

House Education Budget Committee

Testimony on the FY 2013 Budget

Presented by Cheryl L. Semmel, Executive Director

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Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on the Department of Education budget. As education and community leaders, we recognize that our classrooms and schools must be dynamic and innovative to best prepare students for the 21st century workforce.

Administrators believe the best thing we can do for our state is to provide a quality education for every student to ensure an educated work force and an innovative entrepreneurial culture in Kansas that will help grow our economy.

Administrators appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Governor's FY 2013 budget proposal. We recognize that there is a lot of interest in discussing how education in Kansas is funded. Certainly, funding for education programs comprises the largest portion of the State's budget.

Since 2009, the Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) has decreased by \$278 million in general state aid. The BSAPP, currently at \$3,870, is well below the \$4,492 set in current law. While administrators recognize the State was struggling with the recession and we made difficult decisions about reducing and eliminating programs and support services, our hope was that as the economy improved, we would work to restore funding.

USA|Kansas supports funding the current formula and believes that as the economy is improving, we begin work to restore funding the \$4,492 BSAPP over the next three years.

Multi-year Funding. Administrators support a **multi-year funding plan that allows us to be good stewards of our patrons' tax dollars.** This will help us engage in long-term planning that allows for innovation and will help us be more efficient in the use of our limited resources.

Career and Technical Education (CTE). While most of the Excellence in Education Act was drafted for implementation in FY 2014, there are proposed changes to CTE in FY 2013. Administrators believe that Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs play a vital role in making students "workforce ready." We also know that these programs are powerful tools for engaging students who may struggle to see the relevance in traditional "college-prep" programs.

We support the Governor's proposal to allocate **funding to promote career and technical education** and to provide **scholarships for secondary students** who graduate from high school with a CTE certificate in a high demand occupation. We encourage you to fund these programs.

However, we do believe that **CTE should be funded using the current weighting of .5** (recently passed by the in SB 393). We believe that using the weighted calculation is consistent with our support for the current formula and that it reduces the vulnerabilities in subjecting CTE to annual appropriations.

Professional Development and Mentoring. As educators, we know that high quality instruction and leadership have a significant impact on student learning. Administrators support the Department of Education's request to fund professional development and mentoring for teachers and administrators.

Bond and Interest. The Governor has proposed elimination of state aid on capital improvements for bonds approved by voters, effective July 1, 2012. We have several concerns with this provision.

First, school districts are committed to ensuring safe and modern facilities that are conducive to student learning. We are concerned that elimination of state aid for bond and interest will result in postponed capital improvements and ultimately create a backlog of maintenance issues.

We are also concerned about the potentially disequalizing effects this could have on districts; specifically, those districts that can generate enough local revenue for these projects and those who cannot.

Finally, there is a significant amount of preparation involved in a bond campaign before going to a vote. In many districts, bond campaigns are underway and part of that process has been the calculation of state aid – not only have school districts factored that in, but so have voters. If the goal is to identify a way to control escalating costs, **a viable alternative might be allocating a set amount for projects each year and/or establishing a process** whereby school districts seeking state aid would submit projects for approval.

Local Option Budget. Over the last three years, the state hasn't appropriated enough money to pay all the equalization aid districts could receive according to the current finance formula. As a result, KSDE prorated aid to school districts. For FY 2012, districts eligible for LOB equalization aid received just less than 86 percent of the aid due, down from 92 percent in FY 2011. It appears that the Governor's budget maintains the same funding level for FY 2013. We encourage the Legislature to review this and, if possible, fund LOB equalization at 92 percent.

Funding for Innovative Programs. The Governor has talked about block grants or "seed" money to encourage development of innovative programs. While many Kansas schools are doing some great and innovative things, we believe that targeted resources for development and implementation could support districts in their work. Our hope is that, with your support, we could create additional opportunities for students. **We encourage the Committee to consider adding \$5 million to help schools implement new and innovative programs.**

Thank you for your continued support of education and for realizing the importance of investing in education. Preparing our children requires a shared commitment, collaboration, and open dialogue among all stakeholders.