



Testimony of:

Andrew Hysell, Executive Director of the Kansas Reading Roadmap

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Chair Highland, Vice Chair Lunn, Ranking Member Winn and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Hysell, and I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Reading Roadmap (KRR). The KRR is a program of the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) and supported both technically and with funding by the Kansas Department of Education.

Today in America, more money is spent per student to educate children in low-income schools. Per student expenditures in the United States rose—in inflation adjusted dollars—from \$2,606 per pupil in 1960, to \$9,910 in 2005¹. Schools had four times the purchasing power in 2010 than they did in 1980.²

Despite these investments, longitudinal data shows that student progress has not increased enough. The long-term National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that between the early 1970s and now, nine year olds demonstrated a 13-point increase on a 500-point scale for reading. However, since 2008, there has not been any statistically significant improvement in reading and 65 percent of fourth graders nationally, and the same percentage in Kansas, are not proficient readers, as of 2015.³

Why? There is no simple answer. There has been a significant increase in the number of English language learners, with the number of Hispanic children quadrupling since the 1970s.⁴ Kansas school districts, like Garden City, are very much aware of this trend and the extra efforts required to address student needs.

However, I believe that underlying structural issues in our schools can frustrate efforts to address early literacy. Historically, our K-12 system has been designed around individual teachers teaching individual students. A teacher in a single classroom dealing with a group of kids, facing significant barriers to success, will find that regular instruction is not enough. At that point, teachers are forced to make their best guess about what to do next and might not even know how to provide additional support.

¹ Hanusheck & Lindseth 2007

² Michael Fullan 2010

³ *Fourth Grade Achievement Levels*, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5116-4th-grade-reading-achievement-levels#detailed/1/any/false/573,36,867,38,18/1185,1186,1187,1188/11560>.

⁴ *Id.*

The reality is that schools can be better organized as a team to leverage the entire institution to help struggling readers, especially in high-need schools. Creating a building-wide and grade-level approach to making decisions, diagnosing reading needs, employing curriculum, and monitoring progress is much more efficient than an isolated classroom experience. It helps schools achieve better outcomes for every dollar spent. Businesses do this all of the time. General Motors would not put its employees in separate rooms and tell each one to build a car. They created sophisticated, efficient system-wide approaches that leverage employees to maximize value. Yet, in some of our K-12 schools, we are figuratively putting teachers in classrooms and telling them to build a whole car. This old-fashioned, K-12 approach, in my view, is putting the brakes on improving student outcomes.

The KRR is a new, innovative approach, restructuring school systems to establish organized, data-focused decision-making. In partnership with the Kansas Department of Education and its Technical Assistance Systems Network (TASN), the KRR embraces the Kansas model of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Kansas MTSS was created here more than a decade ago and teaches any school—big, small, urban or rural—how to maximize its curriculum, teachers and classroom time. Based on my work both in the public and private sector in Washington and in states like Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, and Kentucky, Kansas MTSS is by far the best.

The KRR improves upon the success of Kansas MTSS by connecting out-of-school, supplemental services to school MTSS frameworks. That is the innovation of the KRR. It folds afterschool, summer programs and family engagement into a school-aligned system so that each program becomes a highly-effective educational instrument. In the case of our family engagement program, it makes parents better consumers of education services for their children.

Normally, afterschool programs are good experiences for kids and are fun. But they are not aligned with school day instruction and usually give only generic educational support. One way to look at this is the metaphor of giving a sick person vitamins. Vitamins will probably help to a certain extent, but what about providing specific medicine based upon what that person's physician prescribes? Especially if there is a serious issue, a doctor's recommendation should be followed.

That is precisely what happens in a KRR school. Schools and teachers use precise data and methods supported by research and practice to "diagnose and treat" students. The KRR schools incorporate that into afterschool and summer programs. Instead of just reading books to kids or giving them a software program, we work in small groups around specific foundational skills such as consonant blends, phoneme substitution, and silent-e. These out-of-school programs add extra horsepower to school efforts to target readers who are struggling the most. As a result, our traditional model schools demonstrated statewide a reduction of children at risk for special education by 38 percent, as measured by schools' own tests.