



**Oral proponent testimony on**

**SB 532**

**Establishing a blueprint for literacy**

**By**

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**In**

**Senate Education Committee**

**March 7, 2024**

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB 532. We share our support for the bill's focus on ensuring pre-service teacher training in science of reading; we also suggest several portions of the bill where revisions are called for to make it stronger.

Through its member adopted Legislative Resolutions, KASB's member districts have affirmed their support for *"the Kansas State Board of Education's Kansans Can vision and outcomes, with the goal of leading the world in the success of each student."* This vision and these outcomes must rest on a firm foundation of literacy for Kansas public school students. **KASB voices our support for these important components of the Kansas blueprint for literacy described in the bill:**

**Teacher Preparation Programs:** KASB supports the Kansas Board of Regents' role, as outlined in the bill, in ensuring that pre-service teachers graduating from Kansas post-secondary teacher preparation programs are in fact being prepared by these programs to implement the Kansas blueprint for literacy in their future classrooms. Section 4 of the bill provides a clear direction, which we support: "Postsecondary educational institutions shall designate practices based on the science of reading through structured literacy as the official tier 1 literacy methodology" for training pre-service teachers in Kansas.

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KASB also supports the language in Section 6 of the bill that seeks to ensure that all undergraduate and graduate level reading and literacy courses are based on science of reading and structured literacy.

**Literacy Advisory Committee Membership:** We appreciate the breadth of experience called for by Section 2 of the bill in the proposed membership of the literacy advisory committee. Providing that the legislative appointments can be literacy experts rather than only legislators expands the potential depth of expertise of committee members. In addition, the designation of a committee position for an ELL literacy expert further adds to the expertise of the proposed advisory committee. We further agree with the Chair’s suggestion during the March 4, 2024, informational hearing that the work of the literacy advisory committee should be subject to the Kansas Open Meetings and Kansas Open Records Acts.

**KASB has concerns about the following parts of the proposal and suggests that they be substantially revised:**

**“Comprehensive Assessment System”:** The current language of SB 532 directs KBOR and the KBOR director of literacy education to design and implement a K-12 comprehensive reading assessment system (*see, e.g.,* Section 4(b)(1)). First, such design and implementation are the constitutional responsibility of the State Board of Education and local boards of education. Thus, the bill should be revised to remove this directive.

Second, it is unclear whether the new assessment system seemingly called for by the bill is truly needed. Creating yet another assessment system, on top of the Kansas Assessment Program and the local screening measures, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments districts already use such as MAP testing, Fastbridge, and others, is duplicative and inefficient. Moreover, during the March 4, 2024, information hearing on the bill, a representative of KBOR indicated that the intent of Section 4 is not to create a new assessment or system of assessments from scratch, but rather to direct the literacy advisory committee to make recommendations on which assessment tools and screeners currently in use in school districts are best suited to evaluate student literacy needs and progress. Consequently, KASB suggests substantial revisions to these provisions, to clarify that the literacy advisory committee is to make recommendations and that the intention of the statute is to continue to support school districts’ use of existing assessments aligned with the science of reading and already in place at the state and local levels to monitor progress on implementation of the blueprint for literacy plan’s goals.

Third, if the SBOE decides that a new literacy assessment system, tailored to the specific goals of the literacy plan, is in fact needed, the bill’s timeline for implementation in the 2025-26 school year is quite aggressive and likely not realistic for such a project. By the time creation of a “comprehensive assessment system” is complete (May 1, 2025), districts will already be past the

time in the 2024-2025 school year that they have made decisions on and committed resources to contracts, training, and other items related to assessments for the 2025-26 school year.

**Costs of implementation:** The bill’s requirements for training and support of in-service teachers are laudable, but must be supported by the appropriation of new funds to pay for these directives:

- Micro-credentialing 100% of in-service teachers in science of reading and structured literacy by 2030—these expenses will include not only the cost of the training itself, but also the supplemental pay for teachers to attend the trainings outside of their contract hours or, in the alternative, the cost of providing substitute teachers for the hours that classroom teachers must attend the trainings;
- Costs to add to current data systems or create new data systems to keep and share the data necessary to monitor progress of students and to track training of teachers (including the attainment of micro-credentials for in-service educators);
- Costs of supplementing or replacing curricular materials to fully align with any new or updated assessment system that results from the bill; and
- Staff expense of liaising with and providing transport to regional reading centers for training or pull-out supports.

Although it is difficult to estimate at this point, SB 532 will have substantial costs to school districts, the state board of regents, universities, and the SBOE through KSDE. The bulk of costs would be incurred prior to 2030, as standards will have been set, credentials will have been earned and incorporated into pre-service teacher training, and curriculum and methodologies will have been changed, among other cost drivers. Added costs that continue after 2030 will be in continually using this training for pre-service teachers and other staff, data tracking and reporting, use of assessments, and support of regional reading centers. The work that SB 532 calls for creates new, ongoing expenses for school districts and others for ensuring this work happens.

The fiscal note assumes that the micro-credentialing process for paraprofessionals would be covered by “one-time” costs of \$250,000 in FY 25 and FY 26. Paraprofessionals are not licensed staff whose training will be accounted for by changes in post-secondary preparation program practices. The turnover of paraprofessionals in schools means that this expense would not be a “one-time” cost for districts but would become an ongoing annual expense in school districts’ budgets. This significant fiscal impact is not captured by the fiscal note nor is it accounted for in the bill.

**Literacy Advisory Committee Membership:** We suggest that the committee membership be expanded or modified to add a locally elected school board member. Kansas school board

members are the largest group of elected officials in the state (approximately 2000) and are charged by the Kansas Constitution with the constitutional duty to oversee the implementation of the Kansas blueprint for literacy at the local level. Given these responsibilities, the committee should include a locally elected school board member at the table for the literacy advisory committee's work.

**Centers of Excellence in Reading:** The state already has an existing network of service centers supporting teacher training and development throughout the state. *See Kansas Association of Educational Service Agencies*, available at <https://www.kaesa.org/#:~:text=The%20Kansas%20Association%20of%20Educational,educator%2C%20and%20every%20student%20succeed>. Rather than directing the formation of yet another, duplicative (and expensive) network of service agencies, resources should be used more efficiently to leverage this existing education service center network to provide the support the plan envisions.

**Inclusion of Details of Kansas Assessment Program in Statute:** Page 3, lines 34 and 35 of the bill, enshrine details of the scoring of the Kansas Assessment program in statute. KASB believes that doing so interferes with the authority of the SBOE in this area. We suggest that the bill's goals would be better served by more generally describing the outcome desired—e.g., 85 percent of students meeting the SBOE's definition of success in literacy—and leaving the details of what specific performance on the KAP meets that definition to the determination of the SBOE. If that is not the committee's will, then we strongly suggest that the committee leave this language as it is currently written. The SBOE has been clear in its guidance to school boards that students scoring Level 2 on the Kansas Assessments are meeting grade level standards. To enshrine any different definition in statute would be contrary to the SBOE's guidance and would create confusion and the false impression that students who are in fact meeting these expectations are somehow not successfully completing "grade level" work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on SB 532. We stand ready to work with the committee and others to support improvements to teacher preparation in the science of reading and to support our districts across the state in working to realize the State Board of Education's Kansans Can vision.

***KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools.  
We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.***