



## **Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools**

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### **Testimony to the Joint House and Senate Education Committees January 31, 2013**

**Dr. Cynthia Lane, Superintendent  
Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools**

In the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, we have established a very rigorous and demanding goal: "Each student will exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society, and at every level, performance is on-track and on-time for success." We believe that this is the right goal for our students and their families, for our community, and for the state of Kansas.

To reach this goal, we must be strategic about targets we ask our students to aim for, and the experiences we provide them in order to reach those targets. This is why both KCK and McPherson have sought and received a waiver from using the Kansas Assessment as the high-stakes assessment, so that students can take the ACT series of tests. These tests, which include the EXPLORE in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the PLAN in 10<sup>th</sup>, and the ACT in 11<sup>th</sup>, are meaningful measures of students' preparedness to gain admission to two and four-year colleges in Kansas. At the same time, it is not enough for our students to enter college; we will not consider our work done unless our students are able to be successful *in* college, and persist to graduation.

Using this as our standard, our first year of results from administering the ACT have demonstrated both the power that this test provides us, as well as the challenges that it presents. On one day last April, more than 1200 students in KCK took the ACT, the first time that EVERY student in KCK took that test. What a powerful symbol of our belief that ALL really does mean ALL! At the same time, our data makes clear that we face significant challenges, both in making sure that all students are prepared for college, and in giving them the tools to successfully finish college. For the latest class for which we have data (2006 data from the National Clearinghouse), only 18% of KCK graduates have completed either a two or four-year degree within five years.

How will we close the gap between the dreams our students deserve to see fulfilled, and the reality of our current performance? First, we must continue to aim for the right target, by seeking a waiver to use a true measure of college readiness, such as the ACT. Our history and our experience teach us that if we place high expectations in front of our students, they will rise up to meet them. Next, we must make sure that our students have the experiences in high school that prepare them to be successful in college. Currently, 46% of students graduate with earned college credit, either through dual or concurrent enrollment with either Donnelly College or the Kansas City, Kansas Community College, or with an International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement credit. Our goal is that every student graduate with college credit. We also want all students to graduate with an internship experience, in order to better prepare them for their future career.

Education is THE factor that will determine whether Kansas continues to have a vibrant economy, and be a great place to raise children. Having the right targets is a critical component of the work that must be done to continue our educational success. If we can all have the courage to aim high, and hold ourselves accountable for progress, we can count on our students to clear the bar.