KSDE Newsroom

KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

Kansas State Board of Education March highlights: Board recognizes schools, receives update on task force created to oversee pandemic funds

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The Kansas State Board of Education recognized the two National Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Distinguished Kansas schools during its monthly board meeting March 9-10.

The two schools – Sheridan Elementary School, Geary County Unified School District 475, and Chetopa Elementary School, Chetopa-St. Paul USD 505 - were honored virtually in February at the national ESEA conference.

Dorothy Coleman, principal of Sheridan Elementary, and Reginald Eggleston, superintendent of Geary County USD 475, shared virtually the factors they found to be most significant in raising and/or maintaining student achievement at their schools.

Jolene Paden, principal of Chetopa Elementary, Craig Bagshaw, superintendent of Chetopa-St. Paul USD 505, and Lori Midgett, Title I Chetopa Elementary, attended the meeting in person and spoke about their experience at the virtual national ESEA conference.

Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson gave an update to board members on Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) II. Once signed into law, it will provide additional money to all public schools via the Title I formula. It also will provide Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools (EANS) II funding for all private schools. However, there are more stipulations for how the money will be spent on the state level to support students affected by the pandemic.

Watson shared how the pandemic has affected literacy and reading scores in Kansas. It appears, based on Kansas risk levels 2019 to 2020 for reading and math (FastBridge), that younger students had the largest literacy and math loss during the pandemic, Watson said. There also were drops from the winter of 2020 to the winter of 2021 in English language arts and mathematics, according to the average interim predictive test performance by grades (third through eighth grades and 10th grade.

However, Watson said, this data represents a very small population of students who were assessed, and results from the Kansas assessment will help determine the full story of how the pandemic affected students.

Watson also discussed social-emotional data in the state before and after the pandemic and how the class of 2020's postsecondary plans and enrollment were impacted.

Enrollment at schools overseen by the Kansas Board of Regents decreased 4% overall, with in-state enrollment dropping 6%. Enrollment at Kansas' private colleges fell 6% overall, with a 21% drop of in-state enrollment.

Stephen King, a computer science education program consultant for the Kansas State Department of Education's Career, Standards and Assessment Services (CSAS) team, updated the board on computer science standards implementation plan. He was joined by Katie Hendrickson, with Code.org.

State Board of Education members in February 2020 approved five recommendations brought forth from the Computer Science Education Implementation Task Force. At that time, board members requested regular progress updates. The five recommendations approved were:

- Create a dedicated statewide computer science education position, which is a position that King took on 13 months ago.
- Encourage all schools to offer computer science, which is ongoing. Forty-nine percent of Kansas high schools offer a computer science course, King said.
- Computer science should satisfy a core graduation requirement. There are 48 states that allow computer science to satisfy a core graduation requirement – Kansas doesn't.
- Create a licensure endorsement. KSDE's Teacher Licensure and Accreditation (TLA) team has formed an endorsement standards committee. TLA has provided data regarding the number of teachers and districts impacted by mandatory endorsement to existing licensed educators.
- Arrange funding. Existing Title II professional development funds have been allocated for computer science training.

A group has been working on a guidance document for districts on best practices for integrating computer science into existing graduation requirements and/or to count a computer science course as a core graduation requirement as long as students obtain sufficient math and science coursework to succeed in postsecondary work.

A draft of this guidance document should be shared with KSDE leadership later this spring, King said.

Hendrickson said in Kansas there are currently 1,999 open computing jobs (74% require a bachelor's degree), and there were 516 computer science bachelor's degrees earned in 2018.

Data from all 50 states shows 47% of public high schools teach at least one foundational computer science course, Hendrickson said.

The State Board had an opportunity to recognize art contest design winners from the KSDE Annual Conference. The contest encourages students to use their creativity by entering artwork using the current conference theme. This year, the theme was Kansans Can: Soar! Unfortunately, this year's in-person KSDE Annual Conference didn't occur because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were 120 entries in the 2020 artwork contest. Winners were first place, Nadia Kaewsai, an eighth-grade student at Andover Middle School, Andover USD 385; second place, Annabelle Stohr, a 10th-grade student at Stohr Christian Academy, Inman; and third place, Jade Willard, a fourth-grade student at Sunflower Elementary School, Paola USD 368.

State Board members endorsed educator microcredentials at the local level as a viable option for individualized professional learning to improve instruction in Kansas.

The definition and components of a microcredential were shared with the board in February 2021.

With the endorsement, school districts can begin implementing opportunities, using provided guidance, toward personalized paths of professional learning for Kansas educators.

Mischel Miller, director of TLA, was on hand to answer questions about the microcredentials.

The board accepted the recommendation to change the accreditation status of St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School from conditionally accredited to accredited. In accordance with the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) process, a system that has been conditionally accredited by the State Board of Education can be brought back to change its accreditation status from conditionally accredited to accredited provided that the areas for improvement are satisfactorily completed.

St. Patrick entered KESA in year 3. The ARC reviewed the system for accreditation recommendation status in August 2020. St. Patrick was granted conditionally accredited status by the State Board in October 2020. The system appealed that decision.

The Accreditation Review Council (ARC) met Feb. 17, 2021, to review documentation submitted by St. Patrick Elementary. Upon review, members of ARC determined that the system had satisfactorily completed all areas of improvement.

There were three areas of improvement identified for St. Patrick:

- Systematic use of data to support Foundational Structures.
- Resource capacity for long-term sustainability.
- Implementation of Individual Plan of Study (IPS).

Through the appeals process, it was determined that two areas were satisfied. The area for improvement that still needs to be addressed is the implementation process of an IPS. The ARC reviewed the system's evidence on IPS and determined that the system has put into place an IPS that is following the state's definition and requirements.

Miller and Jeannette Nobo, assistant director of TLA, answered questions about the change from conditionally accredited to accredited.

The two also gave board members preliminary information on systems' academic and social-emotional progress while paused from accreditation activity.

Board members in October 2020 approved public and private systems to voluntarily pause from KESA through June 30, 2021. State Board members directed KESA staff members to have systems that chose to pause report on academic and social-emotional progress. Board members requested a preliminary report, as well as a final report.

The preliminary report process started in January 2021 with 280 possible participants across the state. A detailed survey will be sent out to all systems in April 2021 to capture more in-depth information. Those results will be presented to the State Board in July 2021.

Board members approved the Kansas City Teacher Residency program as an alternative elementary licensure pilot for elementary teaching.

Miller was joined by Charles King, executive director of the Kansas City Teacher Residency, and Andrew Stuart, director of strategic growth for the program, to share more details about Kansas City Teacher Residency.

The Kansas City Teacher Residency model is currently being used successfully in Missouri as an approved elementary program provider. Board members received an overview of the program at the February meeting.

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Craig Neuenswander gave an update on legislative matters.

Watson, Craig Neuenswander and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Brad Neuenswander updated the board on the Commissioner's Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) and Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools (EANS) Funding Oversight.

The task force is comprised of 19 people, including superintendents, legislators, teachers, local school board members, business managers, state board members and private school personnel. They meet weekly from 3-5 p.m. every Friday. Meetings are livestreamed and recorded.

The task force will give direct oversight to $368 million in ESSER II funds and $26 million in EANS funds.

ESSER II funds have to be spent on pandemic-related expenses by September 2023.

The task force, which started meeting Feb. 26, will be in place until summer 2023.

The board approved a special meeting for 10 a.m. April 19 to approve EANS applications.

Board members had a work session to review the Kansans Can vision, along with its goals, objectives and outcomes. Watson and Brad Neuenswander led the board through how the vision and outcomes were developed.

The board will meet next on April 13-14 in Topeka.

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