

# Building Needs Assessment Training Workshop

*Kansas School Board Resource Center*

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*"You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." - Yogi Berra*

- The building needs assessment exercise may be the most important responsibility for every school board.
- Basis for a strategic plan to improve outcomes, academically prepare students for life.
- Strategic plans that don't address the BNA questions will not get students the education they deserve.



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## Most strategic plans: all hat and no cattle

- Strategic priorities of USD 500 Kansas City
  - “High expectations for student achievement” is #4 of five
  - “Students will have a strong academic foundation anchored by strong literacy skills”

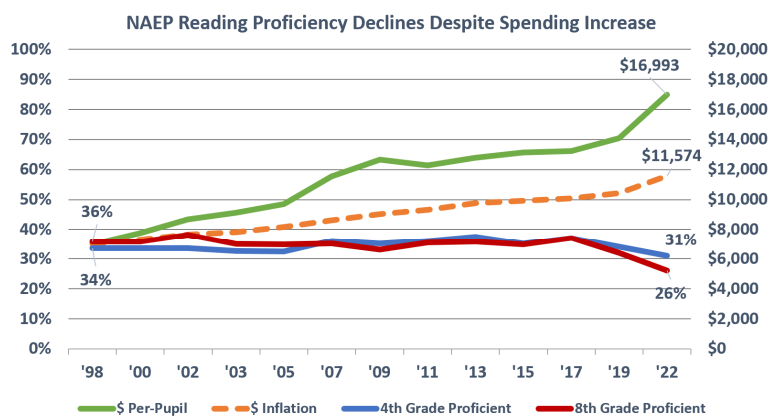
Year	USD 500 Kansas City Math			USD 500 ELA		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
All Grades	58%	32%	10%	58%	28%	14%
10th Grade	69%	26%	5%	63%	26%	11%

2022 State assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number



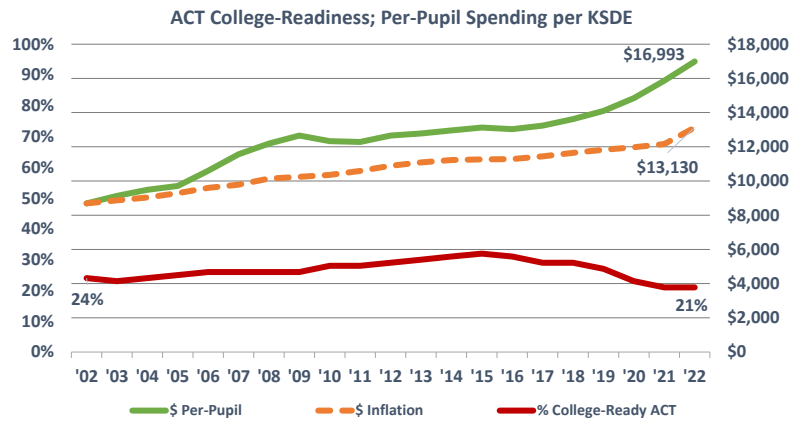
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## Government-provided data: spending up, achievement down



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## ACT college-ready in English, Reading, Math and Science



Source: ACT, Kansas Dept. of Education, Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index for Midwest Cities on fiscal basis.



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State assessment only valid since 2015 (see handout for 2022 results by district)

Year	State of Kansas Math			State of Kansas ELA		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
2015	23%	44%	32%	21%	37%	41%
2016	27%	38%	33%	24%	35%	40%
2017	28%	38%	33%	27%	34%	37%
2018	29%	38%	33%	29%	34%	37%
2019	28%	39%	34%	29%	34%	37%
2021	34%	38%	28%	30%	35%	35%
2022	34%	36%	29%	34%	34%	32%

State assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number



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## Be aware of large achievement gaps

2022 State Assessment Results - English Language Arts				
School	Cohort	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
Dodge City MS	Free/Reduced	65%	27%	8%
Dodge City MS	Self-Pay Lunch	47%	26%	27%
Hays Middle School	Free/Reduced	35%	37%	28%
Hays Middle School	Self-Pay Lunch	19%	37%	44%
Salina Lakewood MS	Free/Reduced	55%	28%	16%
Salina Lakewood MS	Self-Pay Lunch	31%	39%	30%

*Source: KSDE; totals may be <100% due to rounding*



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## K.S.A. 72-1163 legal requirements

Each year the board of education of a school district shall conduct an assessment of the educational needs of each attendance center in the district. Such assessment shall be published on the school district's website. Information obtained from such needs assessment shall be used by the board when approving the budget of the school district to ensure improvement in student academic performance.



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## *You must answer three questions (each school)*

1. What are the barriers preventing students from being proficient in reading and math?
2. What budgetary changes are needed to overcome the barriers?
3. With changes implemented, how many years to proficient (and/or below grade level)?



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## *Most districts did not follow BNA law in 2022*

- Dodge City: district summary only; answers to Question #2 do not address the barriers identified in Question #1, and the response to Question #3 (“more than five years”) is not within the spirit of the law.
- Hays: reports for each school but 3 questions not answered.
- Salina: district summary only; 3 required questions not answered.



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## Part 1: Take Charge of the BNA Process

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### *BNA is a legal obligation for board members*

- Tell district staff to schedule meetings with each school, provide supplies and support as directed.
- District staff may attend to observe, but board members run the meetings.
- Require attendance for teachers and principals?

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## *Discuss BNA meeting parameters in advance*

- Don't let 'board policy' get in the way. Assert your legal obligation to participate.
- No board member should be restricted in asking questions of staff.
- Encourage public to attend and observe.



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## *Setting goals for the district leadership team*

- KSDE target is 75% proficient (Levels 3 and 4).
- Eat the elephant one bite at a time.
  - Be brutally realistic – you won't get there in a few years.
  - Allow for achievement gaps; set goals for each primary cohort.
    - Low-income (free and reduced)
    - Not low-income (self-pay lunch)
  - Allow for grade-level and subject proficiency variances



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## Setting goals for the district leadership team

USD 489 Hays Math						
Year	Low-Income Students			Not Low-Income		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
Grade 3	11%	37%	52%	4%	12%	83%
Grade 4	20%	45%	36%	5%	40%	55%
Grade 5	31%	40%	29%	18%	33%	49%
Grade 6	49%	38%	13%	22%	47%	31%
Grade 7	32%	51%	17%	13%	53%	34%
Grade 8	39%	40%	21%	24%	28%	48%
Grade 10	51%	41%	8%	23%	39%	38%

*State assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number*

- Achievement typically drops precipitously in elementary school and students never catch up – districts must eliminate that inflection point.



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## Setting goals for the district leadership team

- Board members aren't expected to have the answers, but you must ask the tough questions.
  - Why are the causes of achievement declines in early grades?
  - What basic elements are missing in the curriculum?
  - What's getting in the way (DEI, for example) and how do we remove those barriers?
  - Wabaunsee's DEI solution
- No excuses – it's management's job to create a plan to produce required outcomes within existing resources.



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## Part 2: Running Productive Meetings

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### *Q1: Qualities of legitimate barriers*

- Identify challenges that district staff can address. This is a problem-solving exercise, not 'Festivus.'
  - No generic barriers like 'money' and 'staffing.'
  - No political statements.
- Be wary of topics over which schools have little control; focus on what you can do to ameliorate an issue.
  - Early childhood needs
  - Mental health (is DEI making it worse?)
  - Lack of parental involvement

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## Q1: Qualities of legitimate barriers

- Encourage building staff to think ahead to Q2. Barriers should be actionable within existing resources.
- Ask probing questions. What’s the basis for this as a barrier?
- Is there strong consensus on this barrier within the school?
- Emerson Elementary story – is the staff a barrier?



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## Q1: Test the barriers; connect the dots

- Repeatedly emphasize that you’re working together to build a student achievement plan.
- Tell district staff to prepare a specific achievement report for each school. Do barriers reflect the severity of the issue?

Year	Hays Middle School Math			Hays Middle School ELA		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
6th Grade	34%	43%	23%	34%	27%	38%
7th Grade	22%	52%	26%	30%	33%	37%
8th Grade	30%	33%	37%	13%	50%	36%

*2022 State assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number*



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## *Q1: Prioritize the barriers*

- Encourage staff to identify barriers to develop buy-in. List everything for staff to see.
- Then have staff prioritize, either top-to-bottom or at least categorically. For example, with 6 barriers:
  - 2 @ priority 1
  - 2 @ priority 2
  - 2 @ priority 3



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## *Q2: Legitimate budgetary changes*

- This is about resource allocation, not a wish list for more \$.
- Instruction – costs associated with the direct interaction between students and teachers – is “the most important part of the education program, the very foundation on which everything else is built. If this function fails to perform at the needed level, the whole educational program is doomed to failure regardless of how well the other functions perform.”
  - *KSDE Accounting Manual*



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## *Q2: Legitimate budgetary changes*

- Staff needs to know what is available in the 2023 budget:
  - USD 443: \$24,218 per student total; \$19,376 operating
  - USD 389: \$20,034 per student total; \$18,253 operating
  - USD 305: \$24,323 per student total; \$22,206 operating
- Budgets should be about priorities...what can be cut back or eliminated to remove barriers in Q#1?
- Hard numbers aren't necessary yet. Focus on the concepts with building staff; district staff can run numbers later.



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## *Q2: Legitimate budgetary changes*

- Use BNA meetings to develop lists of possibilities.
- Write ideas on big Post-It sheets for all to see.
- Encourage building staff to email with additional thoughts and ideas after the meetings.
- Answers to Question #3 will be addressed with district staff at subsequent meetings.



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## Part 3: Follow-Up Discussions with District Staff

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### *BNA process tells you if you have the right leadership team*

- BNA purpose: put a plan in place to achieve specific achievement goals with existing resources.
- Allocate staff and resources to achieve the plan. Don't try to fit the plan in existing structure; that's trying to disprove Einstein's definition of insanity.
- Emphasize the key principle. Improving outcomes is #1 priority. That means nothing gets in the way...not DEI, extracurriculars, or existing management structure.

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## *Board-driven process that lays out district staff primary responsibilities*

- Staff must provide within the board-determined timeframe:
  - Calculate costs to address each barrier.
  - Provide commentary on barriers identified by building staff.
  - Prioritize options to shift resources to address barriers.
- One week for board study, then a series of public meetings to review with staff and select the options to address achievement barriers.



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## *Board-driven process that lays out primary responsibilities for district staff*

- Budgets should fulfill Instruction needs for improving achievement. Then allocate remaining resources as needed.
- Cost-saving opportunities are everywhere:
  - What happens if we don't spend this (dues, travel, etc.)?
  - Reduce costs with outsourcing & cross-district service-sharing.
  - Are we losing money on food service?
  - Are we fully utilizing bulk purchasing options?



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## *Dealing with objections*

- Keep the focus on the BNA purpose.
- Ask questions like...Is (doing this or avoiding that) more important than improving achievement?



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## Part 4: Passing the Budget & Monthly Updates

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## *Public budget hearing*

- Keep the focus on the BNA process. The budget is built around targeted student achievement gains.
- Achievement handout for the public. The budget is designed to go from (A) specific 2022 state assessment results to (B) specific goals by (C) the end of a specific school year.
- Emphasize the major barriers identified and the related changes proposed in the budget.



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## *Monthly progress reports*

- Progress reports from at least one elementary, middle school, and high school principal at each board meeting.
  - What are we doing differently, and why?
  - How are we measuring progress?
  - Student and staff reactions.
  - How can parents and community leaders help?
- Educate the community; civic clubs, chamber of commerce.



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