

# Building Needs Assessment Training Workshop

*Kansas School Board Resource Center*

*"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.

## *Goals must be SMART*

- Specific – not ‘improve’ but ‘go from 25% proficient to 30%.
- Measurable – fall, winter, spring progress reports
- Achievable – you can’t go from 25% to 75% in one year
- Relevant – focused on students, not adults
- Time-Bound – go from 25% to 30% in one year

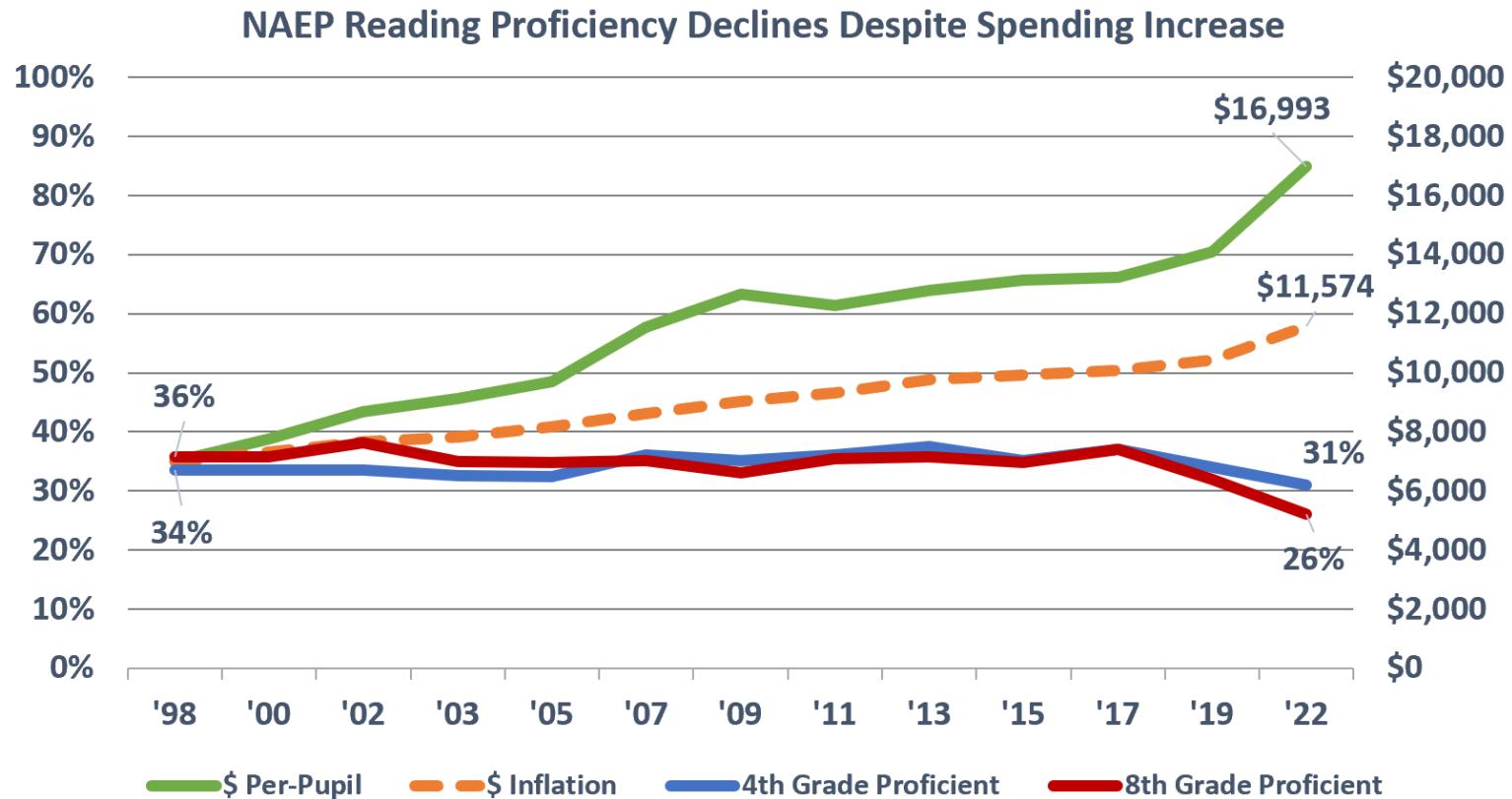
# *Most strategic plans: all hat and no cattle*

- 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”

2023 USD 500 Kansas City Math				2023 Results by Grade USD 500 ELA		
Grade	Below Grade Level	Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
All Grades	58%	31%	11%	55%	30%	15%
10th Grade	75%	18%	7%	62%	25%	13%

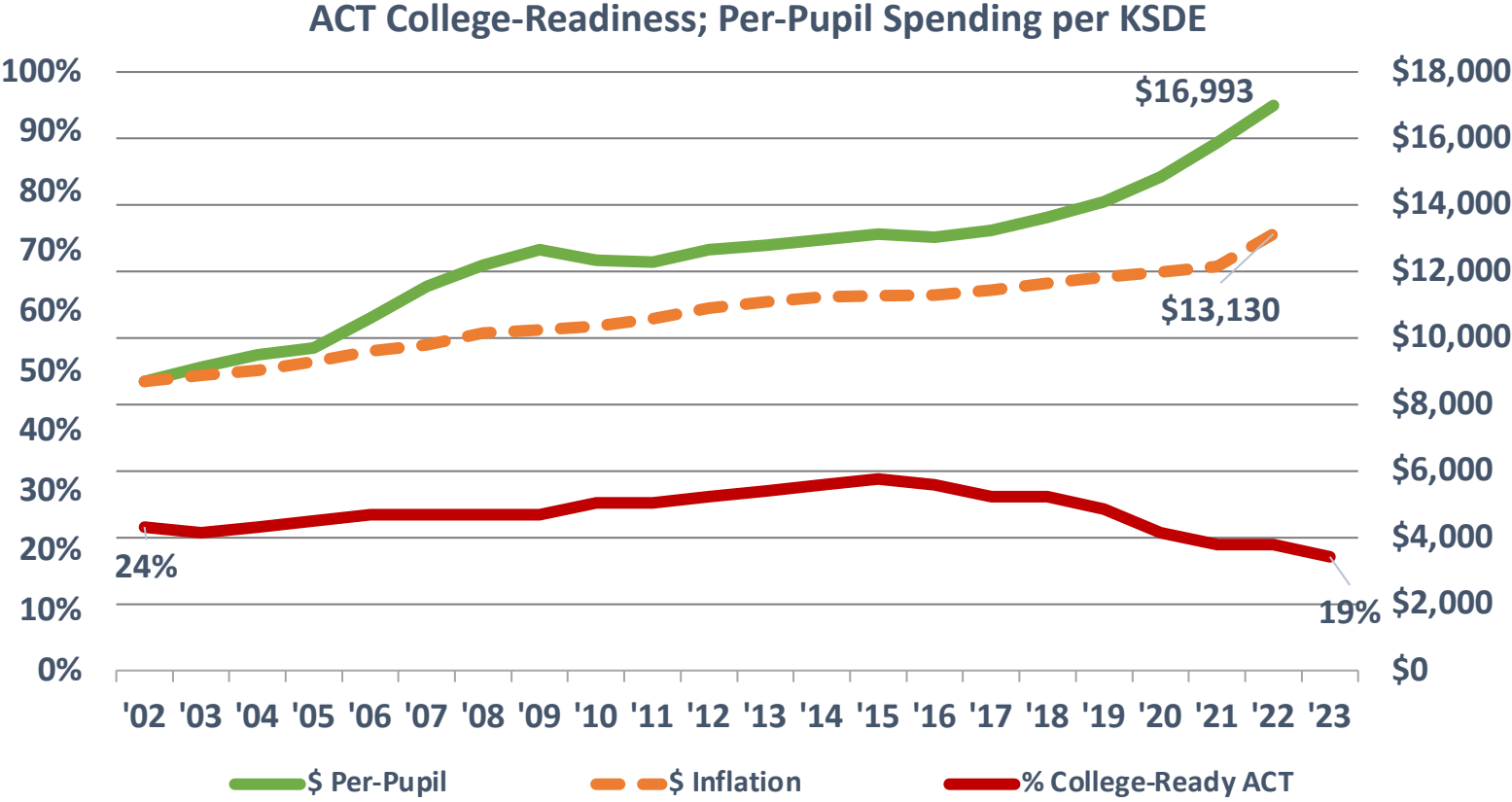
*Source: KSDE; all students tested, rounded to the nearest whole number*

# Government-provided data: spending up, achievement down



Source: KSDE, NAEP, BLS

# 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.



# State assessment only valid since 2015

State of Kansas - All Students Math				State of Kansas - All Students ELA		
Year	Below Grade Level	Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	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%	33%	29%	34%	37%
2021	34%	38%	28%	30%	35%	35%
2022	34%	36%	29%	34%	34%	32%
2023	33%	36%	31%	33%	34%	33%

Source: KSDE; all students tested, rounded to the nearest whole number

# *Be aware of large achievement gaps*

2023 State Assessment Results ELA				
School	Cohort	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
Liberal Sr. High	Low-Income	68%	25%	6%
Liberal Sr. High	Not Low-Income	61%	26%	13%
Horace J. Good MS	Low-Income	48%	39%	13%
Horace J. Good MS	Not Low-Income	29%	43%	28%
Oakley Elementary	Low-Income	30%	37%	33%
Oakley Elementary	Not Low-Income	21%	38%	41%

*State assessment results rounded to the nearest whole number*



## *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.

## *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)?

## *Most districts do not follow BNA law*

- Dodge City: In 2022, 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. In 2023, the district admits that board members did not attend meetings.
- Some districts don’t answer the required questions.
- Many districts contend board members don’t have to participate, just review the staff-prepared reports.

# Part 1: Take Charge of the BNA Process

## *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?

## *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.

# *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

# Setting goals for the district leadership team

USD 457 Garden City Math						
Low-Income Students				Not Low-Income		
Year	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
Grade 3	28%	37%	35%	12%	26%	61%
Grade 4	32%	51%	17%	20%	46%	34%
Grade 5	55%	33%	12%	35%	37%	27%
Grade 6	50%	36%	14%	42%	30%	29%
Grade 7	39%	49%	11%	27%	45%	28%
Grade 8	65%	27%	8%	43%	30%	26%
Grade 10	77%	19%	3%	58%	27%	15%

*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.*



# *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.

# Part 2: Running Productive Meetings

# *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

## *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?

## *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?

## *Q1: Prioritize the barriers*

- Encourage staff to identify barriers to develop buy-in. List everything for staff to see.
- Then collectively agree on which are the top 3 or top 5 barriers to address with budgetary changes.

## *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*

## *Q2: Legitimate budgetary changes*

- Staff needs to know what is available in the 2024 budget:
  - USD 457: \$19,204 per student total; \$16,382 operating
  - USD 274: \$20,018 per student total; \$17,845 operating
  - USD 480: \$19,742 per student total; \$15,328 operating
- Budgets should be about priorities...what can be cut back or eliminated to remove barriers?
- Hard numbers aren't necessary yet. Focus on the concepts with building staff; district staff can run numbers later.



## *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.

# Part 3: Follow-Up Discussions with District Staff

# *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.

# *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 meetings to review with staff and select the options to address achievement barriers.

# *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?

# *Dealing with objections*

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

# Part 4: Passing the Budget & Monthly Updates

# *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 2023 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.



# *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.