



“Pay to Play” Update: Decline in Use of Participation Fees

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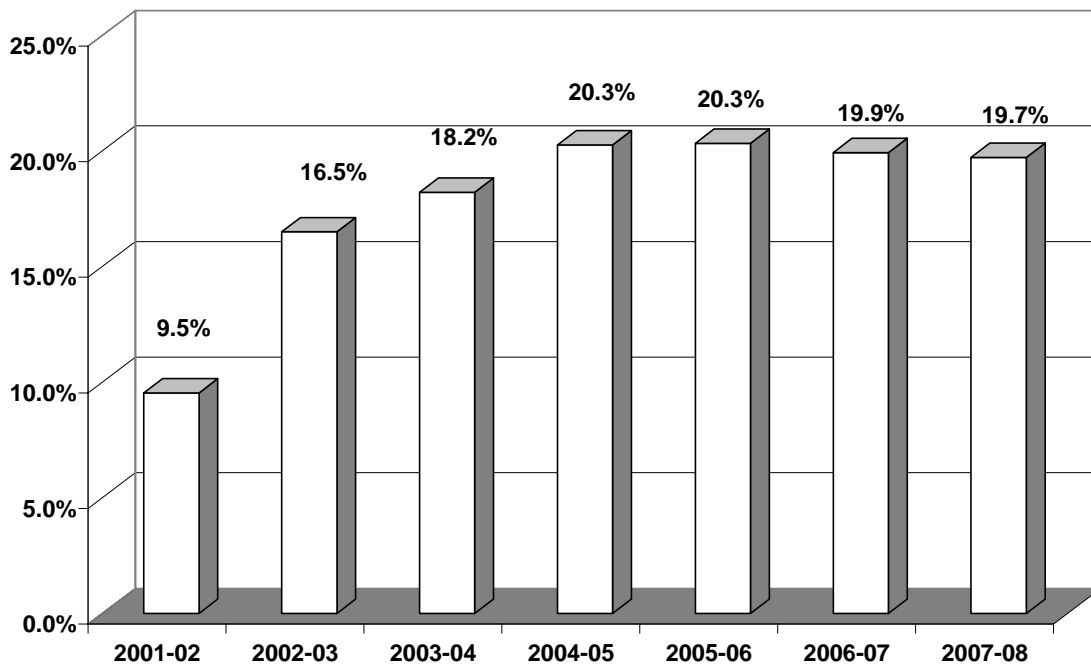
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The idea of charging fees for participation in sports and other activities was growing dramatically in Kansas, but appears to have stalled. Six years ago, KASB Research began to respond to calls about this issue with data collection. The question has usually included; “How many districts do that?” In order to be able to respond to that question, this summer we repeated a survey on this subject. Of Kansas’ 296 districts, 289 responded to these questions.

Slightly less than 1 in 5 districts statewide (19.7%) now have participation fees for school activities. Two years ago, the peak was reached with 61 districts out of 300 charging a fee to students for participation in activities. This year, 57 out of 289 report such a fee..

% of School Districts With "Pay to Play"



The greatest use of these fees, on a percentage basis, occurs in the districts over 10,000 enrollment where 3 of 6 (those reporting) now have fees for activities. Only 16.9% of the districts with less than 1,725 students charge a fee, and the average fee charged is the lowest in the smallest districts.

Enrollment Category	Survey responses	Do you Pay to Play? "yes"	"Yes": % of all responses	Average Junior High Fee Reported	Average High School Fee Reported
<1,725	242	41	16.9%	\$17.32	\$20.25
1,725 - 10,000	41	13	31.7%	\$20.00	\$27.31
>10,000	6	3	50.0%	\$30.00	\$53.33
Total USDs	289	57	19.7%		

The survey questions concerning activity participation fees were repeated, based on input from school district business managers. The following table shows the "Yes" responses from the 57 districts that reported the use of activity participation fees:

Of 57 USDs with "pay to play":

Enrollment Category	Do you have Pay to Play? "yes"	1 student 1 sport	1 student ALL sports	Family all sports	Covers Gate Admission also	Non-refundable fee, for any reason	Fee is refundable for certain reasons	Fee waived under income guidelines	Discounts for multiple students per family
<1,725	41	21	18	2	8	14	23	12	2
1,725 - 10,000	13	5	8	1	2	3	9	10	3
>10,000	3	1	2	0	0	0	3	3	0
Total	57	27	28	3	10	17	35	25	5

Because the issue of "pay to play" often arises in the context of the overall costs of activities programs, and whether or not the students should contribute financially to those programs, we included a question in the survey which asked the district to estimate what portions of their activities budgets come from fees, gate receipts and other sources. Usually, any other financial support beside fees and ticket sales would come from general fund transfers. Among all districts, irrespective of "pay to play", the following table displays the average percentages reported from each funding source, by size of district:

Enrollment Category	Gate Receipts	Participation Fees	Student Admission Pass	General Fund Transfers	Other Funds	Total
<1,725	44.3%	2.6%	5.6%	38.6%	8.9%	100.0%
1,725 - 10,000	36.7%	2.9%	6.4%	46.8%	7.3%	100.0%
>10,000	33.4%	13.0%	7.4%	41.0%	5.2%	100.0%
Statewide Average	43.0%	2.8%	5.7%	39.9%	8.6%	100.0%

It appears that smaller districts have a higher income potential from ticket sales than do larger districts. Statewide, the average support coming from ticket sales increased from just 40.3% last year to 43.0% this year. One phenomenon being observed at the collegiate level, and perhaps at the secondary level also, is the rise in popularity and ticket sales for women's athletics. Some universities are able to promote basketball and volleyball as revenue producing sports and some high schools may also be experiencing this.

In most districts, participation fees are not a significant source of income. These fees don't even raise the same proportion of the total activities budgets as do student admission passes, but perhaps some districts are planning in the future to increase ticket prices also.

In some districts, the discussion of the costs of activities tends to focus on where the money is going, rather than on increasing the sources of revenue through participation fees. Some districts pay for cleaning uniforms, and some don't. Some districts provide transportation for students to activities, and some don't. The following table shows the percentage of "yes" responses to a series of questions posed about just what aspects of activities participation does a district furnish, at no cost to the students:

District pays for, or provides, the following things for participants in activities/athletics:					
School furnishes at no cost to students?	% of Districts answering "Yes":				
	Team Athletics	Individual Athletics	Spirit Squads	Music Groups	Other Activities*
Uniforms	90.3%	59.5%	62.3%	64.0%	14.9%
Laundry	44.3%	19.7%	9.7%	31.1%	4.5%
Transportation	90.0%	68.2%	88.6%	89.3%	67.8%
Meals on trips	29.1%	22.1%	24.6%	25.3%	18.3%
Summer Camps	10.0%	3.8%	15.6%	7.3%	3.5%

***Activity competitions such as FFA, FBLA, Debate/Forensics, Student Council, etc.**

Team athletics seem to have the highest rates of districts paying the cost, although summer camps for spirit squads also are funded by a greater proportion of districts than any other type of camp. Transportation for team sports, spirit squads and music groups is universally provided, but the percentages this year are all down slightly from last year's data. Laundry of team uniforms, dry cleaning choral group gowns and tuxedos and band uniforms is commonly provided, but cheerleaders and drill team dancers must clean their own outfits.

Like most other kinds of KASB information resources, this data is available by district to enable board members or administrators to examine their district in the context of how similar districts address the issue. Printouts of the complete data are available on the KASB web site. For more information, or printouts of selected USDs, email KASB Research research@kasb.org or call 800-432-2471.