KSDE Newsroom

KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

Kansas State Board of Education October highlights: Board removes restriction on number of days subs can teach through June 30

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The Kansas State Board of Education at its October 2020 meeting approved an emergency declaration removing the restrictions on the number of days a substitute can teach in any one assignment through June 30, 2021.

This was in response to Kansas school systems asking for more flexibility regarding the use of substitute teachers during the pandemic.

KSDE offers an emergency substitute license. The minimum requirement for an "E sub" license is 60 semester credit hours from a regionally accredited college or semester. Before the emergency declaration, someone with an E sub license could only teach 15 days in any one position.

KSDE also offers a degreed candidate substitute license. To obtain a degreed candidate substitute license, applicants must have a bachelor's degree. Before the emergency declaration, someone with a degreed candidate substitute license could only teach 30 days in any one position.

The State Board of Education accepted the recommendation of the Accreditation Review Council (ARC) and awarded the status of conditionally accredited to private system St. Patrick Elementary, Kansas City Catholic Diocese, through the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) process.

Jeannette Nobo, assistant director of the Kansas State Department of Education's (KSDE) Teacher Licensure and Accreditation (TLA) team, and Mischel Miller, director of TLA, provided information about St. Patrick Elementary and answered questions.

Nobo and Miller also presented four systems to the Board that the ARC recommended for accreditation through KESA. Those systems are Blue Valley Unified School District 229; Renwick USD 267; Lincoln USD 298; and Buhler USD 313.

The board is slated to act on the recommendation for these four districts at its November meeting.

During the 2019-2020 school year, 29 systems were scheduled for accreditation. However, because of COVID-19, accreditation visits were delayed. Consequently, each month through December, KSDE staff members are bringing ARC recommendations to the board for review and/or action.

The board approved allowing public and private systems, as a voluntary option, to suspend KESA activities through June 30, 2021, or to continue in the KESA process as normal. Systems will have to report social-emotional and academic data in their narrative reports, and KSDE staff members will report out on that in July 2021.

Systems have to continue to meet compliance in all areas; maintain their continuous improvement process; complete their 2019-2020 system yearly update in full; and complete a 2020-2021 system yearly update report section on social-emotional supports and academic progress.

KSDE sent out a survey to systems to see if they wanted to pause KESA if allowed. Sixty-eight percent of the private and public systems said they planned to pause KESA activities.

Miller, along with TLA's Susan Helbert and Shane Carter, updated the board on teacher vacancy and the Licensed Personnel Report (LPR).

COVID-19 created an unprecedented end to the 2019-2020 school year and the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Districts continue to deal with shifting staff needs because of the pandemic, Carter said.

Vacancy data includes fall 2019, spring 2020 and fall 2020 (vacancies at the start of the school year). A vacancy is any position not filled or filled but the person doesn't have an appropriate license.

The top five vacancies in all three time frames were special education, elementary, English Language Arts, science and mathematics.

The reasons for vacancies include no applicant; not fully qualified based on an endorsement area; preferred nonqualified over fully qualified; budget; qualified applicant refused offer; personnel; and not fully qualified based on professional attributes.

The LPR and licensure data from 2019-2020 showed that 88.1% of educators remained in the same districts, with 4.75% changing districts. The average age of teachers is 42.9, and the average salary for a first-year teacher is $40,471. The average salary for teachers is $58,878.

The 10-year retention rate for teachers in their third year of teaching was 90.73% in 2019 and 91.4% in 2020.

The total number of licenses being issued – 20,000 - is stable, Helbert said.

Bill Faflick, executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA), provided the association's annual report. KSHSAA serves 355 high schools and 408 middle schools and oversees 35 academic and athletic activities. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 90% of teams are participating in activities across the state, Faflick said.

Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson gave his annual report to State Board members.

"Anxiety is high," Watson said of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We're all experiencing trauma to some extent."

This includes parents who have lost jobs, teachers and students dealing with different learning environments and even community members coping with the pandemic.

Watson discussed student characteristics – 21% of the student population is Hispanic, while 63% is white, 7% are African American and 9% are other. The number of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches is declining. In 2014, 50.3% of students received free and reduced-price lunches. It has steadily declined to 47% in 2020. He also mentioned that the number of special education students is increasing while the amount of special education funding isn't keeping up with inflation.

While the number of students graduating is going up, it's not fast enough, Watson said. Kansas can continue to improve in 2020 through using Individual Plans of Study. The state set a goal of every student, beginning in the middle grades, having an IPS in place by the 2018-2019 school year. Required components of an IPS include a general postsecondary plan; portable electronic portfolio; and a course builder function with course selections based on career interests.

G.A. Buie, chairman of the Confidence in Public Education Task Force, announced the 2020 recipients of the ABC Award. Award recipients were Cindy Couchman, Buhler USD 313; Dyane Smokorowski, Wichita USD 259; Cory Gibson, Valley Center USD 262; Shannon Ralph, Gardner-Edgerton USD 231; and Tabatha Rosproy, 2020 National Teacher of the Year.

The Confidence in Public Education is a nonprofit corporation with a primary purpose of strengthening confidence in Kansas public education and increasing awareness of the positive aspects of public education in the state.

Each year, the Task Force presents the ABC Award to an individual or organization that has provided a long-term contribution, had a significant impact or demonstrated an uncommon commitment to public education across the state.

Kent Reed, an education program consultant for KSDE, gave an update on Anti-Bullying Awareness Week, which took place Oct. 5-11. The Kansas Integrated Accountability System shows there were 2,399 bullying incidents, including relational, verbal, cyber and physical during the 2019-2020 school year.

The Kansas Communities That Care report shows that out of 78,548 students that were surveyed, 12.3% percent reported seeing bullying one to two times per week; 5.5% reported being bullied regularly; and 3.4% reported being electronically bullied regularly.

Board members recognized the 2020 National School of Character from Kansas – Complete High School Maize (CHSM), Maize USD 266. This is the second National Award for the school.

Dr. Kristy Custer, principal of CHSM, introduced students who spoke about the character education curriculum.

The National School of Character Recognition Award is sponsored by Character.org. Character.org is known for its "11 Principles Framework for Schools: A Guide to Cultivating a Character-Inspired Culture," a comprehensive framework developed by school leaders and character education researchers.

Cheryl Johnson, director of Child Nutrition and Wellness, Jill Ladd, assistant director of CNW, and Mark Thompson, an education program consultant, shared proposed revisions to School Wellness Policy Model Guidelines. The guidelines were last reviewed and updated in May 2017. CNW worked for a year on obtaining input from more than 400 school personnel, content experts and community stakeholders regarding potential updates to the model guidelines.

During the winter of 2020-2021, the Rudd Center was contracted by the Kansas Health Foundation to evaluate the progress of Kansas school districts in implementing the guidelines. The grant included three components:

- Conducting workshops and providing individualized coaching for districts each year.
- Creating a set of School Wellness Policy Model Guidelines.
- Building and maintaining a web-based tool to assess every school district's wellness policies and practices.

The evaluation showed that districts reported progress in improving school wellness policies during a five-year timespan.

The Professional Standards Board and KSDE staff members have been researching and exploring options to use microcredentials as a means of individualized professional learning for educators.

KSDE's Miller introduced Debbie Mercer, dean of Kansas State University's College of Education; Dr. Paul Erickson, principal of Union Valley Elementary School, Buhler USD 313; and Kristy Oborny, a librarian for O'Loughlin Elementary School, Hays USD 489.

Erickson and Mercer discussed a microcredential pilot, which took place during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. More than 50 Kansas educators initiated the process. Erickson served as the lead investigator and facilitator for the pilot.

Results from the pilot included:

- Twelve educators developed their own microcredentials and completed them following criteria set by the Professional Standards Board.
- Thirty educators completed and earned microcredentials through Bloomboard, with a 100% passing rate on the second attempt.
- Twenty-one educators completed and earned two microcredentials, qualifying for relicensure per the pilot requirements.
- Six educators who completed the pilot already have relicensed solely based on these personalized professional learning efforts.

State Board members will continue to talk about microcredentialing at its November meeting.

The 2020 Kansas Teacher of the Year team visited with the board about the impact of COVID-19 on their classrooms, students and co-workers.

Team members are:

- Tabatha Rosproy, 2020 Kansas Teacher of the Year and 2020 National Teacher of the Year, a preschool teacher for Winfield Early Learning Center's Cumbernauld Little Vikes program, Winfield USD 465.
- Kara Belew, a social studies teacher at Andover Central High School, Andover USD 385.

- Amy Hillman, a middle school project-based learning and Achieving Through Individual Motivation (AIM) teacher at Santa Fe Trail Middle School, Olathe USD 233.
- Shawn Hornung, a social studies teacher at Wamego High School, Wamego USD 320.
- Stefanie Lane, a fourth-grade math and English language arts teacher at Garfield Elementary School, Clay County USD 379.
- Julie Loevenstein, a fourth-grade teacher at Glenwood Ridge Elementary School, Basehor-Linwood USD 458.
- Lara McDonald, a seventh-grade language arts teacher at Washburn Rural Middle School, Auburn-Washburn USD 437. McDonald wasn't able to attend the Zoom meeting.
- Melissa Molteni, a second-grade teacher at Corinth Elementary School, Shawnee Mission USD 512.

Dr. Watson continued the conversation on the impact of COVID-19 to the education system. Long-term solutions are important, he said. Districts must consider long-term solutions to deal with the pandemic because it isn't going away any time soon. While remote and hybrid environments work well to help control the virus, they aren't as effective as in-person learning, Watson said.

Board members also discussed gating criteria; local control; extending grace to everyone; time management; the amount of seat time required for students; the challenges of health departments having different policies for quarantine; and the amount of stress placed on everyone from the pandemic.

The State Board will meet again Nov. 10 in Topeka.

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