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To: Special Committee on Education

Re: Written Testimony on Kansas State Board of Education Rules and Regulations

November 30, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Williams and members of this Special Committee, for this opportunity to share with you the success of the Kansas State Board of Education's implementation of the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation Model, most commonly known as KESA. Although the regulations were formally adopted this past year, KESA has been in the works since early 2017. I understand there may be some questions as to how the State Board holds schools accountable for student performance. The following information should answer all of those questions.

From 2005 to the time an education system first entered KESA, a school's accreditation status was at least partially determined by how well students performed academically. Schools maintained their accreditation status if a certain percentage of its students (as determined by the State Board) performed at or above "proficient" on state assessments OR if there was an increase in overall student achievement by a percentage prescribed by the State Board, at least 95% of the total student population and 95% of each student subgroups took the state assessment, and there were acceptable attendance rates and graduation rates as determined by the State Board. None of that has changed.

The only performance criteria that was specified in a previous accreditation regulation was the 95% assessment participation rate. Schools are still required to assess at least 95% of their students and each student subgroup - it's just stated differently. Federal law already requires schools to assess at least 95% of students. Rather than repeat each requirement already stated in other state and federal laws, the KESA regulations require education systems to be in compliance with all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations (K.A.R. 91-31-31(x) and 91-31-32(f)). Additionally, accredited education systems are required to participate in the Kansas assessment program *as directed by the Kansas State Board of Education*. The direction given by the State Board is for education systems to assess the total student population as well as each student subgroup at 95%.

As for other performance criteria such as attendance, graduation rates, student performance on assessments, and the rate by which schools show improvement in performance - none of those factors have ever been specifically dictated within a regulation. Accreditation has always been a measurement of improvement and growth - improvement in policies, improvement in school

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development, AND improvement in student performance. It is important that schools always have an achievable goal that promotes such development and performance. If the State Board were to put a specific performance requirement in regulation, such as “75% of all high school seniors must graduate on time”, one of two things could happen – districts could game the system to ensure students graduate regardless of whether such students actually earn a diploma, and districts may become complacent once that specified benchmark is reached. Neither of those results help Kansas lead the world in the success of each student, and neither of those results are acceptable to the State Board. To avoid this, the State Board retains the discretion in setting performance goals on a district-by-district basis. This allows the State Board to consider the needs and resources of each district’s student population rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all solution. This approach also allows the State Board to continuously push education systems to improve.

Rest assured KESA holds school districts MORE accountable, not less. Unlike the prior system, merely graduating from high school isn’t enough. Districts are now required to produce graduates with the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in either postsecondary education, the attainment of an industry-recognized certification, or in the workforce. Academic preparation remains a top priority – that’s why it’s the first part of the State Board’s definition of a successful Kansas high school graduate.

Again, on behalf of the Kansas State Board of Education I thank you for this opportunity to explain some of the language of our accreditation regulations. I look forward to our discussion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Porter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Jim Porter  
Chairman, Kansas State Board of Education