

School Boards in Kansas

Mark Tallman

Associate Executive Director
Kansas Association of School Boards

Education in the U.S.

A national interest...



...a state responsibility...



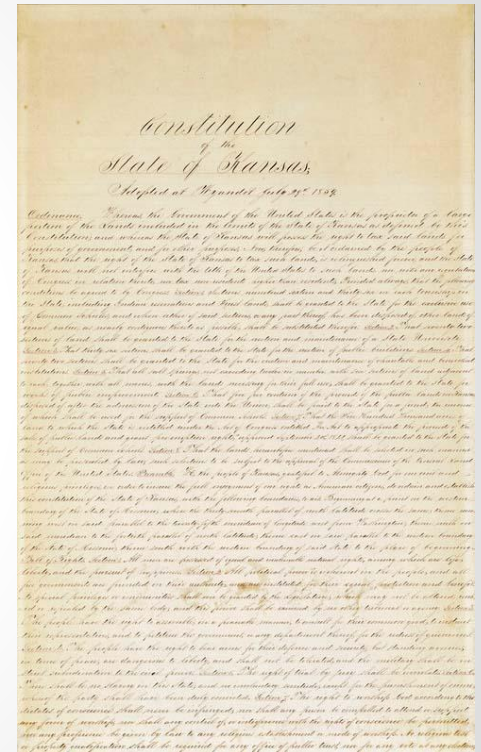
...and a local function.



Kansas Constitution Article 6 - Education

As Amended by the People, 1966:

- Purpose:
 - Intellectual, educational, scientific and vocational improvement through public schools and colleges.
- Authority:
 - “General supervision” from elected State Board of Education
 - Public schools “maintained, developed and operated” by local elected boards
 - “Suitable provision for finance” by the Legislature.



Checks and Balances

State Board

sets standards for all schools to ensure a foundation of quality for all districts.



Local boards

ensure public schools are responsive to students, parents and patrons of each community.

The **Legislature** ensures all districts can provide a foundational quality of education despite very different local resources.

First 100 years of Kansas school boards

- Not uniform: some for city systems, some for single elementary schools or rural high schools.
- Different numbers of members, election process, powers; overlapping boundaries.
- Thousands of boards across the state.

First 100 years of Kansas school boards

- Accountability level; county superintendents, state superintendent; no State Board.
- Community (junior) colleges and area technical schools (not colleges) developed out of local school districts.
- Funding overwhelmingly local, property tax (over 80% of state and local revenue in 1930, 55% in 1960; about 34% now.)

Formation of modern school boards

- 1960s unification acts required “uniform” system, grades one to 12 (kindergarden not required).
- All territory (students and taxpayers) in one district; developed by local planning bodies.
- Had to meet two of three minimum requirements (students, size, taxable wealth).

Formation of modern school boards

- Origin of USD “number system” beginning with 200, ending at 512.
- All districts have same number of board members, same election process, same authority (one exception).
- Decreased from over 1,000 to 312 districts; increased spending; local controversies and “agreements.”
- Dropped from 304 to 286 over past decade.

Kansas school boards today - elections



- Seven members.
 - Four-year staggered terms.
 - Non-partisan April elections.
 - Terms begin July 1.
 - Multiple “voting plans” - at large and board district positions.
-
- Historically, high rates of reelection **and** high turn-over rates (50% have served one term or less).
 - Vacancies filled by remaining board members.

Kansas school boards today - authority

Executive

- Hires superintendent, clerk, treasurer.
- Approves employment of all other staff.
- Approves most contracts.
- Approves expenditure of district funds.
- Negotiates contracts with teacher unions.

Legislative

- Approves board policies “laws” for the district; student handbooks.
- Sets district curriculum and student assessments program.
- Approves budget, tax rates and fees, within state limits.
- Approves inter-local agreements for joint services.
- Establishes evaluation systems for staff.

Quasi-Judicial

- Hears appeals for student suspension and expulsion.
- May hear appeals for staff and student decisions, parental concerns.

The Key Work of School Boards (NSBA):

- **Vision**: Establishment of goals for student achievement.
- **Standards**: Statements that define and explain educational expectations.
- **Assessment**: Measuring outcomes against performance standards.
- **Accountability**: Assigning responsibility for educational outcomes.
- **Alignment**: Vision, goals, and priorities matched with communication, planning, resource allocation, and implementation.
- **Climate**: Policies and actions of district leaders set the tone for attitudes and behaviors of staff and students.
- **Collaboration**: Partnership among board members, parents, businesses, political leaders, the media and the community at large.

Seven ways Boards direct the district

- Policy
- Handbooks
- Directives to superintendent
- Evaluating the superintendent
- Goal-setting
- Negotiated agreement
- Allocation of resources



Limits on local board authority

- Boards set curriculum, but accreditation based on student tests reflecting state standards.
- State regulations on programs and services.
- State licensing requirements.
- Federal special education requirements.
- Federal office of civil rights investigations, compliance.
- State law limits local option funding, fees, capital outlay; voter approval for construction bonds.

Limits on local board authority

Recent changes:

- Innovative district law allows exemptions from laws, regulations in exchange for higher outcomes targets.
- Repeal of teacher due process or tenure law (under legal challenge).

Kansas Education Goals

Rose capacities for each student:

- Communication skills to enable students to function in a complex and rapidly changing civilization;
- Knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices;
- Understanding of governmental processes to enable the student to understand the issues that affect his or her community, state, and nation;
- Sufficient self-knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness;

Kansas Education Goals

Rose capacities for each student:

- Grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage;
- Training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently; and
- Academic or vocational skills to enable public school students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.

Kansas Education Goals

What do the Rose capacities really mean?

- Every child should finish school with skills to be successful in society, economically, physically and mentally, as part of a culture, and as a citizen.
- Not about passing tests, or coursework, or “seat time” or Carnegie units of credit. (These may be indicators, but are not the real goals.)
- Every student should be prepared to be successful based on their “chosen” life work, but different career paths may require different ways to prepare for success.

How are Kansas schools performing?

- 85-90% of students graduate, all-time high; KS ranks in top 15 states.
- Near estimate for jobs requiring high school diploma (90%).
- Approximately 40% of Kansas students appear to be “college-ready”.
- Approximately 60% of Kansans 18-24 have some college, up to a four-year degree (ranks 16th).



How are Kansas schools performing?

- Approximately 20% of students need college remediation.
- Similar to % not taking college prep courses in high school (not required for graduation).
- Nearly 70% of Kansas jobs in 2020 expected to require some postsecondary education.
- Kansas ranks between 5th and 15th on reading and math tests, graduation, preparation for college and adult educational levels; eighth overall.
- Near average on per pupil funding; student poverty.
- No higher achieving states overall spend less, have more poverty.

