



Kansas State Department of Education Insight Podcast Transcript

Episode 6 – 2021 End of Year Message from Dr. Watson

Intro:

You're listening to the Kansas State Department of

Education Insight podcast, where we bring you conversations and information on our vision to lead the world in the success of each student.

Host Dr. Randy Watson:

Hello, Kansas, educators, welcome again to the KSDE Insight Podcast, that's why and by we're having so much fun.

Mainly because you tune in and give us a great insight. Listen and learn about all things great in Kansas education and many of the things going on in our public and private schools in Kansas. Some just outstanding things happening because of rock stars like all of you teachers and custodians, principals, bus drivers, all the people that make education possible in Kansas. We salute you. We say thank you as we take a look back to 2021. And we hope as you're listening to this podcast, if it's timely, you're getting some downtime, some time with family and you're rejuvenating those batteries, you know, you're getting them fully maxed out for that winter and spring push. But we just hope you're enjoying yourself. If you're listening to this podcast a little bit later on, we hope you enjoyed your holiday break and you're experiencing a great 2020, too. But let's take a look back to just some of the things in 2021.

Let's call it a wrap. You know, I think I think we like to say we wrapped up 2020 and 2021, right? Pandemic, maybe cause does this think about that? But we had some really outstanding things that happened.

And first, I want to say this you go back all the way to March of 20 and then kind of track through the pandemic years. The one thing I'm most proud of is the way Kansas educators came together multiple times during that pandemic to produce three major documents continuous learning that got us through from

March of 20 to the end of that school year navigating change, which was this remarkable document that took us from this fall of 20 into the spring of 21. So that was just a remarkable document. And then navigating next, which really set the stage for the opening of the 21 school year.

So thank you, Kansas educators, hundreds of Kansas educators. And by the time we got to navigating change and navigating next, we expanded that to some of the best medical minds in our state. Kudos and thank you to the University of Kansas medical system.

Wow. Our deep admiration for you before the pandemic. It's even greater now. You're your help. Along with the Kansas COVID Work Group of physicians, which are made up of some of the most outstanding pediatricians and family physicians in our state.

I just can't say thank you enough. You have helped us keep schools open and safe and worked right alongside educators. And if there's one strong message, it's that we can do anything we want when we work together and educators and in our medical community have done that extremely, extremely well.

Also, some other outstanding things we want to highlight that took place in 2021. We hit during that time as we look back, and that's and that spring of 21. And over the summer, we achieved the highest graduation rate in the history of Kansas.

You know, that ought to just make you jump out of your seat, run it, run out in the neighborhood and say, Did you know, did you know we graduated more students from high school pre-pandemic than ever before in the history of our state?

And not only that, more students went on to earn something after high school, more than they ever have, with well over 50% having a credential. What does that mean? Or they have a welding certificate or they have a certificate, maybe in machining or they have an associate degree or baccalaureate or a masters or Ph.D.

So you have to tip your hat to the families, the students and the educators for that hard work. And as those of you that came out on the tour earlier this year in 2001. Heard Brad and me talk that why are we reading about this, why aren't we hearing about it?

Go celebrate that and that remarkable accomplishment last year, and we're just so, so excited about that. Speaking of accomplishments, I give lots of shout-outs, but we have eight different recognition systems in our star recognition system. Those are around the state board outcomes of what we think will be necessary to produce successful students at high school and after high school. And we had a school district, the first school district that got on the medal stand in all eight categories. That's like the Michael Phelps, you know of schools. I mean, that's like someone. It's even better than Michael Phelps. And here's why Michael Phelps, for all of his accomplishments, did it in one sport, did it in swimming. This school district is doing it in academics. They're doing it with high school graduation. They're doing it with social, emotional supports for kids. They're doing it with civic engagement. They're doing it in eight areas and they're doing it well well enough to be recognized again on that medal stand at some level for their outstanding success. And that is Southern Lyon County USD 252.

So you want to know who's knocking it out of the park, Southern Line County USD 252 is the first district in our state to reach the highest level of performance and recognition that we can give.

So just think about that in 2021.

I know we're going to, you know, years from now, you're going to pick up the history book. It's going to be the second year of COVID, right? That's how we're going to remember the Delta variant came. And yes, we had to respond to all of that.

But we accomplished some unbelievable goals during that time. And it was just so good to acknowledge that and continue to acknowledge that success. Speaking of which, as you know, in the fall. 2021 in the late summer, early fall, we went around to a success tour, 50 Kansas communities, where we engaged,

so many of you, thousands of Kansans. And are we getting this right with schools? How are we doing? We're putting the finishing touches on that research as we speak right now. We'll be releasing that in early January to the State Board of ED, but I can just tell you, Kansans said, yeah, you're on the right track.

Teachers, educators, you're on the right track. Double down. Make an even more concerted effort to help these kids be successful and help them get to where they want to be in school and then after school. So we were excited about that tour and stay tuned as we get into 22 to hear the results of that research will be published in that research. We asked three different research groups to take a look at that data independently. So we asked McCarroll out of Denver, Colorado, that one of the major educational research organizations in the United States, they're looking at it, Kansas State University, a couple of superintendents and people in our state and education working on PhDs, they said, we want to take a look at that. We think that's important. And then our own research staff, crackerjack research staff we have here at Cassidy is looking at that data and they'll present that data together separately and then bring it together and then present it to myself and the state board.

So stay tuned for that. But that's in the rearview mirror. That's 2021, and we're looking forward to 2022, 22 years now going into this century and all of the remarkable things way ahead of us as we're trying to continue to work for this success of each child.

So let's talk about one of the major initiatives that you'll start to see in early 22. It's around new graduation requirements we have had since the fall. A graduation task force made up of Great Kansas, Great Kansas educators, parents, school board members, principals taking a look at our current high school graduation outcomes requirements and asking a simple question. Is it time? It's been over 30 years. Should we really look at maybe changing those? What do we like about them? What do we need to look at as the world changed and they're looking around three big areas?

What courses exclude maybe be added or deleted for graduation as you may or may not know, it requires right now three units of mathematics to graduate from high school. Should that stay, should that be different? Should we add more mathematics for graduation?

Should we give more flexibility for graduation? Or should we specify even within those three credits what they are? Well, that's one group. second group, how can you earn credit through what we call competency, meaning I can show you, I can do that work, and I don't have to set through the entire year of the class to get the credit. We're looking at that. How can that happen so that students who want to work at their own pace and place and time can do that? And those students are like the kind of more traditional seat time can do that or they can mix and match.

So that's a second category. And the third we're calling market value assets. That's a fancy name for other things beyond the high school diploma that we want students to have or that they can choose from from a menu of options?

For example, a student may graduate high school and have twelve college credit hours that would be a market value asset, or they have an active score of 21 or they've been accepted into the armed services and has have passed the ASVAB test.

Those are just examples, but something beyond the high school diploma. Those are the three things what courses added or deleted? How can competencies play into it? And then what are those market value assets in addition to the high school diploma?

When will you see it? The draft will be done in late January and then starting in February through April. I and many others will be on the road coming to service centers and school districts and being on Zoom and saying, here's the draft keyword draft.

And then we want your feedback, and all of that feedback then is going to go back to this task force. They will take everyone's input and feedback. They will alter message change, craft the final draft and that will go to the state board of Education for their consideration.

In May of 2022, we don't do this very often. As I said, this is a once-in-a-generation project. And I can't tell you how happy I am. Jarred Furhman, the principal at Basehor-Linwood co-chairs that with Jim McNiece from the State Board.

We just have some outstanding educators on that. So we need your participation and input. Be looking for that draft to come out in early February. And one of the things we're going to be celebrating this whole year is a new round of the Kansas Teacher of the Year team.

Our KTOY Team is already been, you know, together and rocking it out. Suzanne Stevenson, that Kansas Teacher of the Year and that team, they're going to be in front of the Legislature and the state board in January and February.

They're going to be joining a new round of Horizon award winners, and we're just excited to have that many of those sessions back in person and have them throughout our state. So they'll be going to colleges and talking to future teachers.

And if you'd like for them to come to your school. Just drop us a note. You can just get GSD Gheorghe. You can drop any of us note and we'll get you in contact with what we call the KTOY Team.

Kansas Teacher of the Year team. They are rock stars. And, in episode eight, you're going to get a special interview with our Kansas Teacher of the Year. So 22 is gearing up to be an outstanding year.

We know how to handle the pandemic. It's never easy, but we know how to handle what we're doing. We're doing a great job. Get vaccinated, make sure you get vaccinated. Get the booster. Who knows? Later on, we may need a second booster.

Get the booster mask up when you have to be indoors, but enjoy each other. Let's make sure we're back together and really enjoying what's going on in education also, and to be looking forward to another robust summer programming, not going to give all of the secrets and details away on that.

But we're working on something that will make the summer of 21 look like a sandbox. It's going to be so enormous and so great. It's going to be outstanding. So educators again hope that you're having a wonderful break.

I am looking forward to the outstanding things you're going to do in 2022. It's going to be remarkable because of you. Last thing I want you to do is you take care of yourself and get ready for a fantastic spring, winter and spring semester.

Encourage a young person that you see in elementary or middle or high school that you think they have it. They have that compassion. They have that they could be a great teacher, go up to them in the hallway and say, Have you ever thought about being a teacher? I'd like for you to think about it. I think you could be a wonderful teacher. I would like to mentor you. I'd like to help you. If you've ever thought about really doing something remarkable where you can change people's lives.

I'd like to be part of that with you through that. Find a person or two or three. It's rewarding. It's why you got in the business and it will pay dividends for all of it for years to come.

So goodbye 2021. Welcome, 2022. Thanks for tuning in to our Insight podcast. Keep tuning in. Get your family and friends to tune in. We'll be covering a lot of great topics in 2022 and we hope that you tune in to all the thank you and have a wonderful new year.