

The Every Student Succeeds Act and Kansas' New Vision for Public Education

Congress has finally re-authorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. What was known as the "No Child Left Behind Act" has now officially been replaced by the "**Every Student Succeeds Act**," or ESSA.

Many have argued that the intentions of NCLB should be applauded. Overall test scores have increased, with the test scores of minority students growing the most, and the achievement gap has decreased. However, as we experienced, the law also dramatically changed the focus of education from developing a well-educated citizenry to a much more narrow focus on testing.

With the new law, we can look forward to an emphasis on less federal oversight, in favor of states developing their own plans for improving educational outcomes for students. We will continue to be required to administer assessments. However, it appears that each state will have the autonomy to determine which assessments will be administered for accountability purposes, and these assessments will be only one of several indicators which will be used to judge the progress of school districts.

We will learn much more about the impact of ESSA on the work in Kansas and KCKPS over the next few months. In the meantime, I want to share that our **Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson** (former superintendent in McPherson, KS), and the State Board of Education have adopted a **new vision, and are drafting outcomes for Kansas**.

Vision – ***"Kansas leads the world in the success of each student"***

The plan that will lead the state to this vision will focus on the skills and attributes needed to ensure students are prepared for college and careers. Assessments will continue to be part of our reality; however, the State Board will be emphasizing the following outcomes:

- Kindergarten readiness

- Increasing graduation rates
- Increasing the percent of students completing a credential or pursuing post-secondary education
- Decreasing the number of students needing remedial course work when they attend post-secondary
- Individual Plans of Study for each student, beginning in middle school
- Social/emotional factors, to be measured and supported locally

As I listen to our state leaders, I see the connections to, and I dare say the influence of the work we are doing in KCKPS. The direction of the state suggests to me that our focus continues to be right on target with the new direction of the state and nation.

Dr. Watson will be joining us on **January 21st from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at the Central Office and Training Center for a session with all KCKPS administrators.** You will have a chance to hear his message, ask questions, and make connections with our District Continuous Improvement Plan (DCIP). The conversation will assist us in beginning to frame our next steps, as we evolve the DCIP and prepare each of our students to graduate Diploma+.

We will also stay closely attuned to the implications of ESSA on our work. It is my current understanding that there will be changes to how Focus and Priority Schools are determined. States are authorized to identify five percent (5%) rather than the current 15 percent (15%) of the lowest performing schools. Funds may also be targeted to an area of concentration or great need, such as early childhood education. What we currently know as the Kansas Learning Network (KLN) will change dramatically. We will certainly want to be fully engaged in the conversations happening at the state level, to ensure that the needs of KCKPS are addressed.

I look forward to seeing our leadership team gather on January 21 at 2:00 pm. Please bring your copy of the DCIP to the meeting.