



**Oral, Neutral Testimony before the
Senate Committee on Education**

on

SB 362 – requiring consideration and documentation of district building needs assessments and state academic assessments

by

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Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **SB 362**. We appear neutral on this bill because we support the concept of using student achievement data to support budget decisions by local school districts. We believe school boards and their administrators and other staff members are already focused on improving educational outcomes. Quite frankly, we believe that is why most people run for their local school boards. However, we have several serious concerns about the bill as introduced.

SB 362 appears to add the following requirements to state law. First, it requires that the currently mandated “assessment of the educational needs of each attendance center in the district” be published on the district website. Further, it would require that “In the minutes of the meeting at which the board approves its annual budget, the board shall include that such needs assessment was provided to the board, the board evaluated such assessment and how the board used such assessment in the preparation of the school district's budget.”

Second, the bill would require that: “Each year, the board of education of a school district shall review state assessment results and, as part of such review, shall document the following: (A) The barriers that must be overcome to have each student achieve grade level proficiency on such assessments; (B) any budget actions, including, but not limited to, recommendations on reallocation of resources that should be taken to address and remove such barriers; and (C) the amount of time the board estimates it will take for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on the state assessments if such budget actions are implemented.

Here are our concerns.

First, we do not believe that current law requires any particular format for a needs assessment, nor has KSDE required a particular instrument or format, although a sample document is available. It is important to note that Kansas school districts range from one hundred students to 50,000, from single building campuses to scores of attendance centers, and from a budget process where the board is

largely supported by a superintendent and clerk to those with extensive business and operational staff support.

Second, school districts are already *also* involved in multiple projects that require developing needs assessments and impact budgets, such as the state-required professional negotiations process, and compliance with multiple state and local mandates such as special education, plus all of the current requirements of the budget process, including posting three different budget documents.

Frankly, consolidation of this information into more publicly accessible and user-friendly documents is a great idea, but it is important that any new requirement harmonize with, rather than duplicate other requirements.

Third, KASB strongly supports the State Board of Education’s efforts to continue to revise the state accreditation system to focus on measurable academic outcomes. The process of using data to identify strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to improve educational outcomes should be part of all of a school board’s decision-making, from budgets to staffing, curriculum to support programs, and operations to facilities. What is vital is that the budget process and requirements align with and support these other efforts.

Fourth, we would disagree with singling out a report on state assessments alone. The Legislature itself has adopted a much broader set of educational goals in the “Rose Capacities,” and the Kansas State Board of Education has adopted complementary requirements for the Kansans Can vision.

Rose capacities and *Kansans Can* outcomes

“Rose” capacities by Kansas Supreme Court and Legislature as state education goals.	State Board of Education “Kansans Can” Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral and written communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten readiness. • Academically prepared for postsecondary. • <i>Third-grade reading competency*</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of economic, social, and political systems • Understanding of governmental processes • Grounding in the arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental and physical wellness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-emotional skills, measured locally.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training or preparation for advanced training • Academic or vocational skills to compete favorably 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual plans for study with career focus. • High school graduation. • Postsecondary success.
<p><i>*Discussed as joint goal of State Board and Special Legislative Committee on Education</i></p>	

Since the final days of the No Child Left Behind Act, we have heard consistent concerns from our members, from their communities, from input like the State Board of Education’s community meetings in 2015 and last year’s Kansans Can tour, and from business voices that a successful student is much more than a single score on a state assessment.

School boards are already required by state law to receive an annual report of the district's academic assessment programs (KSA 72-3219.) If boards are required to look at student success data, it should include all important measures identified by the Legislature, the State Board and the local community.

Fifth, the bill refers to having students receive grade level proficiency. At this point, the State Board of Education is not designating "grade level proficiency" on state assessments.

Finally, the bill would require the board to estimate the amount of time it will take for each student to achieve grade level proficiency on the state assessments if such budget actions are implemented. To begin with, no school system in Kansas, public or private, has achieved having all students consistently reach a reasonable minimum standard. The directive in the Kansas constitution is for improvement, not perfection.

On the following page is a chart showing Kansas assessment results for several groups of students meeting the Level 2 and above benchmark, which sometimes considered "grade level." The grey line in the middle is the average of all Kansas students. The top blue line is the average for the five private school systems with the state, all of which have a combined low income and special education percentage below 33%. The orange line just below shows test results for the only nine public school system with fewer 33% of low income plus special education. Finally, the bottom yellow line show results for the 11 public school districts with the highest low income plus students with disabilities totals, over 92%.

Note that all public school groups were declining in 2016 and 2017 after eight years of school funding declining compared to inflation. Note that as funding increases began in 2018 and 2019, the decline in scores stopped and levelled off, with a small increase for districts with the highest need students in 2019. We believe more progress would have been made but for the COVID pandemic, which caused a suspension of tests in 2020 and sharp declines from 2019 to 2021.

Note also private school results have also declined since 2015, even before the pandemic. These schools are not "on track" to get all students to "grade level," and had a similar pandemic decline as public schools with similar demographics.

School leaders have no idea what will happen to future funding, to changing student demographics and needs, and to economic and social factors affecting families, communities and school staff. The COVID pandemic, which was completely unexpected, caused the largest measurable learning loss across the nation and world in decades. Educators have no real idea how long it will take to recover because we have never experienced anything like this in modern times. Asking for a long-term prediction of academic results is asking for nothing more than an educated guess.

I want to stress that KASB and its members are committed to educational improvement. On the final page I have placed a chart showing both long-term and short-term trends on many educational measures. Kansas students have made progress in many areas over time, supported by budget decisions school boards have made using state, local and federal funding.

If the committee wishes to work on this bill, KASB stands ready to help address our concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.



Groups with average Free and Reduced Lunch Percent plus Students with Disabilities Percent, 2015 to 2021							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
5 Private Systems: 25.1	90.1	89.2	88.0	88.1	88.3		87.0
9 Public/Private Peers: 25.7	89.4	86.3	84.6	84.9	85.0		83.3
State Average: 62.9%	76.9	73.2	70.9	70.8	71.1		67.7
11 Highest Public: 96.6%	66.9	62.9	61.3	60.5	61.8		54.2

Average Percent Free/Reduce Lunch Eligible Plus Percent Students with Disabilites, 2015-2021					
Private Systems (all under 33%)		All Public Districts under 33%		All Public Districts over 92%	
Kansas City Catholic Diocese	15.9	Andover	18.5	Arkansas City	92.4%
Lutheran Schools (Topeka)	22.2	Blue Valley	18.7	Liberal	92.6%
Salina Catholic Diocese	26.6	De Soto	21.1	Northeast	92.7%
Wichita Catholic Diocese	28.4	Ft Leavenworth	22.9	Dodge City	93.1%
Dodge City Catholic Diocese	32.3	Basehor-Linwood	29.8	Hamilton	94.2%
<i>Average</i>	<i>25.1</i>	Smoky Valley	31.3	Topeka Public Schools	95.1%
		Piper-Kansas City	29.8	Lyons	97.1%
		Silver Lake	30.3	Kansas City	98.3%
		Renwick	29.0	Cedar Vale	100.0%
		<i>Average</i>	<i>25.7</i>	Chase-Raymond	101.0%
				Elk Valley	105.6%
State Average: 62.9%				<i>Average</i>	<i>96.6%</i>

Area	Measure	Pre-COVID Trends (Most dropped in 2021 or no data)
Postsecondary Attainment	Over age 24 (B.A. or higher)	Increased from 11% in 1980 to 34% in 2019.
	Age 18-24 (Any postsecondary)	Increased from 52% in 2005 to 57% in 2019.
	Postsecondary Success Rate – State Department of Education	Increase from 44% (2011-15) to 48% (2014-18)
	High School Students in Postsecondary Courses	Increased from 25,678 in 2015 to 34,908 in 2020.
High School Completion	Over age 24	Increased from 73% in 1980 to 92% in 2019.
	Age 18-24	Increased from 84% in 2005 to 89% in 2019.
	Graduation Rate – Adjusted Cohort (Four year)	Increased from 80.7% in 2010 to 88.2% in 2020.
	Drop-out Rate – percent grades 7-12 leaving school	Decreased (improvement) from 1.7% in 2015 to 1.3% in 2020.
Preparation for Postsecondary	ACT Test – statewide composite score	Decreased from 21.8 in 2015 to 20.4 in 2020.
	Postsecondary Remediation, age 17-19, Kansas state universities and community colleges	Decreased (improvement) from 39.1% to 33.3% at community colleges; 15.2% to 8.9% at state universities.
K-12 Testing	State Assessments – version since 2015 (all students, all grades, reading and math, “grade level”)	Decreased from 77% in 2015 to 71% in 2019.
	National Assessment of Educational Progress – Average percent at “proficient” (equals state “college ready.”)	Increased from 36% in 2003 to 40% 2007-13; decreased to 35% in 2019.