

June 12, 2009



United School Administrators of Kansas
515 S. Kansas Avenue Suite 201
Topeka, Kansas 66603
Phone: 785.232.6566
Fax: 785.232.9776
Web: www.usakansas.org

Mr. Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner
Kansas State Department of Education
120 Southeast 10th Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1182

Dear Mr. Dennis:

On behalf of USA|Kansas and our member associations, I would like to thank the State Board of Education for the invitation to submit legislative recommendations for consideration as part of the FY 2011 budget planning process. As we plan for the upcoming legislative session, administrators are mindful that the state continues to experience an unprecedented economic crisis as revenues continue to fall and the need for appropriate educational services continues to rise.

Our recommendations are based on the premise that schools are required to provide each child with a quality educational experience that will prepare them for the future.

Revenue enhancements

Our commitment is to work towards identifying reasonable solutions that support K-12 public education and recognizing that the state's economic recovery will come only through continued investment in human capital and consideration of revenue enhancements.

Increase the state mill levy. In 1998, the state reduced the general fund mill levy to the current rate of 20 mills, reflecting a significant reduction from previous years.¹ This reduction has impacted the State's ability to meet its long-term commitments to fund public education. Administrators support a phased-in state mill levy increase. It is estimated that for each mill raised, the state would capture approximately \$30 million in increased revenue. To ensure the State can continue to meet the Constitutional requirements of providing suitable funding for the educational interests of the State, administrators believe that these funds should be allocated for K-12 public education.

Administrative efficiencies

Reduce the number of school budget funds to increase transparency. Administrators believe that having fewer funds would provide districts with increased flexibility and transparency. Accountability would be based on a district's ability to demonstrate appropriate progress is being

1

1992 (32 mills), 1993 (33 mills), 1994 (35 mills), 1997 (27 mills), 1998 (20 mills)
Source: Kansas Legislative Research Department

made to educate all subgroups. In the event a district is not demonstrating academic progress in all subgroups, they would be required to develop a spending plan that is approved by KSDE and required to provide more detailed accounting for expenditures (similar to what is currently required). Administrators recognize that Federal requirements can often result in new funds being created and would therefore encourage the State Department of Education to advocate for a similar reform at the national level.

Support a temporary waiver of the continuing contract law (K.S. 72-5437), effectively moving the May 1 deadline to fifteen (15) days following passage of the Omnibus appropriations bill. Administrators do not make decisions about reductions in workforce lightly and are committed to addressing workforce issues responsibly. During the 2009 session, USAIKansas supported a bill that would allow districts, for a limited period of time, to notify teachers of non-renewal within a reasonable number of days following the adoption of the state budget. This would allow districts to make decisions based on more accurate information about the financial resources available to the district.

Building capacity

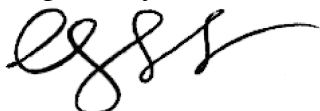
As administrators and lifelong educators, we embrace innovation and continuous improvement. Quality instruction and leadership is critical to the success of our students. New challenges confront school leaders and teachers, including technology, diversity, and relevant curriculum. We are called upon to build capacity in others and form strong teams; leadership must be a culture of shared responsibility throughout the educational organization.

As we strive to improve quality instruction and adequately support new teachers, administrators recognize that there is perhaps no greater investment than allowing new teachers time to strengthen and build upon those skills they have acquired through their educational experience. **Administrators recommend amending K.S. 72-5445 to require teachers to complete not less than five (5) years of consecutive employment**, with an offer of employment for six (6) years, replacing the current law reading “not less than three consecutive years of employment, and been offered a fourth contract.”

In the immediate future, Kansans will be called upon to compromise and work together for the common good of the State. As new initiatives and opportunities arise, administrators encourage the State Board of Education to consider whether these initiatives enhance student learning and whether there are sufficient *new* resources to support implementation and delivery.

In closing, administrators would like to respectfully ask that the State Board of Education join USAIKansas in publicly advocating to ***fund K-12 public education based on the educational needs of students, not political expediency.*** Preparing our children requires a shared commitment, collaboration and open dialogue among all stakeholders.

Respectfully,



Cheryl Semmel, Executive Director