



Oral Opponent Testimony on

SB 428

By

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Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

KASB appears today in opposition to SB 428. As always, our position is based on our member-affirmed legislative policy platform:

Section 2 – Constitutional Responsibilities:

- We support general supervision of public schools under the State Board of Education, including setting standards for accreditation, learning standards, graduation, and licensure.
- We support management of public schools under locally elected boards of education, including setting curriculum, staffing, financial management and policies, so that such schools can progress and meet State Board standards.

We believe, and can demonstrate, that local boards make sound local decisions to assess student needs and budget for increased student achievement and without the interference of the prescriptive measures in SB 428.

Derby USD 260 is an example of how one school district has adopted a strong needs assessment process in connection with its strategic plan that resulted in improvements on last year's state math and reading tests that were about double the state average. Its percentage of high needs students is similar to the state average.

The district's 2022-2027 strategic plan prioritizes the needs assessment to identify and determine attainable school resources, academic progress, and individual needs for each school:

- Goals for 2022-23 through 2024-25 include raising state assessment results by two percent annually.
- The needs assessment and state assessment review are used in the district's preparation for the state accreditation process.

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The district provides schools and teachers with detailed reporting on how each student is doing on assessments including changes in performance over time.

The data allows Derby educators to evaluate results at the student, classroom, building, and district levels. For example, last spring data indicated a weakness in learning about fractions in math, so the district used federal COVID funding to add a fractions program to support instruction – a clear example of using the needs assessment data to make budget allocations to improve student learning.

Principals are given professional development and report monthly how they are using data. Data is reviewed at weekly teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. Curriculum coordinators visit each grade level and attend PLCs. Three professional development days are spent each year on common needs assessment focused topics. Late start collaboration time is used throughout the school year to work on goals and needs.

Derby students have individual goals in reading and math, and they track their own results. They are also engaged in their plan to improve in those areas. Students and staff share details of these in presentations to the school board. Although much of the work on the needs assessment and recommendations is developed by the administration and building leadership, it is ultimately a tool for the board. The new system means the board must spend more time on these topics through regular meeting updates and written reports from the superintendent.

“I will admit I was skeptical,” board president Michel Blankenship said. “I thought this might just be something to kind of check off. I was surprised when we got a three-ring binder and all the data, which showed our administrative leadership took it very seriously. It’s a big challenge but it's easy to get complacent no matter what you're doing. I think the needs assessment helps keep us talking about the big picture, focused on our strategic plan and goals.”

Derby USD 260 is a great, recent example of KASB members using their strategic plans to drive student achievement; however, Kansas school boards have long considered local needs while budgeting to prepare our children for success in academics, careers, and in life. Here are some examples:

- The annual announcement of Kansas National Merit Scholars reflects how Kansas school boards dedicate resources to academic achievement to prepare students for college.
- Louisburg USD 416 graduated 96.5% of its high school students last year, thanks to strong partnerships between the the board, staff, teachers, and students.
- Coffeyville USD 445 has increased its high school graduation rate from 78 percent in 2016 to 96.5 percent in 2022 thanks to hard work in a community that faces many challenges.
- In Oakley USD 274, high school students have for many years run the Palace Community movie theater in cooperation with local business sponsors. Students learn important business and life skills, and the 2,000-member rural community enjoys having an affordable, family-friendly movie theater.
- Last year, a record 9 in 10 Kansas students graduated from high school, opening the doors for better opportunities for college, career, and lifetime earnings.
- In 2022-23, Kansas students earned 5,590 professional credentials while still in high school. That’s a 128% increase since 2009, and great news for students, families and businesses.

- The 2023 state assessments saw an increase in top performance levels in all grades for math and all but one grade in English. School boards across Kansas are working hard to provide the resources needed to ensure this improvement continues.

These examples reflect how school boards across Kansas, from our largest communities to some of the smallest, dedicate resources to ensure students succeed in academics, careers, and in life. They consider family and community expectations and the rapidly changing business environment in addition to the testing data required by law.

We invite the committee and all Kansas legislators to check in with their local public schools to learn how they budget to address local needs. We believe you'll see that solutions for student success are most effective when they begin at the local level rather than a top-down mandate.

For these reasons we urge the committee to reject SB 428.

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.