

Audit of Kansas State Professional Development Policies (Revised)

Recommendations

The broad recommendations in this section encompass many of the specific recommendations identified in Areas for Improvement and can be viewed as areas for task force work, used to sequence and prioritize action plans based on this policy audit, and become the focus of required budgetary priorities for the Professional Standards Board and Department of Education.

Policy is best recommended by those who are responsible for administering it as well as those who will be affected by it, therefore this policy audit report will be most helpful to those who develop, implement, and support policy on professional development. It is NSDC's suggestion that a representative group of thoughtful educators be appointed to review the report for purposes of relevance and accuracy. Following that review, the policy audit report can serve as a guide for revising the necessary policies.

Recommendation 1: Definition of Professional Development

Using the National Staff Development Standards, specify the essential attributes of professional development in Kansas. In an accompanying policy document, include the requirement that general fund budgets must include PreK-20 educator professional development.

Recommendation 2: Accountability for High-Quality Professional Development

Establish a system of accountability for high-quality professional development with specific checks at multiple points within its design, implementation, support and evaluation. Professional development should reach beyond developing educator knowledge to application and impact on student learning.

Recommendation 3: Career-Long Professional Learning

Ensure that all individuals involved in the education process participate in career-long learning. Require educators to develop a professional development plan during his/her initial preparation based on his/her strengths and areas for improvement that is continuously revised to follow the educator throughout his/her career and strengthen his or her practice and impact.

Recommendation 4: Professional Educator Standards on High-Quality Professional Learning

Ensure that state standards for teachers and school and district leaders, currently under revision, align with and include concepts and practices of high-quality professional development, including active participation in and facilitation of both job-embedded and externally provided professional development.

Recommendation 5: Time for Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Ensure that local districts provide 40-80 hours of student achievement-focused professional development for licensed educators and support staff directly involved

in student learning each year as part of the student contact hours as established in KSA 72-1106. Because the majority of professional development is job-embedded, there will not be the need for additional special days within school calendars devoted to professional development as time away from the classroom. Professional development can occur in classrooms and school during student contact time or within educators' workday. Time for professional development during the school day includes teacher collaboration time driven by specific goals for educator learning that are based on an analysis of student achievement data.

Conclusion

The Kansas State Department of Education has a significant responsibility to ensure that it allocates the resources, supports the recommendations in this policy audit, and facilitates changes in the structure of the school day to ensure that professional development is not viewed just as a mechanism for renewing educator licenses, but rather a fundamental responsibility of all professional educators that is vital to meeting the state's goals for improved student academic success.