

Summer Academies Jump Start the New School Year



The summer months may mean vacation for Kansas students, but not for our teachers. This is the time educators spend preparing for the next school year, whether that means developing new lesson plans, researching teaching strategies, taking additional coursework or simply reflecting on the past year and determining where they can improve instruction.

At the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), our summer months are also spent preparing for the next school year, and often that means assisting educators in their preparations. This summer, KSDE is hosting a series of Summer Academies designed to help teachers and administrators understand and prepare for the transition to new Common Core Standards for mathematics and English language arts.

The State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Standards last October, the first change in the state's curricular standards in six years. I'm excited by the prospect of implementing these new standards, which are internationally benchmarked and aligned with college and career readiness standards. I'm equally excited about this first introduction to the new standards, which places an emphasis not on assessment indicators, but on quality instruction to support the standards.

Too often in the past, educators have keyed in on assessment indicators within the standards, making those indicators the curriculum and placing all other content in a secondary role. As we introduce the new Common Core Standards, our goal is to keep the focus on quality instruction in all areas and how that can support overall success with the new standards.

The Summer Academies, titled "Uncommonly Good Instruction for the Kansas Common Core Standards," began last month and will continue through the end of July. Teachers, administrators and building leaders are able to spend two days learning how the new standards are similar to and different from our existing standards, and about effective practices that can be used in the classroom to teach effectively with the new standards.

It's taken a lot of work on the part of many people to pull the Summer Academies together, and I know attending the academies is a big commitment on the part of educators. I want to thank everyone who has made the academies possible, and all those who are taking time to attend. I think it's a great way to spend this time prior to the start of the new school year and I know it will make a difference in facilitating a smooth transition to the new standards. And that will benefit educators and students alike.



Dr. Diane Debacker
Kansas Commissioner of Education