

Diploma Completion Advisory Council: 12-10-14 Meeting

Present: Julie Cook, Julie Ehler, Vicki Fix-Turkowski, Barb Gibson, Don Grosdider, Michele Hayes, Janey Hummel, Tina Khan, Bill Losey, Martha Maxwell, Troy Marseline, Tim Marshall, James Martin, Larry Patrick, Brad Pepper, Justin Schwartz and Amy Wagoner

Absent: Terry Coughlin, Rhonda Denning, Susan Helbert and Stuart Sutton

KSDE Staff: Jessica Noble, Barb Hamernik

Background on Creation of Advisory Council:

KSDE expects that students within DCPs are being offered a comparable education to students in traditional schools and that all of the state requirements are being met. However, it has been discovered that there are a number of inconsistencies when it comes to serving and reporting data for students within DCPs. KSDE is concerned that this could result in budget cuts because it may appear like these programs are receiving state funds without being held accountable. The Legislative Post Audit report on virtual schools showed preliminary findings that adult learners in virtual DCPs are not consistently earning credits and that many students enroll in September but stop doing work in the early fall. Many of these students are not accounted for again until they appear in the following September's enrollment. This gives the illusion that DCPs are just enrolling students for the money with little regard to their actual education, which KSDE knows is false. KSDE hopes that the Council can provide a better understanding what DCPs and districts are accomplishing and where the barriers are to meeting state requirements.

Purpose, Outcomes and Processes of Advisory Council:

The purposes of the Council are to help KSDE:

- Understand the unique differences and common needs of the approximately 65 diploma completion programs (DCPs) in the state
- Develop requirements and an audit process for DCPs to ensure consistency and accountability across all diploma completion programs and sponsoring districts. [Council recommended that we distinguish in the requirements those that are required for high school students vs. those that are required for adults whose cohort has graduated.](#)

The Council will meet once a month from December 2014 through May 2015. Meetings will be the second Wednesday of each month from 9 am to 12 pm. Additionally, members are asked to participate in one of three subcommittees ([see later in notes](#)) that will meet concurrently to the Council. Recommendations will go to the State Board of Education in the summer of 2015 for with the expectation that we will phase in requirements during the 15-16 school year with full implementation, including the audit process in the 16-17 school year.

Membership on the Council consists of two representatives from each service center that operates DCPs, three representatives from district-operated DCPs and KSDE staff in ESOL, Special Education, Teacher Licensure, KIDS System and Virtual. The Council determined that other possible members include: district superintendents, curriculum directors, high school principals, counselors, data entry personnel (those who report information to KSDE), homeless coordinators and staff familiar with students in foster care. Jessica will work to find staff to fill these additional membership positions.

Review of Current Requirements:

DCPs may be operated by a service center in partnership with one or more districts or by a district directly. KSDE estimates that there are approximately 65 DCPs in the state serving both alternative high school students and adult learners. [See 12-10-14 Power Point for an in-depth look at current requirements for DCPs and districts.](#)

Discussion:

- School districts do not want to acknowledge that DCP students are still their students. They may respond if we can provide or demonstrate benefits to the district
 - Are there additional services (blended learning) the DCPs can provide to traditional students to cut the district's expenses such as job readiness?
 - Centers keep costs lower in other areas because they address specific needs of students at risk.
 - Centers are more flexible to meet needs than traditional schools.
- Dollar impact is something districts and centers are very aware of.
 - Resources used to maintain SPED teacher for each core content class offered in centers when teacher to student ratio is small compared to district classes.
 - Districts questioning where best to allocate their resources which could force center students to attend district school for some classes.
 - District bottom line is graduation rates and financial obligations.
- Centers must operate in partnership or under a district because the centers cannot issue high school diplomas.
 - There is a common misconception that there is no difference between a GED and a diploma from a DCP. However, a GED is based on a general education exam, while a diploma is based on meeting graduation requirements set by the district so there is a difference.
 - DCPs cannot get direct funding from the state.
- Communicating changes and providing training to the field
 - Districts struggle with accepting center students as still being the district's students because the district contracts for service and feels student is no longer their responsibility.
 - Districts renewing existing contracts tend to be less interested in keeping track of students while newer districts are more apt to consider the students as "their students"
 - Provide training and/or information to districts on record keeping: including superintendents, principals, staff (especially new staff or changing staff), data providers and other essential personnel.
 - Remove barriers of districts not understanding what they are to provide by reviewing statutes.

- Graduation Requirements:
https://online.ksde.org/regs_statutes/Stat_Reg_Results.aspx?Statute=0&Regulation=91-31-35
- Maintaining Education Records:
https://online.ksde.org/regs_statutes/Stat_Reg_Results.aspx?Statute=0&Regulation=91-31-31
- Educational Services for Individuals 19 years and older:
https://online.ksde.org/regs_statutes/Stat_Reg_Results.aspx?Statute=72-53,111&Regulation=0
 - District personnel do not understand how DCPs fit into KIDS system and often will not allow the program access to their local student information system.
 - District doesn't receive additional funding to address failure (at-risk funding) but should acknowledge their responsibility when a student fails.
 - Adults in CTE Pathway should be reported as any second level student and would qualify for assistance under SB 155

Review of Current Practices:

Data Sharing and Communication:

- Need to develop a way for districts and DCPs to log attendance easily so the information is uniform and dependable. KSDE needs to know the number of days of a DCP is in operation each year (days in membership) and the number of days a student was in attendance during the year (days in attendance). Need this for all students, even adults.
- When is the best time to terminate enrollment? When should a student be deactivated for being absent? Should this be a DCP or a district responsibility? Who should keep the records? How would anyone know when a student has moved to another district and/or another DCP? What are the attendance patterns that should be considered before deciding to deactivate a student?
- Suggested terminating at the end of the semester or if student tells DCP they are finished. Otherwise it is too cumbersome to un-enroll adults for non-attendance on a regular basis.
- Need training for KIDS data staff because they don't understand how the DCP fits in the district or how to enter the students in the KIDS system.
- Need ways to encourage adult students to attend.

Staffing:

- Who is responsible for a student if enrolled in a virtual school but is out of the district and needs to attend district school for a course? Should they attend the district the learning center is in or should they attend their home district?
- Who does transcript evaluation? Who should be responsible for transcript evaluation since the district issues the diploma? It should be staff from the district, but there appears to be inconsistency issue with this.
- Who is responsible for IEP? Who should be providing the services?
- Centers should have a teacher for every core content class. Elective course teachers can be under teachers at the district school. Directors of Centers currently do not have to be licensed in education for any level. Virtual schools are taking this issue to the Board of Education to change this to all directors must hold a license (counseling, teacher, admin). Teachers need to

be entered into the EDCS and other report programming to track teachers as well as students. Districts don't want to do this reporting and do not want to allow DCPs to do it because it would mean sharing personal information such as social security numbers and salaries.

Miscellaneous:

- What are the requirements for juveniles attending learning centers? An opinion was expressed that it takes a mature mind to educate themselves in learning centers.
- Migrant students - Do all students do Home Language Surveys? Is the test for both adults and kids? Do districts support ESOL teachers in centers? District should get funds if center has ESOL teacher. PreK – 12 (age 18) qualified for ESOL; Title 3 is ages 3-21; and Migrant is ages 3 – 24.
- It is a concern that districts who are looking at their budgets only may decide to terminate contracts with service centers which could force the DCP's students into regular classes in the district school creating a real problem for these students. It was also shared that service centers are the ones taking the risk and many DCPs do not survive when districts end their contracts with service centers. When contracts are ended, services are move to the district and usually down-graded greatly with DCP teachers serving multiple rolls, including non-teaching assignments.
- Observation: Larger districts want more student information to be retained in the district student information system and smaller districts want the DCPs to keep the information, including files and records, because they don't have the resources.

Subcommittee Work:

1. Requirements ~~and best practices~~ for DCPs and districts:
 - Requirements defined as those things that must be done even if not legislated in regulation or statute
 - Best practices defined as those things that should be done to enhance the system
 - Ultimately decided to only address requirements in subcommittee. Best practices can be addressed at a later time.
 - Also decided not to address the requirements around KCCMS-EDCS-STCO at this time as it will take a considerable amount of time to sort out.
2. Audit process for new and existing DCPs
3. Communicating and training staff within DCPs and districts on changes implemented

Next Meeting Dates:

All Council meetings will be held in-person at KSDE and virtually via Adobe Connect. Members are free to choose the method that works best for them.

- ~~January 14 from 9:00-12:00pm~~ [KSDE staff decided to cancel this meeting](#)
- February 11 from 9:00-12:00pm
- March 11 from 9:00-12:00pm
- April 8 from 9:00-12:00pm
- May 13 from 9:00-12:00pm