

Press Release

For Immediate Release

January 12, 2016

Joint Statement of KASB, USA, KSSA, KNEA on start of 2016 legislative session

TOPEKA- Our Kansas public schools are great. Every day teachers, administrators, support professionals and school leaders work magic in our classrooms and districts statewide.

The results are there. Working with parents and communities, Kansas schools rank in the top ten nationally on every measure on reading and math tests, high school completion and college preparation.

The Kansas education community is proud of these results and Kansas parents feel confident sending their children to our public schools every day.

But our heartfelt desire is to move public schools from the top ten to the top. We agree with the State Board of Education's new vision: "Kansas leads the world in the success of every child."

We aren't content to rest on our laurels and coast. We long to be the best.

That is why our teachers and administrators seek out and participate in staff development opportunities. That's why so many of our educators have graduate degrees in their subject area or in curriculum. That's why school board members are committed to implementing that vision for every child to succeed in school and in life. The need to improve the Kansas public school system is in our DNA and it is in our State Constitution.

Teachers and administrators spend their days helping children learn and after hours meet to discuss what each individual student needs.

School professionals plan curriculum, develop lesson plans, grade papers and analyze student work.

But we don't stop there. School board members, teachers and support personnel are often seen after school hours, working side-by-side at school events to recognize and encourage our young people.

This is how the Kansas school system operates. We are good at. It is not just a job; it is truly a calling.

And we know Kansas public education must continue to improve. All of our organizations have spoken to our members, parents, business leaders, and our communities and believe that we must help students master not only basic academic skills but to be prepared for much higher demands for college and other postsecondary programs, in the workplace





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and as citizens and community members. One thing is clear: we cannot do it alone.

It concerns us that the great things happening in our public schools so often go unrecognized by policymakers. While the focus is often on how we can spend less on our children, we answer by redoubling our efforts.

Teachers spend their own money to buy supplies, while telling their own families to tighten their budgets thanks to pay freezes or the rising cost of our health insurance plans. School districts and board members work hard to preserve programs aimed at student success while reducing administrative costs to the absolute bare minimum.

Now, we turn our attention this week to the Statehouse in Topeka where the Legislature is gathering to consider how to provide for the people of Kansas.

There are challenges to overcome. Our state budget is in the red and state services have been cut to the bone. Kansas needs good highways, safe communities, opportunities and help for our seniors and those with disabilities. And Kansas continues to need great public schools and colleges to develop a work force that will bring good jobs and a strong economy.

Kansas has a long history of overcoming challenges and rising to new heights. It's in our motto *ad astra per aspera* — to the stars through difficulties. We've done it before and we can do it again.

We ask legislators and Gov. Sam Brownback to choose partnership, not partisanship; compromise, not conflict; and we ask for them to focus on the long-term effects of their decisions. If they can do this, we pledge to support them in this effort. Let us all return to the Statehouse with the commitment to work together through our current difficulties and set us once again on a path to the stars. That is the Kansas way.

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