” said Cameron who graduated high school in 2018 and has been attending Emporia State University.
Looking at the Data
Ted Carter, KASB Chief Data Officer

Members give guidance for KASB’s future

In May, KASB sent out a survey to all members asking five open-ended questions related to how we have worked to adapt to the “new normal” since the pandemic began. One-hundred and thirty-five members responded with ideas and suggestions for how we can improve moving forward. Here are some things we learned.

Key Takeaways

- Many respondents felt the Zoom sessions were the best change to come out of the pandemic.
- Many respondents indicated that KASB should:
  - be sending fewer paper mailings.
  - be doing more online trainings/events.
  - be doing more facilitated online discussions.
  - have more resources available online and/or focus on making sure online resources are easy to locate.
  - be taking a blended approach to trainings/events.
- Some respondents indicated that KASB should:
  - be sending fewer emails.
  - offer more on-demand training.
  - continue face-to-face trainings/events.
  - provide more trainings on the impacts of COVID-19 on students, staff, educating, and district operations.
  - provide more training and guidance on technology, telework, and tele-ed.

Response Summaries

The following are the five questions asked, followed by a list of the topics most commonly mentioned. Note that only topics mentioned by five or more respondents are included.

What does it look like a year from now if KASB has been more strategic in what is printed/mailed with a blending of online mediums?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer printed communications</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good as is</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More online opportunities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does it look like a year from now if KASB has shifted our structure to engage with our members through a blended, timely approach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More facilitated online discussions</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good as is</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better informed/prepared/engaged membership</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue onsite visits / in-person trainings</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video library / on-demand content</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased ease of access to information</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely responses to info requests</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target specific groups</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More online opportunities / trainings / events</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and info available online</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on actionable items</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does it look like a year from now if KASB has established methods for building relationships and offering support in a “post COVID” environment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue online collaboration</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended approach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased value of / access to online learning</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KASB facilitating sharing among members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased ease of access to information online</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue onsite visits / in-person trainings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What additional supports could KASB provide that would be beneficial in helping your boards navigate in these times?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 related topics / Planning in uncertain times</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic / Financial planning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software / technology recommendations and best practices</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KASB has shifted its methods of communication and sharing of information in the recent weeks. Which of these changes do you find most valuable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online meetings / Zoom</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email communications</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch and Learns</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks/HR/Payroll Zooms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

KASB staff was very pleased with the responses to this survey, as it confirms the plans we have already put in place for the future. The past several months have taught us the importance of expanding the methods by which we provide information to and receive feedback from our members, and also the importance of shifting our focus away from those methods that are not as cost effective towards less expensive methods likely to yield better results.

If you have additional feedback not reflected in the summary information above that you’d like to share, please email me at tcarter@kasb.org and I will make sure your voice is heard! 📥
KASB urges passage of fourth stimulus; opposes DeVos plan for private schools

By Leah Fliter, lfliter@kasb.org

As June ended, KASB was tracking several important federal developments.

Education advocates are working to secure hundreds of billions of dollars in new federal funding to help schools and state governments respond to the continued economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effort includes a Call to Action for KASB members to contact Senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran to urge them to support a fourth federal stimulus bill.

A bill is pending in the U.S. House of Representatives which includes several provisions with funding for school infrastructure, online learning, school transportation, and school financing mechanisms for capital improvements to respond to the increased costs associated with the pandemic.

Meanwhile, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is moving to prioritize the allocation of federal emergency funding.

New federal stimulus?

Before the pandemic struck, education and other social services in Kansas were beginning to recover from years of state revenue shortfalls and the state’s economic outlook was improving.

But as a result of the state and national shutdown in response to the corona virus, economic experts project that the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will cause Kansas to have a $650 million budget deficit next year. Gov. Laura Kelly has said the state will see “devastating” cuts unless the federal government steps in. The CARES Act funding passed by Congress in March cannot be used to fill state revenue gaps.

The state budget shortfall could threaten school district budgets and the implementation of the Gannon school finance case because 52 percent of the state general fund goes to K-12 state aid.

Most school funding goes to people, so cuts would increase unemployment and exacerbate the state’s economic downturn. Higher education, foster care, prisons, and law enforcement would also suffer painful cuts.

KASB, the National School Boards Association, the Kansas State Department of Education and other advocates are asking Congress for a new stimulus bill with at least $175 billion in stabilization funding that would bolster state budgets, offer a short-term boost to the economy, and to invest in education and other public services. The groups are also asking for $4 billion to connect underserved students to broadband internet service (“the homework gap”).

The House of Representatives passed the “HEROES Act” in May to stake out its position on additional stimulus funding. That bill was called “dead on arrival” in the Senate and provided only about $60 billion for K-12 education and $1.5 billion toward fixing the homework gap.

Senate leaders said they would not take up discussion of a new stimulus bill until July at the earliest because they wanted to give the CARES Act funding time to work. In Kansas and other states, however, some leaders have complained the CARES Act dollars are subject to too many restrictions, and distribution has been slowed by shifting direction from the federal government.

On June 24, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said K-12 and higher education would need $50-75 billion to reopen safely. In a TV interview Alexander said it is critical for the economy and parents that schools reopen. While that figure is low compared to many estimates, Alexander’s remarks may signal the beginning of Senate consideration of additional stimulus funding.

KASB will continue to monitor the stimulus effort.

‘Equitable Services’ Rule

A new rule proposed by the U.S. Department of Education would require some school districts to change the way they distribute federal CARES Act funding. Public education advocates say the rule penalizes public schools and favors private ones. The Department disagrees, stating the rule ensures all students are served by CARES Act dollars.

The Interim Final Rule on Equitable Services to Students and Teachers in Non-Public Schools released on June 25 gives
public school districts options for distributing the federal funding that many education advocates say is counter to Congressional intent.

The rule takes effect immediately and has the effect of law, but legal action to overturn it is considered likely.

“The U.S. Department of Education’s equitable services Interim Final Rule regarding the CARES Act would cause greater disparities among schools and communities, and it would harm students who need more support to succeed in school. As school district leaders are engaged in COVID-19 recovery efforts, we need to do everything we can to help students most in need,” said National School Boards Association Executive Director & CEO Anna Maria Chávez.

Dan Domenech, the Executive Director of AASA-the Superintendents Association called the rule “an opportunistic money grab” that advances privatization of schools.

Education advocates reported that in a conference call Monday with reporters and others, Department of Education Assistant Secretary James Blew said school districts have a choice: “Are we only going to serve our low-income students, or are we going to serve all our students?” Blew also said he anticipated a lawsuit to overturn the rule and speculated Congress might try to reverse it as well.

As reported in Education Week (emphasis added by KASB):

“A district can decide to distribute the CARES money only to schools that received Title I for the 2019-20 school year —essentially, those schools with a minimum share of students from low-income backgrounds.

• If districts choose to distribute aid only to Title I schools, they can use two options to calculate how much money they set aside for equitable services: They can use the same amount for equitable services they set aside for the 2019-20 school year; or they can conduct a count of low-income students in local private schools to determine the proportional share.

• If a district distributes aid only to Title I schools, it can’t use the CARES money to backfill cuts at the state and local level. That could create a very big incentive for districts not to spend CARES money only on Title I schools, given the huge budget cuts many districts are facing.

• But if a district distributes CARES aid to schools that didn’t receive Title I in 2019-20, then it must calculate the amount it must set aside for equitable services using a count of all local students enrolled in private schools in the district.”

In Kansas and nationwide, public schools typically serve many more disadvantaged students than do private schools. And the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is sufficiently widespread to theoretically prompt school leaders to consider using the CARES Act to help non-Title I schools.

The CARES Act became law in late March. It directs funding for K-12 schools be distributed based on the Title I formula which serves disadvantaged students. Under that formula, if a public-school district provides “equitable services” to a local private school (such as tutoring or access to technology licenses), those services would only be provided to low-income, private school students

KASB is studying the new rule.

**Moving Forward Act**

H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in late June. It includes $130 billion to help schools pay for increased infrastructure costs to respond to the health and safety concerns associated with the COVID pandemic.

Some of the issues addressed in H.R. 2 include:

• School construction funding for schools receiving impact aid funds
• School bus safety and efficiency
• Broadband/ digital equity including support for WiFi on school buses
• Energy efficiency improvements, retrofitting, and renewable energy for public school facilities
• Advance Refunding for municipal (school) bonds
• Reinstatement of Qualified School Construction Bonds; and
• Establishment of a new School Infrastructure Bonds program.

The National School Boards Association, AASA-The Superintendents Association, NEA and other national advocacy groups support the school infrastructure spending in H.R. 2.

KASB will continue to monitor the bill’s progress.

---

**Please contact Senators**

KASB urges school board members to contact Sen. Pat Roberts and Sen. Jerry Moran and ask for their support of a fourth federal stimulus bill that includes at least $175 billion to stabilize funding for K-12 public schools and other crucial state services.

**Sen. Jerry Moran**
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1605
Phone: (202) 224-4774
Email: click here

**Sen. Pat Roberts**
109 Hart Senate Office Bldg, Rm 521
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6521
Email: click here
WHAT WILL IT COST TO REOPEN SCHOOLS?

This document estimates some of the expenses school districts may incur in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and as they plan to reopen for the 2020–2021 school year. These calculations assume the statistics of an average* school district with 3,659 students, 8 school buildings, 183 classrooms, 329 staff members, and 40 school buses (transporting at 25% capacity, or 915 students, to comply with recommended social distancing guidelines).

ADHERING TO HEALTH MONITORING & CLEANING/DISINFECTING PROTOCOLS
- Hand sanitizers for students in classrooms $39,517
- Disinfectant wipes for classrooms (four/day per classroom) $16,833
- No-touch thermometer (one per school) $640
- Oximeter (one per school) $360
- Electrostatic disinfectant sprayers $33,600
- Deep cleaning of school after a confirmed case $26,000

HIRING STAFF TO IMPLEMENT HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS
- Additional custodial staff for increased cleaning/disinfecting of schools and buses to prevent spread $448,000
- Ensuring at least one FT/PT nurse in every public school $400,000
- Ensuring one aide per bus to screen students temperatures before boarding $384,000

PROVIDING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)
- Gloves for custodial staff (five pairs/day for two custodians per school) $1,440
- Daily disposable masks for in-school staff $44,415
- Disposable masks for students who do not bring masks from home (est. 30% of students) $148,190

PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION & CHILD CARE
- Resume before/after school childcare programs (with social distancing and cleaning protocols) $168,750
- Fog machines and cleaner for buses (7 machines) $55,860
- Hand sanitizer for buses $10,534

**TOTAL ADDITIONAL EXPENSES AN AVERAGE* DISTRICT MAY INCUR TO REOPEN:** $1,778,139

*Costs will vary by district depending on many factors, including regional/market price as economy of scale (i.e., larger districts may have access to lower unit costs because they can buy in higher volumes), and the availability of labor and goods necessary to comply with recommended social distancing and cleaning protocols. Model assumes 25% transportation capacity to adhere to social distancing guidelines. (Bus fleets would need to quadruple in size to safely transport 100% of students under COVID-19 circumstances, which is financially unfeasible for districts.)

This list of costs is not intended to be exhaustive but illustrates how the overall cost of school operations will substantially increase to safely reopen as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on K–12 education, please contact ASBO International & AASA.

External References:
School reopening: Plan on changing plans

“In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

By Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Education leaders across Kansas who are working on plans to re-open schools in August, can certainly relate to the words of our 34th president and fellow Kansan.

The Commander of Allied Forces in World War II knew situations on the battlefield could quickly change and that required rapid responses, tearing up original plans and sometimes improvising on the move.

But the act of planning — examining variables, rating options, maintaining perspective and identifying leaders — was necessary to implement those changes.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic that closed schools in mid-March, school leaders must address a seemingly endless array of possible scenarios in re-opening schools and all those scenarios could change on a dime.

Just look at what has happened in 2020. COVID-19 wasn’t even on the radar for most people in late February. Just weeks later, schools were shuttered for the year and much of the economy was nailed down.

By May, however, it seemed Kansas and most states had “flattened the curve” and officials were confidently saying schools would re-open; some were demanding it. Bars, restaurants and numerous other businesses reopened; many schools started football practice, and everyone was getting haircuts.

But COVID-19 refused to take a break and by late June, many states, including Kansas, were spiking again. Education officials report that a significant number of parents say they won’t be sending their children back into school buildings because of fears of the pandemic and a significant number of parents say their kids must return to school so that they — the parents — can work.

‘Don’t lock in now on one model.’

- Dr. Randy Watson

Kansas Education Commissioner Dr. Randy Watson advised school districts to be flexible. “Don’t lock in now on one model,” he said.

Schools are looking at opening schools with social distancing rules; possibly staggering shifts of students in and out. They are trying to figure out ways to enhance remote learning, which is how most Kansas students ended the last school year. And they are looking at the possibility of opening schools, then having to close them again, and then perhaps re-opening — all depending on the spread of the virus.

KSDE, with the help of about 1,000 Kansans from numerous fields, is crafting a guidance document for school districts. The “Navigating Change 2020” report should be released by July 10 and submitted to the State Board of Education on July 14 for consideration. It will provide districts with options and recommendations on how to keep students and educators safe and provide high quality learning to students, including online instruction.

It will contain no mandates but leave decisions to local school districts on the best way to operate when the new school year starts.

Watson advised local school board members to develop solid working relationships with their local county health department and county commissioners because those officials will be instrumental in deciding local restrictions and closures during the pandemic. He also advised districts to be flexible in delivering instruction.

During a recent KASB Advocacy update via Zoom, Deputy Education Commissioner Brad Neuenswander told school board members from across the state to survey their communities and let them know there will be options when school starts. Many school districts have jumped deep into planning for numerous contingencies as they prepare for the next school year.

KASB Deputy Executive Director Brian Jordan and USA-Kansas Executive Director G.A. Buie said local school boards and superintendents have a monumental task as they work to re-open schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure community buy-in, Jordan and Buie encouraged local education leaders to seek as much input as possible from their communities on re-opening schools but recognize that schools may have to pivot quickly as they did in March. Plans may have to change, Jordan said, “but the process of planning is critical.”

"In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower
On-site and online, KASB schedules summer Regional Roundtable meetings

In July, KASB will offer on-site and online summer regional roundtables that will focus on student success amid the COVID-19 pandemic and reopening of schools after a five-month hiatus.

The sessions will offer education leaders the opportunity to discuss with KASB leaders and each other in small groups ideas to meet the challenges ahead. The discussions will focus on strategies, health and safety issues, funding and district goals.

Leaders will also be able to provide input on legislative topics in the run up to the 2021 legislative session.

To find out more information and to register go to the KASB website. To find out more information and to register go to the KASB website.
- **Virtual sessions** will run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thur. July 9 and Tue. July 14.
- **On-site meetings** will start with a meal at 5:30 p.m. and adjourn no later than 8:30 p.m.

Here are the dates and locations of the on-site sessions:
- **Tuesday, July 7** at the City Limits Convention Center, Colby;
- **Tuesday, July 7** at The Learning Center, Haysville;
- **Thursday, July 16** at Northcentral Kansas Technical College, Beloit;
- **Thursday, July 16** at Piper USD 203.
Public comment during virtual meetings

One of the most difficult changes districts have had to make concerning board meetings is the handling of public comment during those meetings. The process of controlling a meeting via technology and still allowing for public participation is a difficult balance to achieve. Many districts have employed different methods of public comment and some have altogether suspended the practice for the duration of virtual meetings. There is no “right” way to navigate the minefield that is virtual public comment, but there are a couple of ways that might lead to more headaches for the board than others.

As a reminder, public comment is not required anywhere in the Kansas Open Meetings Act (“KOMA”) or in school law statutes. The KOMA only requires the public be allowed to observe the meetings. It does not require participation. This means that whether to have public comment is a local board decision and may be impacted by the board’s adopted policy. If you use KASB’s policy, your public comment policy is BCBI Public Participation at Board Meetings.

With the decision left to local control, the board has unilateral authority to modify, suspend, or completely remove public comment from meetings if it so chooses.

However, if the board is going to carry on with public comment during the era of virtual meetings, it is helpful to keep a few things in mind. First, the traditional rules of public comment apply, information that violates the privacy interests of students or staff should not be allowed (this goes for emails, voicemails, or live comment). Comments that violate this rule should be redacted or stopped so that disclosure of private information is limited or avoided if possible.

Districts that collect public comment through email should consider the method of presentation to the public. It may be an inefficient use of the board’s time to read all the emails back to the public at the following meeting. Instead, consider collecting topics of the comments and releasing it to the public along with instructions on how the public can view the (redacted) comments online on the board website.

An additional concern to reading comments back to the public at a meeting is that of confusion. A member of the public who is causally paying attention to the meeting online and doing other things may miss that a board member is reading a comment and attribute the comment to the board member as their individual thoughts. This can lead to a large amount of unnecessary confusion and ire. While it is not the board’s responsibility to ensure that the public pays attention and accurately hears and understands its proceedings, we hesitate to put the board in a position where misunderstandings and confusions can easily happen and are just as easily avoided.

Guidance for summer activities

The Kansas State High School Activities Association (“KSHSAA”) has allowed restricted summer activities starting June 1, 2020. While this comes as a great relief to students, parents, coaches, and school sports enthusiasts, it has left a lingering question about potential liability for those students engaging in summer activities.

First and foremost, KASB echoes and supports the guidance issued by KSHSAA and suggests all members follow that guidance. Secondly, districts may consider including an assumption of risk acknowledgment in their summer activities information concerning COVID-19 and potential exposure. It may be common sense to most that during a national pandemic, any close contact with another person may result in exposure to the infection, especially when infected persons may appear asymptomatic, but there are those who may believe that if the district is having activities then the risk is gone.

In the Member Portal, there are samples of acknowledgments for districts to use that explain the risks associated with engaging in summer activities during a pandemic. Think of these acknowledgments as the typical athletic activity waivers, but now they include language concerning COVID-19. These new acknowledgments point out that while the district will do everything it can to keep things safe and sanitary, there is always risk of exposure and potential infection through activities that involve other people, and that parents assume that risk by allowing students to participate.