



everychild.one voice.®

Kansas PTA

715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612

www.kansas-pta-legislative.org ■ kansaspta@gmail.com

Testimony to Special Committee on K-12 Student Success

Chair, Representative Ron Highland

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

Sue E. Mollenkamp, Committee Assistant, 785-296-7310

Sue.Mollenkamp@house.ks.gov

9:00 am Room 346-S

Chairman Highland and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Kansas PTA. We would like to extend our appreciation to this Special Committee, as well as the district administrators, KDE and KS Legislative staff, for taking the time to begin gathering data and reviewing information for this important state responsibility.

The Kansas PTA is here today to submit two recommendations, directed primarily at the process of developing a new school finance formula:

One, we ask that creation of a school finance formula involve the active participation of key stakeholders from across the state, facilitated by education experts and informed by rigorous research.

Two, we ask that each student's opportunity, to achieve state education standards and to meet the Rose Capacities, be the guiding criteria used to develop a new school finance formula. Essentially, we ask that actual costs drive the process, rather than allocation be driven by the amount of funds available.

The Kansas PTA bases these requests on the assumption that a school finance formula establishes the boundaries from within which any given school-age child has the opportunity to achieve education standards. Essentially, states have the sole capacity to ensure any parent can walk into their community school knowing the resources are available to help their child achieve and without fear of their child being turned away because of a learning or behavioral challenge, lack of transportation, religious affiliation, financial resources, or some other special need. Equity cannot be established with local and federal funds alone, nor through a system of privatization.

Key stakeholders are beginning to publish statements, identifying key elements and procedural expectations regarding a new school finance formula. Kansas PTA will be looking for these positions papers from educators, parents, patrons, school boards, local chambers, cities, counties and such to identify areas of alignment. To this end, Kansas PTA has appended our legislative priorities most directly relevant to a school finance formula, as well as emerging documents from a few of these key stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration.



Mary F Sinclair, PhD, Kansas PTA Advocate
on behalf of Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President
KansasPTA@gmail.com

The mission and values of the PTA have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago:

PTA Mission - to facilitate every child's potential by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Through advocacy, as well as family and community education over the century, PTA has established programs and [called for legislation](#) that improves our children's lives including: the creation of kindergarten classes, child labor laws, public health service, hot and healthy lunch programs, juvenile justice system, mandatory immunization, arts in education and school safety.

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities.

APPENDICES:

Kansas PTA submits our [Legislative Platform and Priorities](#) to be considered in the development of a new school finance formula:

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION PLATFORM. *The Kansas PTA will recommend, initiate and support legislation and appropriation for public schools that will ensure all children and youth in Kansas a high quality, adequately funded education.*

Priority 1. Kansas PTA will support efforts to strengthen and improve the Kansas public school finance system, which includes legislation and policies that:

- a. uphold Kansas Constitutional obligations to make suitable provision for the finance of the Kansas public schools that is equitable for every child.
- b. restore recent state cuts to base state aid per pupil, back to levels comparable to those deemed suitable by the legislature - actual costs identified in research studies requested and authorized by the Kansas legislature (e.g., Legislative Post Audit 2006 Cost Study).
- c. pursue solutions to fully fund state and federal educational mandates, including the new uniform financial accounting and reporting act, without disproportionately shifting the burden to local communities.

Priority 2. Kansas PTA will support efforts to restore an equitable and balanced tax policy to maintain a reliable revenue stream for public education. A policy which draws upon a combination of income, property and sales taxes has been proven by history to be a secure and sustainable approach. Kansas PTA opposes provisions limiting the growth of government before public education is fully funded to the statutory levels.

Priority 3. Kansas PTA will support efforts to preserve the Kansas Constitutional infrastructure for education, including nonpartisan elections of Kansas school board members and their appointment of our Education Commissioner, as well as, retaining the primary responsibility of defining the phrase intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement with the education governance structure (Kansas School Board, Kansas Department of Education, education scholars and practitioners).

Priority 5. Kansas PTA opposes the use of vouchers, scholarships or tax credits toward the tuition of non-public schools that can discriminate in admissions, provide sectarian religious instruction or “compete” under different rules than public schools; we affirm Governor Brownback’s position that vouchers would not be effective in the state of Kansas.

Priority 6. Kansas PTA will advocate for evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs, including early childhood programs (e.g., Parent as Teachers and Pre-K Pilot), allocating state funds for all-day kindergarten, Head Start, and student engagement programs that reduce dropout rates and increase school completion.

Priority 7. While Kansas PTA supports the current state charter legislation, passed in 1994, that allows for the creation of charter schools under the supervision of local boards of education, Kansas PTA opposes any charter related legislation that: allows for non-licensed teachers or allows for authorizing entities that are for-profit, private or non-education.

TEACHER SUPPORT - PLATFORM. *Recognizing that quality education for children is directly related to the effectiveness and efficiency of school personnel, the Kansas PTA will recommend, initiate and support legislation and appropriations to encourage, recognize and provide incentives for school personnel that will improve and benefit the education of children and youth in Kansas.*

Priority 8. Kansas PTA supports restoration and allocation of state funding for teacher mentoring, staff development and other evidenced-based programs that promote a professional teaching community, teacher retention and recruitment of quality teachers.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT - PLATFORM. *The Kansas PTA recognizes no educational system can be of the highest quality without the support, involvement and cooperation of parents, legislators, and the community.*

**School Administrators Group –
Fundamental Requirements of the next school finance law ([Nov 2015](#))**

As the Legislature and Governor Sam Brownback consider a new way to fund schools, United School Administrators of Kansas recently put together a list of “fundamental requirements” for the next school finance formula.

The list includes:

- Every student in Kansas public schools will have an equal opportunity to be college and career ready as defined by the Rose Standards.
- Some students will require greater supports to meet those standards.
- The Legislature and school districts need budgeting predictability.
- The formula must meet constitutional requirements for equity and adequacy.
- Local control and flexibility of funding educational services should be allowed.

USA/Kansas is an umbrella organization composed of 10 school administrator associations and represents 2,000 administrators statewide.

G.A. Buie, executive director of USA/Kansas, said, “As we move forward with a school finance plan it is important to establish a strong foundation. These five requirements will serve as our base. We must work in cooperation with the Legislature to build a formula that will serve the students of Kansas and allow educational professionals to build a system that meets the rapidly changing needs of Kansans.”

KASB Legislative Committee Report ([working report for the 2016 session](#)):

Funding for Student Success:

PTA supports the Supreme Court rulings of Montoy and Gannon, which found that the basic structure of the former school funding formula is constitutionally sound, with a combination of base foundation funding for all students and additional funding for students whose opportunity to achieve state education standards requires more resources, as determined by scientific research, not political expediency.

State Responsibility:

1. **Basic Funding.** As the state develops a new school finance formula to replace block grants system, KASB supports increasing statewide education funding and the per pupil amount for each district, based upon the statutory level approved by previous legislatures and the Kansas Supreme Court and recommended by the State Board of Education, studies of educational costs, funding levels in the highest achieving states; traditional levels of educational funding compared to state income; and annual increases in operating costs and state requirements
2. **Cost Differences.** KASB believes the school finance system should provide additional funding through mechanisms for high cost students. All such mechanisms should be developed using evidence-based research, not political expediency.
3. **Special education.** KASB supports full funding of special education as required by state law [not just at the federal maintenance of effort level].
4. **Early Childhood.** KASB supports full funding for students in all-day kindergarten and strengthening funding for other early childhood programs.

Funding Equity

1. **State and local balance.** KASB supports local funding authority for both operating and capital costs, providing such authority is equalized with an appropriate mix of tax resources.

Tax Policy

1. **State Revenues.** KASB supports balanced and sustainable state tax policies that provide increasing education funding necessary for increasing educational outcomes. If current tax policies do not provide revenue to meet these costs, state tax policies should be revised. Changes in education funding and tax policy should not increase disparity in local tax efforts, and any new revenue source should be equalized.
2. **Tax Policy.** KASB supports efforts to broaden the tax base by reducing special exemptions and credits and oppose further targeted tax reductions. KASB further supports an independent study of the Kansas tax structure, including the impact of recent policy changes.
3. **Statewide Mill Levy.** KASB supports directing revenue from the 20 mill levy to local districts as local effort, rather than the state.