

Commissioner Randy Watson



Dr. Randy Watson was named Commissioner of Education by the Kansas State Board of Education in November 2014, while he was still serving as Superintendent of McPherson schools, USD 418. During his tenure with the Kansas State Department of Education, Dr. Watson has rapidly become known for his visionary leadership to position Kansas as an innovator in rethinking a century-old school model. The Kansans Can vision to lead the world in the success of each student continues to drive the work of the Kansas State Board and the state education agency.

Among the forward-thinking initiatives are balancing the emphasis between academic test scores and the characteristics Kansans identified as ensuring student success. Dr. Watson was instrumental in introducing statewide outcomes for social-emotional growth, kindergarten readiness, individual plans of study, graduation attainment and post-secondary success. Commissioner Watson has been recognized nationally for guiding student-focused, personalized learning through the Kansans Can School Redesign Project, which fuels the State Board's vision for education. Five cohorts of systems are currently engaged in the redesign process to tailor instruction to students' strengths, needs and interests.

Dr. Watson is a lifelong Kansan who was raised in Coffeyville and went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees from Kansas State University. He received his doctorate of education in secondary administration, school law, curriculum development and instructional leadership, and district level certification also from K-State. He was named a Kansas State Education Alumni Fellow in 2002. Among his many other honors and recognitions are Kansas Superintendent of the Year (2015) and Outstanding Service Award recipient from the United School Administrators of Kansas (2020).

His long-time career in education spans nearly every level of the field, all while serving Kansas students - first as a teacher and coach, followed by administrative positions as principal and superintendent, and as part-time faculty for higher education. As Commissioner, he has personally visited each of the state's 286 school districts, and continues to speak with educators, staff and students regularly throughout the year.

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.