

Kansas Commission on Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Meeting Minutes

July 26, 2010 – Curtis State Office Building, 1000 SW Jackson, Room 530, Topeka KS 66612

Commission members in attendance:

Interim Commissioner Dr. Diane DeBacker, Secretary Roderick Bremby, Jessica Noble, Jana Shaver, Malissa Martin-Wilke, Melissa Ness, Dr. John Heim, Blake West, Donovan Karber, Lt. Col. Mike Erwin, Miriam Krehbiel, James Mireles, Hon. Tom Webb, Representative Jo Ann Pottorff, Secretary Roger Werholtz, Deputy Secretary Dorothy Stites, Tanya Keys, Commissioner Russ Jennings, Linda Kotich and Jennifer Knorr

Support personnel and proxies:

Will Libeer (for Keil Eggers), Bobbie Bower (for Nancy Keel), Shelby Hoytal (for Kansas Mentors), Gary Alexander (for Christine Downey-Schmidt), Tolla White (for Harriet Johnson), Dr. Julie Ford and Steve Williams

Welcome, Introductions, and Overview:

- Interim Commissioner Dr. DeBacker and Secretary Bremby, Co-Chairs, welcomed those in attendance to the meeting.
- Attendees introduced themselves by sharing names, agency affiliations and current work in graduation, dropout prevention and recovery.
- Interim Commissioner Dr. DeBacker and Secretary Bremby provided an overview of the materials that were distributed at the meeting, including the agenda and the Commission's purpose, outcomes and processes. (Both of these documents can be found at: www.kansasdropins.org)

Presentation of Key State Data:

- A short video highlighting segments of the youth panel from the Kansas Dropout Prevention Summit was shown.
- Jessica Noble made a presentation on key state data, including graduation and dropout rates, methods of calculation, economic impact of dropping out and reasons why students drop out. (A copy of this presentation and the handouts can be found at: www.kansasdropins.org)
- The following questions/thoughts were shared by attendees:
 - In order for students to take the GED they must drop out of high school. Do we know how many students drop out for this reason? Of the students who drop out to get their GED, how many actually receive their GED?
 - A representative of counties/cities should be on this Commission because dropping out has serious consequences on their municipalities.

Social Networking Activity:

- Jessica Noble and Steve Williams, CCSR Facilitator led the group in a social networking activity. Each individual/organization represented on the Commission was displayed in a circle on a large sheet of paper on the wall. Attendees were invited to take a few minutes to decide how the agency they represent was connected to other agencies on the topic of graduation, dropout prevention and recovery. Attendees then came forward and drew the connections on the paper so that it created a visual map of the connectedness of the Commission.

- Attendees were then asked “what connections are YOU making about the connections illustrated on the map?” “What AHA’s have you experienced?” Responses included:
 - This map illustrates that we want comprehensive solutions and collaborative approaches.
 - Everyone has a stake in dropout prevention.
 - We need to bring the “small groups” into the process.
 - If we do things well there will be less need for connections to the Department of Corrections, Juvenile Justice Authority and Court Systems.
 - The Foundations are not very involved.
 - We really need city/county representatives here because they play a large role in this.
 - As we look at our draft outline, we need to think about who we need to move this plan forward.

Small Group Work:

- After lunch the large group divided into two small groups:
 - Group One: Setting goals, benchmarks and timelines for reducing the state dropout rate
 - Group Two: Developing the mission, vision and guiding principles of the Commission
- Each group was given two hours to work on their topic before they reported out their recommendations to the large group.
- Group One Report Out:
 - The group discussed how GED counted against schools and districts and was not considered a viable option for students by Department of Education. However, many in the group felt at some point GED was a viable option for some students.
 - **The group recommended that GED should come back under KSDE or be better coordinated. Data information for GED students also needs to be better coordinated.**
 - The group discussed how the parent sign out for a student had merit but because no data was collected by KSDE the state was missing opportunities to know why students and parents were making these choices.
 - **The group recommended that KSDE collect and track the parent sign out data.**
 - The group discussed targets for both improving graduation rate and drop-out rates for state of Kansas.
 - **The group recommended that by 2020 the graduation rate should be 95%. (Currently is 80%)**
 - **The group recommended the drop-out rate should be cut in half by 2015**
 - **The groups recommended the state use two ways of tracking the above:**
 - **ESEA Goal set by Department of Education**
 - **Kansas Goal which would give schools credit for GED’s.**
 - The group discussed developing a reward system for schools instead of current deficiency method. They wanted the system to be based on continuous improvement.
 - GED’s, home schools, length of time in school, students leaving country were issues that needed further conversations.
- Group Two Report Out:
 - **Mission:** The Commission will establish clear and measurable recommendations that engage all key stakeholders in comprehensive solutions to ensure the graduation of all Kansas P-12 students.

- **Vision:** By 2020, all Kansas students will graduate from high school with the skills to be successful.
- **Guiding Principles:**
 - All students are capable and deserve and should receive a high school education.
 - Multi-sector collaboration is essential to success.
 - Recommendations must speak to equal, equitable access to resources and support.
 - Current regulations and barriers can be changed.
 - Policies and regulations must support the creation of positive and engaging learning environments.
 - Parental, student and community involvement is essential.
 - Schools must demonstrate cultural awareness and responsiveness.
 - Policy-makers must provide the necessary resources to implement the commission's recommended solutions.
 - The public/community, businesses, parents and policy-makers need a deeper understanding of the challenges and needs of students, schools and the connection between school investment and the economic future of the community and Kansas.
 - Our recommendations must be realistic/finite yet impactful.
 - Our recommendations must be systemic in nature.
 - The Commission should be prepared to accept some cultural differences.
- Voting was postponed to the next meeting to give Commission members an opportunity to reflect on these recommendations.
- Jessica Noble announced that the two topics for the next meeting were:
 - State statutes and local policies related to attendance and compulsory attendance age
 - Relevance of education (i.e. exploring ways to encourage school districts to incorporate internships and work-study programs into structured learning time)
 - (It is possible that these topics could change prior to the next meeting)

Public Comment:

- Michael Lemon, Kansas Enrichment Network, thanked the group for their inclusion of a youth representative on the Commission.

Closing Remarks:

- Secretary Bremby told attendees that there was not adequate funding to pay for all future lunches and that if any other organizations wanted to sponsor a Commission lunch it would be most appreciated. Contact Jessica Noble if interested.
- Interim Commissioner Dr. DeBacker and Secretary Bremby thanked the Commission members for their time and hard work.
- Next meeting date: Aug 12, 2010 in Landon State Office Building, 900 SW Jackson, Room 106, Topeka KS 66612