

Senate Committee on Education

January 25, 2012

Hearing on the Excellence in Education Act

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CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

In Governor Sam Brownback's Road Map for Kansas, he made a commitment to the people of our state to improve education by increasing the percentage of students who are career and college ready upon high school graduation. To meet this goal, the Governor has proposed a new method of funding career and technical education (CTE) programs in Kansas:

The current .5 vocational education weighting for unified school districts will end. Instead, the Kansas Department of Education will have a separate vocational and technical education fund that is equivalent in dollar value to the current value of the vocational education weighting. KSDE will distribute this money to school districts based on enrollment in technical programs.

Funding will be provided to the Kansas Board of Regents to pay the tuition for all high school students enrolled in a career and technical education course/program in a community college or technical college.

Funding will be provided through the Kansas Board of Regents to fund the state tiered technical aid for these program credit hours. Under the new tiered technical education state formula, all credit hours of secondary students enrolled in postsecondary technical education programs are eligible for tiered technical education state aid.

Additional funding will be provided to the school districts to provide transportation for their high school students to travel to and from the postsecondary institution until they graduate from high school.

Under the concurrent enrollment law, the courses/programs that high school students take at the postsecondary institutions would be on students' high school and postsecondary institution transcripts at the time the credit is earned.

If a postsecondary institution does not offer a course/program that is needed, the Kansas Board of Regents would have the authority to authorize another Kansas postsecondary institution to provide such course/program.

Funding will be provided to the Kansas Department of Education and the Kansas Board of Regents to promote the initiative.

An incentive program will encourage districts to increase the number of students exiting high school with an industry-recognized credential in key occupations identified by the Kansas Department of Labor as those in highest need of additional skilled workers by providing a \$1,000 per student award to the sending high school for each student earning this certification.

Agriculture education programs play a critical role in development of young people and are unique in their program structure as they do not offer traditional industry certification. Funding for agricultural education programs will continue uninterrupted. The Kansas Department of Agriculture will work with the KBOR, KSDE, high school and college agricultural educators, and agricultural stakeholders to explore opportunities for certification of agricultural education and development of new certifications in agriculturally related fields that have been identified as occupations in need of additional skilled workers or to prepare students for agriculture careers.

Funding will no longer be provided for those high school programs of study that are also available in a postsecondary institution within 30 miles of the high school.

The Kansas Board of Regents will be encouraged to develop a state-wide articulation agreement between high schools and community and technical colleges for these programs. The State Board of Education will be encouraged to require that all students in the 8th grade and above have an individual career plan of study.

In sum, the structure and policies I have described will undoubtedly increase the number of Kansans who graduate from high school career ready, and therefore successfully meet the Governor's Roadmap goal. Since the program was announced earlier this month, it has been praised by the Technical College Association, Community College Association, Commissioner of Education, Diane DeBacker and the KS State Board of Education, Andy Tompkins, Executive Director of the Kansas Board of Regents and many superintendents and district level career and technical education coordinators across the state of Kansas.

EXCEL IN EDUCATION REFORMS

In Governor Sam Brownback's Road Map for Kansas, he made a commitment to the people of Kansas to improve education. To meet this goal, the Governor has included in his proposed education funding formula package a series of reforms designed to increase the level of accountability and transparency in our schools. The reforms will also enable us to identify, recognize, and reward our best educators and encourage more meaningful engagement between educators and students' families.

The Kansas Department of Education has worked with over one hundred Kansas educators and developed the Kansas Educator Evaluation Protocol (KEEP), which is now being piloted in 17 school districts across Kansas. This legislation would require that an evaluation system be implemented in every school district. Districts can either formally adopt KEEP or develop their own evaluation system and submit it to the state board for approval. Approved evaluation systems must include an annual designation of each employee in a rating category. The categories are: Highly Effective, Effective, Progressing, and Ineffective. The state board will adopt rules and regulations to define these categories. However, the designation of the rating category will be based on the employee's performance using the following allocations: 50% to growth in student achievement, 40% to input received by supervisors, peers, parents and families, and students during the school year, and 10% to contributions by the employee to the profession.

Helping every educator in Kansas reach the "Highly Effective" category should be a goal shared by all. Full implementation of an educator evaluation protocol will also allow state and local school boards to target professional development and mentoring resources towards the weaknesses identified in the evaluation system and support activities that have proven to show measured improvement in student achievement.

As we improve our ability to identify our most "Highly Effective" educators, we should also recognize and reward their efforts to achieve growth in student performance, particularly in regards to our most challenging student populations. This legislation will establish an awards program that recognizes and rewards classroom educators identified by the evaluation system as being "Highly Effective" in achievement growth in At-Risk students. Classroom educators will be nominated by their districts to KSDE to receive a \$5,000 bonus at the conclusion of the school year. Districts will have the flexibility to divide the bonus if multiple educators contributed to the growth achieved in the same students.

Including input from parents and families in the evaluation process will encourage more meaningful engagement between educators and students' families. It is also important for parents to have confidence their child is receiving a quality education. Therefore, this legislation would require that each educator's rating be posted on a website designated by the school district that is accessible to the parents of the students enrolled in the district. Additionally, it would prohibit any individual student from being taught by educators rated as "Ineffective" in two consecutive school years. It would also allow a district to terminate the contract of any teacher that has been designated "Ineffective" for two consecutive school years if the teacher has had an opportunity to participate in a professional development program designed to help them address deficiencies.

CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH

In Governor Sam Brownback's Road Map for Kansas, he made a commitment to the people of Kansas to improve education by promoting innovative teacher certification programs that will help school districts take advantage of the skills, knowledge, and experience of local citizens and better meet the challenge of the teacher shortage experienced in many rural areas of the state.

The Excellence in Education Act will eliminate the requirement for professional education pedagogy course work for certification applicants who wish to teach secondary students in STEM and Career and Technical Education content areas if they can demonstrate an extensive amount of knowledge and private sector experience in a related occupation.

It will also eliminate the requirement for professional education pedagogy course work for certification applicants who have previous classroom experience as participants in the "Teach for America" program.

However, before the applicant's request will be considered, they must have secured a commitment from a local school board to be hired as a teacher in that school district subject to receiving such certification as a teacher.

The Governor applauds the efforts of the state board and KSDE to make adjustments to the professional and CTE certification pathways to help meet the needs of secondary students who could benefit from the knowledge of private sector Kansans. The provisions I described above will continue their good work and effect immediate change on the certification system.