



**Comments on K12 Budget
In
House K12 Education Budget Committee
By
Leah Fliter, Assistant Executive Director of Advocacy
Kansas Association of School Boards
Lfliter@kasb.org
January 29, 2025**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

KASB is pleased to make these comments on budget deliberations for K-12 public schools. Our comments are based on our member-adopted legislative policy. Relevant passages are excerpted below:

Financing Schools

Adequate and Equitable Funding of Public Schools

We support suitable finance provided by the Kansas Legislature, including continued implementation of the constitutionally suitable school funding and inflationary adjustments approved by the Legislature, the Governor, and the Kansas Supreme Court.

We support the renewal of the current constitutional school finance formula, which has been deemed adequate and equitable by the Kansas Supreme Court, by eliminating the sunset provision. Maintaining the structure and approach of this constitutional formula will provide critical stability and continuity for Kansas school districts and their communities, supporting the vital role that our public schools play as community hubs and centers of community connections and activities.

- *The formula should efficiently and effectively meet the planning and funding needs of all districts—those that are growing in enrollment as well as those that are stable or declining in enrollment. This is especially important given the uncertainties in forecasting enrollment that now exist because of the current non-resident enrollment procedures districts are required to follow.*
- *Ensuring equitable and adequate funding for school district capital costs by revising the capital improvement aid formula and allowing districts to provide appropriate facilities. The legislature should eliminate the statute prohibiting the State Board of Education from approving a bond issue if the cap on bond and interest state aid has been reached.*

Certified and Classified Staff Pay

**Kansas Association of School Boards
1420 SW Arrowhead Rd. Topeka, KS 66604 | 785-273-3600 | www.kasb.org**

- *Increased funding that compensates for rising costs will help districts pay suitable wages to recruit and retain highly qualified staff to continue to promote student success.*

Special Education

- *We support the state legislature meeting its statutory obligation to reimburse special education service costs at the mandatory rate of 92 percent of excess costs to ensure student success. Underfunding special education creates a budget shortfall which forces school districts to shift funds away from services and programs for all students to pay for mandated special education services.*

Academically Prepared for Postsecondary

- *Expanded metrics to accurately evaluate students' academic growth and success.*
- *Access to affordable broadband service for all Kansas students, families, and schools.*
- *Sufficient at-risk funding to meet student needs.*
- *Consistent and stable indicators of need for determining how to allocate at-risk dollars to public schools.*

We'd like to make the following broad recommendations regarding the Kansas State Department of Education's budget request as well as items in Governor Kelly's budget recommendation:

-KASB supports continued inflationary adjustments to K-12 base state aid as litigated in the Gannon school finance case.

-We support phasing in additional state aid for the separate Special Education funding formula to enable the state to fulfill its statutory commitment to fund 92 percent of school districts' excess costs to educate gifted students and students with special needs. The new money added in 2024, while much appreciated, is a one year down payment on a multi-year plan to arrive at full state funding. Without new money in 2025, the underfunding gap will begin to widen again.

-We support the Governor's recommendation to add \$500,000 SGF for AP test fees for low-income students because of the impact it will have on student achievement and opportunity.

-Regarding the Governor's recommendation to add \$5.5 million SGF to cover the copay costs for breakfast and lunch for low-income students, KASB members know that hungry kids can't learn; however, school districts' at-risk funding is allocated based on the number of students who qualify for free school meals. We encourage the legislature to consider adopting additional or other means of determining how to allocate at-risk dollars to public schools instead of relying solely on free meal status.

Thank you.

KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools. We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.