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Testimony for Special Interim Committee on Education
December 1, 2021

Rep. Kristey Williams, Chairperson
Dr. Anna Stubblefield, USD 500, Superintendent

Chairperson Williams and members of the Interim Committee, I am pleased to be here today to provide information regarding "Improving Student Achievement and Outcomes." I was selected as the superintendent of Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools on July 1st and am grateful for the opportunity. During the course of my twenty years as an administrator in the state of Kansas I have had the privilege of working in one of the most affluent and high achieving school districts (Blue Valley), one of the most educated communities (Lawrence), and one the most diverse and impoverished districts (Kansas City, Kansas). What I have learned in each of these districts is kids are kids and families want the best education for their students. I have also learned that while there are commonalities in all of these districts, each of these districts have unique characteristics that require different resources and supports. In USD 500 we serve over 21,000 students. Our student demographics are as follows:

- 55% Hispanic
- 24% African American
- 12% Other
- 9% White
- 86% Free & Reduced
- 16% SPED
- 14% ELL

I am sharing the demographics of the district because the negative impacts of poverty on academic success are often compounded when families live in communities of concentrated poverty. In Kansas City, Kansas, in addition to mitigating the disadvantages experienced by low-income students, we face additional challenges.

As all of you are aware, Wyandotte County experienced COVID-19 infection rates as high as 43% which was well above the other counties in our state. This was compounded by the high level of poverty in our community last year.

KCKPS showed strong academic gains in spring 2019 based on state assessment results which showed a significant number of students moving into proficiency (levels 3 and 4).

- Overall in ELA, the district increased proficiency rates by 4.3% from 14.3% in spring 2018 to 18.6%
- Gains were made across all grade levels and subgroup populations. Among schools, 39 of 43 showed positive growth in ELA; 5 schools had growth between 0.1% and 2.4%,

13 schools between 2.5% and 4.9%, 16 schools between 5.0% and 9.9% and 5 schools with 10% or more.

- In Math, the district increased proficiency rates by 6.2% from 11.4% in spring 2018 to 17.6% in 2019
- Gains were made across all grade levels and subgroup populations. Among schools, 40 of 43 showed positive growth; 4 schools between 0.1% and 2.4%, 6 schools between 2.5% and 4.9%, 14 schools between 5.0% and 9.9%, 12 schools between 10.0% and 14.9% and 4 schools with 15% or more.

It is important for me to acknowledge we have a huge challenge ahead of us to bring assessment scores to a level where we all want them to be, however USD 500 experiences high levels of student achievement in pockets.

- Sumner Academy consistently is ranked as one of the top high schools in the state and country.
- Two of our elementary schools were selected to receive the National ESEA Distinguished Schools Program Award in the last three years. Schools selected for this award demonstrate a wide array of strengths. Both schools were selected for closing the achievement gap between student groups for two or more consecutive years.
 - o Bertram Caruthers Elementary (2021-22)
 - o New Stanley Elementary (2019-20)

We have also invested in our Student Service department to address the needs of our students and families. The department's priorities focus on trauma sensitive and resilient schools, social emotional learning and program support including Attend 2 Achieve (A2A), alternative education, behavioral health, community partnerships, McKinney Vento, and parent engagement. Services provided by the department to support staff, students and families are:

- Attend 2 Achieve (A2A)
- Alternative Education
- Behavioral Health
- Social Workers
- Counselors
- Bullying Prevention
- Community Partnerships and Volunteers
- 24-hour Care Line
- Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)
- Family and Community Engagement
- Kidzone
- Language Support
- McKinney Vento
- Trauma Sensitive and Resilient Schools
- Social Emotional Learning

Taking into consideration all of these factors, we started the year, in USD 500, with the focus and commitment to “Rebound, Reimagine, and Renew” what teaching and learning looks like for our students to create a system where all students would experience success. As the new superintendent it was important to build and expand on the initiatives and programs we were seeing high levels of student achievement and post-graduation success.

In 2014 Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools committed to graduating each student with a high school diploma plus an endorsement. Through the Diploma+ initiative, our district continues to expand and increase the possibilities of this commitment- facilitating college and career experiences designed to ensure students will be successful postsecondary.

2018-2019 School Year Diploma+ Data

46% of seniors graduated with a Diploma+ Endorsement

- 17% achieved an ACT of 21 or higher
- 14% earned 18 or more hours of college credit
- 14% earned an industry recognized certification
- 16% participated in an internship or job shadow
- 1% were accepted into the military

2019-2020 School Year Diploma+ Data

48% of seniors graduated with a Diploma+ Endorsement

- 15% achieved an ACT of 21 or higher
- 17% earned 18 or more hours of college credit
- 15% earned an industry recognized certification
- 16% participated in an internship or job shadow
- 2% were accepted into the military

Our students have experienced positive results from the Diploma+ program which provides real-world learning experiences. Our goal is that by 2031, 100% of students will graduate with a diploma plus an endorsement. In order to make this a reality, we expanded and implemented Diploma+ programming at every level (elementary, middle, and high school).

During the 2020-21 school year, Diploma+ expanded to all 28 elementary campuses. All students completed one Industry virtual session with a professional of their choice using the Nepri Connector web platform. Through this, students were able to explore careers connected to their learning, hear from local career speakers, and foster career awareness at the earliest grade levels. This year schools will conduct one virtual visit in the fall and one in the spring.

To ensure we have the capacity, USD 500 has also partnered with the Kauffman Foundation in the Real World Learning (RWL) community. RWL is a Kansas City community initiative to help prepare our region, students, and employers for the future. In RWL, learners are prepared for work, school, and life after high school graduation.

We are leveraging our ESSER dollars to implement programs, professional development, and systems that are research and evidence based best practices to ensure our students are on track. With intentionality we are aligning how we allocate the dollars to our strategic plan in four broad areas:

- Social-emotional Well-Being
- Academic Acceleration and Support
- Engagement and Voice/Real World Learning Experiences
- Infrastructure and Human Capital

Some examples of what we have allocated dollars for are summer school, curriculum resources, expanding Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas (JAG-K), implementing AVID, targeted tutoring, translation software and expanding Kid Zone.

The foundation to making this happen is implementing the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to build a framework for teachers on all of our school campuses in order to meet the academic and social emotional needs of our students. Building leaders and teachers will lead the work centered on implementing effective practices with fidelity.

Finally, we have partnered with the University of Kansas to complete an Environmental/Academic Scan. The purpose of this review is to provide an understanding of the scope of the academic structure, curricular components, climate issues, communication, and use of data. Based on the recommendations from this report, we will develop a dynamic and transparent plan with clear goals and benchmarks that will lead to 100% of USD 500 graduates leaving our system with a Diploma plus an endorsement.