

SB 427
Proponent Testimony of Carla Wieggers – in person
Senate Education Committee
March 13, 2024

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 427 on behalf of the stakeholders of Lansing USD 469. My name is Carla Wieggers, and I am a 19 year resident of Lansing, raising two children in partnership with district schools, and I recently served on the local school board.

I am in support of transparency and convenient availability of school board member contact information for stakeholders, the ease and willingness to add new items to the agenda, engage with the public at board meetings, allow community stakeholders to freely attend and civilly comment during public time, and I also support considering training from multiple sources and nonprofit organizations to be able to discern the important responsibilities that school board members have in serving the people of their community.

The eligibility of any of the seven board members to add agenda items on the day of the meetings should be supported. Additionally, to ensure that agenda items don't just drop off the radar, it may be valuable for the board to establish a running list of items for the group to get to in a timely manner.

The ability to call special meetings by the board president, or a group of three, is vital. On two specific occasions, I recall observing that there was a: 1) lack of urgency to meet and discuss personnel actions that needed to be addressed prior to a supervisor departing the district, and 2) another perceived delay in an ongoing investigation process. Both these instances were not swiftly serving the stakeholders of the school district.

The control and accessibility of the school board of all school grounds, district property and buildings is key for board members to recognize and assume responsibility, outlined in Sec. 3. K.S.A. 72-1416. When a viable structure is neglected to a point of being unsafe and no longer in condition to use, in my opinion, there has been a failure in management of that public school resource. It is the responsibility and stewardship of the school board to remain up to date on the maintenance of facilities that they are entrusted to oversee by community stakeholders. Additionally, the board must ensure that the Superintendent is keenly aware of the need for the appropriate level of care of district property and for establishing a system of maintenance and work ethic.

Thank you for letting me speak today. I am happy to be of service in the future. I appreciate what you do in service to the state of Kansas.

Respectfully,
Carla Wieggers

SB 428
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Dear Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee,
I thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 428 on behalf of the stakeholders of Lansing USD 469. I am a 19 year resident of Lansing, raising two children in partnership with district schools, and I recently served on the Lansing school board.

I am in support of ensuring that the attendance center needs assessments (Building Needs Assessment or BNA) be conducted by the school board on behalf of all stakeholders. I believe that standardization, perhaps even workshops conducted by KSDE on “what right looks like (or could look like)” in implementing the needs assessment process is necessary for implementing a true assessment process.

I believe in “local control” by individual USDs, and KSDE has provided a detailed plan for a tracking document which provides a solid process as well as a product to capture data and track educational progress from year to year and convey transparency to community stakeholders. The populated templates serve as supporting documentation to the community stakeholders that their resources will be used effectively and efficiently when the school board votes on the superintendent’s proposed budget each September.

It is integral that the seven board members understand the importance of the needs assessment process. Once this tracking document is established by directors and building administrators and the assessment is conducted and collaboration takes place between superintendent and the school board, future years will be more efficient in adding input and conducting the BNA.

1. KSDE’s School Finance Guidelines & Manuals, Building Needs Assessments Review Guidance & Budget Usage, Incorporating Into the Budgeting process (published March 2023, pages 1-5):

“Requirements:

The USD board of education must complete a needs assessment of each attendance center within the USD.

A tracking document should be used (may use KSDE template) and should include important questions to monitor the data and progress of the building,

evaluate curriculum, staffing and facility needs as well as other important items to consider for the continued growth of the school.

Per K.S.A. 72-1163, the needs assessment should also track the progress of the attendance center to meet the goal set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218(c) (State Board of Education's Outcomes and Educational Capacities aka Rose Capacities).

The Needs Assessment for each school must be used by the USD board of education when approving the annual Budget and must be available at the USD administrative offices and posted to the USD website.

The minutes of the meeting at which the board approves the annual Budget, should include that each building's needs assessments that the needs assessment was provided to, and evaluated by, the USD board of education and how the USD board of education used the needs assessment in the approval of the USD budget."

It clearly states in the BNA documents and supporting templates that the school board must conduct, complete the BNA. They should not simply receive the information, the process should include professional collaboration.

2. KSDE Building Needs Assessment Template Instructions (published March 2023, Pages 1-15 and more):

"Template Instructions

Please enter in all blue boxes.

The questions in the Building Needs Assessment are suggestions only and can be edited by adding or removing topics/ questions in order to make sure it's best fit for your district.

If removing and adding questions, it's suggested to use the Word or Excel templates.

By statute, all buildings must complete some form of a Needs Assessment.

Templates for BOE State Assessments Review/Building State Assessments Review may be found on KSDE's School Finance Guidelines & Manuals page in the Guidelines section."

3. Below will be an example of an excerpt from Building Needs Assessment template of Derby, USD 260, Wichita.

The Derby BOE appears to have really put a lot of time into the process and product of the BNA process, communicating with their superintendent and District Leadership

Team, and how to use it as a tracking document. Similar to Lansing USD 469, Derby is also in the process of implementing a long range strategic plan.

A little background of when I discovered the gravity of conducting the BNA.

In September 2022 (as our USD 469 board was discussing the annual budget), Lansing board members asked the Superintendent at the time about the BNA. Some of us asked him what he used to assess and determine the budget he presented to us for our approval?

We asked him about the analysis of the previous year's budget - had they gotten that right?

Was the previous year's budget adequate to carry out what the Superintendent needed from community resources to educate our area children?

We asked him if he could plug data into the newly published KSDE template (from July 2022). He declined that he would not ask his people to do that. He offered to the board that he would start to implement the KSDE template for the following school year (2022-2023).

In January 2023, some on USD 469 BOE attended a workshop put on by the Kansas School Board Resource Center (KSBRC). We learned about the legislation that had led to the Building Needs Assessment requirement of all Kansas USD boards. But many schools in Kansas were just not doing it effectively (including our district, in my opinion).

In March 2023, as one member of the BOE, I held a town hall off campus to inform the public with transparency about the Building Needs Assessment and how it should be an accompanying document that addressed how our state assessment performance data should be tied to our annual budget process. A Workshop was conducted free of charge by KSBRC, Mr. Traebert.

In May 2023, USD 469 invited KASB to present a class about the Building Needs Assessment at one of our BOE meetings. We had to pay, in addition to our membership with KASB, for this very vital training because it informs the board of how the local tax base provides the resources to support the annual budget. The Building Needs Assessment process was not mentioned during our initial training by KASB.

In June 2023, Lansing's DLT presented to the school board. Though a great start, and probably more analysis than previous years, it was still not "board conducted." It was not collaborative.

If a board member had a question after that presentation, it seemed to be perceived by some DLT members as a "slap in the face" of all of their hard work. I sensed that

questions were not welcome and that questions from the BOE were perceived by staff as “micromanaging” and disregarding, criticizing the educational professionals. That was not the intent. What an unfortunate friction and strain came from this. Some took to social media to post their dissatisfaction, and our Superintendent at the time had decided at that point to resign and quickly found a position in a nearby district - there was some leadership turbulence. Implementing anything new has growing pains. Again, establishing the first template with data provides a baseline by which to track all sorts of gains and document quantifiable action steps.

Additional Issues: the Kansas State Assessment official results are often delayed into September or October to validate the previous academic year’s performance. For each September’s USD Budget Hearing to the Public, it will have to be decided about standardization and consistency on what scores to use, being mindful of gains in the universal screener (Fastbridge) also from one year to the next.

Now take a look at Derby’s Building Needs Assessment Template:

KSDE Needs Assessment - from Derby Website:

“The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Building Needs and State Assessment Review was a new process for all Kansas school districts established prior to the 2022-2023 school year. It was enacted by HB 2567 Sec. 12.

As part of the KSDE Needs and State Assessment Review, each school Building Leadership Team (BLT) within our district has reviewed their Kansas Assessment Program data. This review included KSDE identified staff, student, and school information. Each BLT recommended action steps to work towards moving students into state assessment levels 3 and 4.

During the July 31, 2023 Special Board of Education workshop, Boards members were provided with each school’s needs assessment to review barriers, suggest action steps and verify priorities for budget approval.



2023-2024 School Year Building Needs Assessment for 2023-2024 Budget Considerations

Dist		Bld	
istrict:	260	g #	Grades Served:
Sch	Paul B Cooper	193	
ool:	Elem	0	K-5,PK (w/IEP),PK,DC,PKAR (4 YO)

Please consider the following questions as you complete the needs assessment for your building.

SECTION 1: Student Needs	Notes	
a. Student Headcount	277	
b. Percentage of students with an active IEP	23.19 %	
c. Percentage of students enrolled in English Language Learner (ELL) services	35.74 %	
d. Percentage of students identified as At-Risk (Free lunch)?	75.09 %	School receives school-wide free meals based upon population and community.
e. Pupil-Teacher Ratio Average	10.3	
f. Pupil-Teacher Ratio Median	10.3	
g. Are the needs of Foster Care Students being met? If no, what supports are needed?	Yes	Number of foster care students 6 Special Education 4/6 67% Student needs in foster care are being met, but due to the nature that 67% of the foster care students enrolled also receive special education services, it does require increased staffing to meet individual needs. The students' needs were met by Cooper Elementary staff.
h. Are there gaps in student success among race/ethnicity student subgroups?	Yes	We see achievement gaps within socioeconomic groups and within special education student groups. We also see gaps between students who have been identified as requiring special education services and those who have not. For example in ELA our 4th grade student averages for levels 3 and 4 are 21.4% compared to student subgroups of FRL at 18.9% and English Language learners 13.3%. Another example is 4th grade math 14.6% are scoring in levels 3 and 4 compared to 11.6% of FRL students, 10% of students

			with disabilities, and 5.3% of English Language Learners.
i.	Is there a tiered system of support to target reading growth?	Yes	DIBELS, Core Phonics and RI are used to place students in Tier 2 interventions in class or Take Flight
j.	Is there a tiered system of support to target math growth?	Yes	CBM and Ready Math diagnostic are used to place students in Tier 2 classroom math group or with a math para
k.	Are there local assessments to measure reading growth?	Yes	Yes - RI, DIBELS, Masteryconnect common assessments
l.	Are there local assessments to measure math growth?	Yes	Yes- Masteryconnect common assessments and Ready Math Diagnostic assessments
m.	Are there learning opportunities for students to focus on academic needs outside the traditional classroom setting?	Yes	Pull out Tier 3 instruction is provided during the school day, after school tutoring is offered throughout the school year.
n.	Reviewing state assessment data, what steps are you taking for all students to maximize their scores?	Yes	We will work in PLC groups to move 15% or more of students scoring proficiency Levels 1 and 2 up 1 API level. In K-3 we will improve the percentage of students meeting expectations on the EOY benchmarks for DIBELS and ReadyMath. We will work in PLC groups to establish individual student learning targets for growth. We will continue to monitor and set goals throughout the year with benchmark assessments measuring our progress.
o.	Are there set targets/goals to move students out of proficiency Levels 1 and 2 on state assessments?	Yes	We will work in PLC groups to move 25% or more of students scoring proficiency Levels 1 and 2 and 3 up 1 API level. We will work in PLC groups to establish individual student learning targets for growth. In K-2 we will improve the percentage of students meeting EOY benchmarks on DIBELS and ReadyMath by 5%. We will continue to monitor and set goals throughout the year with benchmark assessments measuring our progress.

4. “The USD board of education should review state assessment results and document the following by using the KSDE Building Assessments Review (Pages 1-4, Published March 2023). Again, this is a process not merely a product:

- A) Identify the barriers that must be overcome for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on assessments**
- B) Identify the budget actions that should be taken to address and remove those barriers.**
- C) The amount of time the board estimates it will take for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on the state assessments if the budget actions would be implemented.”**

Additional Issues: With regard to B) budget actions, the KSDE template provides more detail for staff members to quantify how best the district is using taxpayer dollars and being fiscally responsible,

An example could be last year's academic year and assessment. The District Leadership Team determined that it would need 8 more staff members at about \$400,000 in order to remove barriers for student success. That is a considerable amount, so the Superintendent might phase these new personnel in over months or a year and continue to assess if they still need them over time?

And "the amount of time" that the BOE estimates that it will take to achieve grade level proficiency, IF the budget were to be implemented?

Understanding Revenue Neutral and our Bonds seems an important skill as local people are looking at our districts as a taxing entity.

There is no "higher headquarters" to a school board, it practices local control. That said, there are many influencers in education: State Board of Education, KSDE, KASB, KSBRC. How will the seven members of a school board be motivated to engage the responsibility of needs assessments? Reaching out to Derby District may be a start at establishing a sounding board.

Respectfully,
Carla Wiegers