

Kansas Education Commission
(a strategic approach to reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)
A Commission of the Kansas State Board of Education

Introduction

On May 13, 2010, the Kansas State Board of Education authorized the formation of the Kansas Education Commission to examine the framework for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Reauthorization of ESEA, as outlined in the *Blueprint for Reform* released in March 2010, will set the direction for education in the United States for years to come. The Kansas Education Commission is the state's strategic approach to reauthorization and educational change.

Purpose

The purpose of the Kansas Education Commission will be to thoroughly examine the key priorities found in the *Blueprint* including:

1. College-and career-ready students, including:
 - a. Raising standards for all students;
 - b. Better assessments; and
 - c. A complete education.
2. Great teachers and leaders in every school, including:
 - a. Effective teachers and principals;
 - b. Our best teachers and leaders where they are needed most; and
 - c. Strengthening teacher and leader preparation and recruitment.
3. Equity and opportunity for all students, including:
 - a. Rigorous and fair accountability for all levels;
 - b. Meeting the needs of diverse learners; and
 - c. Greater equity.
4. Raise the bar and reward excellence, including:
 - a. Fostering a Race to the Top;
 - b. Supporting effective public school choice; and
 - c. Promoting a culture of college readiness and success.
5. Promote innovation and continuous improvement, including:
 - a. Fostering innovation and accelerating success;
 - b. Supporting, recognizing, and rewarding local innovations; and
 - c. Supporting student success.

Objectives

The Commission will thoroughly examine the key priorities found in the *Blueprint* in order to:

1. Recommend revisions to state statutes, regulations and/or policies to ensure that Kansas students are prepared for their next steps (e.g., the world of work and/or post-secondary education). Statutes, regulations and/or policies to be examined include, but will not be limited to:
 - a. Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA)
 - b. Teacher licensure regulations
 - c. School finance
 - d. Charter school statute
 - e. State accountability system in compliance with the ESEA
 - f. Data systems
 - g. Special education
 - h. Technical assistance provided to districts and schools
 - i. Virtual schools

2. Provide coherence to the discussions and work currently underway in various segments of Kansas education regarding the reauthorization of ESEA and the future of education in our state.
3. Allow for a smooth transition from the accountability system of No Child Left Behind to the new system as outlined in the *Blueprint for Reform*.

Commission Membership

The Kansas Education Commission will consist of the following members:

Appointing Authority/Organization	Number of Representatives
Commissioner of Education	1
State Board of Education	2 members each (for a total of 20)
United School Administrators	2 members
Kansas Association of School Boards	2 members
Kansas National Education Association	2 members
Postsecondary Technical Ed Authority	2 members
Kansas Board of Regents	2 members
P20 Council	2 members
Kansas Advisory Council for CTE	2 members
Kansas Parent Teacher Association	1 member
AdvancEd/Kansas North Central Association	1 member
Independent Schools Association	1 member
Private Institutes of Higher Education	2 members
Professional Standards Board	1 member
QPA Advisory Council	1 member
Governor’s Office	1 member
House Education Committee	1 member
Senate Education Committee	1 member
Kansas Association of American Educators	1 member
Midwest Equity Resource Center	1 member
Special Education Advisory Council	1 member

Commission Structure

The Kansas Education Commission will be organized according to the key priorities as found in the *Blueprint*.

Subcommittees will consist of:

1. Career- and college-ready students (chair and co-chair to be determined by subcommittee membership). KSDE advisor - Tom Foster (upon request of the subcommittee).
2. Great teachers and leaders in every school (chair and co-chair to be determined by subcommittee membership). KSDE advisor – Pam Coleman (upon request of the subcommittee).
3. Equity and opportunity for all students (chair and co-chair to be determined by subcommittee membership). KSDE advisor – Colleen Riley (upon request of the subcommittee).
4. Raise the bar and reward excellence (chair and co-chair to be determined by subcommittee membership). KSDE advisor - Julie Ford (upon request of the subcommittee).
5. Promote innovation and continuous improvement (chair and co-chair to be determined by subcommittee membership). KSDE advisor – Brad Neuenswander (upon request of the subcommittee).

Timeline

Creation of the Kansas Education Commission	May 2010
Invitation to potential members	June 2010
First meeting of the Kansas Education Commission	July 6, 2010

Second meeting of the Kansas Education Commission	August 30, 2010
Third meeting of the Kansas Education Commission	October 8, 2010
Preliminary report to the Kansas State Board of Education	December 14, 2010

Subcommittee meetings will occur independent of the Commission meetings. Meetings in 2011 will be determined at a later date and dependent upon reauthorization of ESEA.

Scope of Work

The subject nature of each subcommittee will ultimately determine the extent of the work and the outcomes for each. In general, however, the following information is provided as a framework for discussions.

1. Subcommittee #1 - College and Career-Ready Students

The *Blueprint* calls for states to develop and adopt standards in English language arts and mathematics that will provide all students with college- and career-ready knowledge and skills by the time they graduate from high school. Kansas was one of 48 states involved in the Common Core Standards (CCS) initiative which resulted in a set of common standards in English language arts and mathematics released on June 2, 2010. While work on the CCS has been underway for over a year, the Kansas Education Commission will be charged with reviewing the standards and assisting KSDE staff in: 1) determining if the standards are appropriate for Kansas K-12 students and, if so, 2) what additional standards, if any, need to be added to fill in any gaps and also give the standards a Kansas flavor; 3) the most appropriate process for seeking adoption of the standards from the State Board of Education; and 4) assisting in determining what professional development will be necessary in order to ensure a smooth transition from the current standards to the CCS.

In addition to common standards, the *Blueprint* calls for the development and use of new generation assessments that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards, will better capture higher-order skills and provide more accurate measures of student growth in order to better inform classroom instruction and meet the needs of all students. Kansas is a member of the SMARTER/Balanced Consortium, a group of over 35 states developing a conceptual framework for new generation assessments. This subcommittee of the Kansas Education Commission will discuss and make recommendations to the current state assessment system using the present model and the cutting-edge thinking of the SMARTER/Balanced Consortium.

Areas that are likely to be examined by the College- and Career-ready subcommittee include but will not be limited to:

1. K-12 standards
2. Accountability systems, including:
 - a. State assessments in reading, math, science, history/government, and writing
 - b. Accountability system in compliance with the reauthorization of ESEA (currently known as No Child Left Behind); including a new system based on student growth
 - c. State accountability system for school accreditation (currently known as Quality Performance Accreditation)
3. Data systems

2. Subcommittee #2 – Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School

States will be charged with developing and implementing teacher and principal evaluation systems that identify highly effective teachers and principals based on student growth and other factors under the *Blueprint for Reform*. This will be mostly uncharted territory for Kansas. Teacher and principal evaluations systems are currently under the local control of the school districts. While it is not anticipated that a statewide evaluation system will be mandated in Kansas, it is expected that new models which incorporate student achievement and other factors will be provided and encouraged. Informing the work of this subcommittee will be the final reports of two previous commissions charged with examining

teaching and leading in Kansas – the Kansas Educational Leadership Commission (accepted by the State Board May 2008) and the Teaching in Kansas Commission (accepted by the State Board December 2008). Both of these previous commissions provided a wealth of information and recommendations to assist the subcommittee in accelerating their discussions.

Also informing the work of this subcommittee will be the work of the National Governor’s Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Teacher Compensation. Kansas was one of six states accepted into the Academy in 2009 and work has been underway since that time to develop a model teacher compensation system that differs greatly from the traditional salary schedule used by all districts in Kansas.

Areas that are likely to be examined by the Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School subcommittee include but not limited to:

1. Recruitment of teachers and leaders
2. Preparation of teachers and leaders
3. Licensing of teachers and leaders
4. Evaluation of teachers and leaders
5. Equitable access to effective teachers and leaders in high-poverty, high-minority schools
6. Compensation of teachers including a value-added component

3. Subcommittee #3 – Equity and Opportunity for all Students

Closing the achievement gap has been the focus of recent reform efforts and will continue to be in the reauthorization of ESEA. A stated goal of the *Blueprint* is to have all students graduating or on track to graduate ready for college and a career by 2020. States are being challenged to do more for the lowest-performing schools that have not made progress over time. All students are addressed in the proposed reauthorization including English language learners, students with disabilities, Native American students, homeless students, migrant students, rural students and neglected or delinquent students. Programs must be in place in all states to address the needs of all students. Resources must be allocated equitably and accountability will be of utmost priority.

Kansas has a strong foundation from which to build in this area. Great strides have been made in the past few years with the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) and the Kansas Learning Network (KLN) to name a few of the initiatives. We are well on our way but more can be done. This subcommittee will be asked to review what is currently taking place to ensure equity and opportunity for all students and make recommendations on how to move us forward.

Areas that are likely to be examined by the Equity and Opportunity for all Students subcommittee include but will not be limited to:

1. Special education
2. English Language Learners
3. Native American students
4. Homeless students
5. Students of migrant workers
6. Neglected or delinquent students
7. Rural education
8. Universal design, including the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS)
9. Technical assistance provided to schools and districts; i.e. Kansas Learning Network (KLN)

4. Subcommittee #4 – Raise the Bar and Reward Excellence

“Race To The Top” has become the mantra of the reauthorization of ESEA. This includes providing incentives for excellence by encouraging states and local districts to work together on ambitious reforms. The greater use of competitive grants was designed to give flexibility to states and districts to develop and change policies and practices to improve outcomes for all students. Under this area, reauthorization will focus on effective public school choice including

high-performing public charter schools and other schools, such as magnet schools, to support local communities and expand opportunities for students. Increasing access to college-level, dual credit and other accelerated courses is also an emphasis in this area.

Kansas has had charter schools since the mid-1990's and the State recently applied for additional charter school funding through the charter school grant sponsored by the US Department of Education. The pending application focuses on charter schools designed around Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Notification of the grant award is expected in late summer. Among others, a main focus of this subcommittee will be to examine the public school options for students in Kansas. This is also the subcommittee that will address the current school accreditation system known as Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA).

Areas that are likely to be examined by the Raise the Bar and Reward Excellence subcommittee include but will not be limited to:

1. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) opportunities
2. Literacy plan for the state
3. Access to challenging high school curriculum including college-level classes, dual credit, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate and other accelerated courses
4. Qualified Admissions and how these align with high school curriculum
5. Graduation requirements
6. 21st Century skills

5. Subcommittee #5 – Promote Innovation and Continuous Improvement

In order to support, recognize and reward local innovation, the creation of fewer, larger, more flexible funding streams will be a focus of this subcommittee. The proposed reauthorization promises greater flexibility, fewer restrictions on blending funds from different funding streams and less red tape. Also included in this area is a call for states to comprehensively redesign the school day, week, or year in order to promote schools as the center of their communities partnering with community organizations. New models to keep students safe, supported and healthy both in and out of school will be a key priority.

Areas that are likely to be examined by the Promote Innovation and Continuous Improvement subcommittee will include but not be limited to:

1. Recognizing and scaling up successful programs
2. Fewer, larger, more flexible funding streams
3. Comprehensive redesign of the school day, week and year
4. Safe schools
5. Healthy schools
6. Engaging communities
7. Student engagement
8. Virtual schools

Summary

The work of the Kansas Education Commission encompasses all components of the Kansas education system. It is the first time in many, many years (if not THE first time) that a review of the entire system of Kansas education has been attempted. It is an ambitious undertaking, but one that is deserving of our attention and dedication. Skeptics will be plenty. In fact, some have already expressed a belief that little, if nothing, will result from the work. It is incumbent upon the staff of the Kansas State Department of Education and the entire State Board of Education to ensure that these beliefs do not become reality. The work of the Commission is too important. Simply having the discussions with the various stakeholders will move the system forward. The recommendations emerging from the Commission will give clear and consistent guidance to the State Board of Education as the members set the direction for education in Kansas for years to come.