



KCKPS Denied Opportunity to Raise Standards for Students

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) has learned that the United States Department of Education (USDOE) plans to deny a portion of the district's request to raise standards for its students. In August, the district applied for a waiver from the Kansas Approved Accountability Plan from USDOE, in order to implement a more rigorous assessment system aligned with national standards, which would ensure that all students graduate prepared for success in college and careers.

The district's waiver request sought to substitute the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) family of assessments (which includes the ACT), along with the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), for the Kansas State Assessment. USDOE has indicated that it will approve the request to use the EPAS assessments for grades 8-12, but will reject the request to use the MAP for grades 3-7.

"This news is devastating to our system, and to our students," said **Dr. Cynthia Lane**, superintendent of schools. "It is unbelievable to me that we would be denied the chance to raise academic standards, and to administer an assessment that contains the rigor that our students deserve."

Currently, students across the state of Kansas are required to take the Kansas Assessment. Unfortunately, numerous students who score proficient on the state assessment arrive at college unprepared for college-level work. These students must then pay to take developmental classes that do not count toward college graduation.

"The district has a goal that all students graduate ready for college and careers, and that at every level, students are on-track and on-time for success," Lane said. "The Kansas assessment is not rigorous enough to guarantee that our students are on-track with where they need to be. We have asked to raise standards for

our students by administering the MAP, which is a more rigorous assessment, and USDOE is telling us 'No!'"

KCKPS is not the only district in Kansas that has applied for a waiver. McPherson (USD 418) and Clifton-Clyde (USD 224) have also sought similar waivers, in order to be able to raise academic standards for their students. They will also be impacted by the USDOE decision.

"We will not allow this decision to affect our expectations for our students," Lane said. "It may mean that they are forced to take an extra unnecessary series of tests, but we will continue to focus on our own higher standards."

The district will administer both the MAP and Kansas Assessment this spring. The Kansas Department of Education has agreed to extend the testing window for an extra two weeks, given the late notice from USDOE.

District Plans Community Town Hall Event

What does the future look like for the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools? What is the district doing to achieve its goal of graduating every student ready for college and careers? These and many other questions will be answered during the upcoming State of the District Community Town Hall Meeting scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, March 29 at the Central Office and Training Center. Community members, business leaders, staff and students are all invited to attend.

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Beyond the Classroom

The opening of the District's "Beyond the Classroom" Art Exhibit earlier this week drew a crowd of patrons, staff and students. Art will remain on display at the Central Office and Training Center through the end of March.

Board of Education Highlights

At its meeting on March 20, members of the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education . . .

- Recognized Students of the Month for March: Davia Gladney, Quindaro Preschool; Van Rem, J.C. Harmon High School; and Brooke Blanchard, Stony Point South Elementary School.
- Recognized Employees of the Month for March (*see related story in this issue*).
- Received an informational report on the district's request for a waiver from the United States Department of Education (*see related story in this issue*).
- Approved the design development documents for a new Mark Twain

Elementary School building and approved moving into the construction document phase. The plan will be for the new building's front entrance to face east.

There will be a staff parking lot and two playgrounds. The new building will accommodate up to 322 students. Students will attend Central Elementary school for one year while construction takes place.

- Approved the construction documents for New Hazel Grove Elementary School. The plan include a bus lane coming up to the building, and a sidewalk for visitors and walkers.

March

Employees of the Month

Congratulations to March Employees of the Month **Shameka Brown**, bus driver, and **Rick Smith**, art teacher at John Fiske Elementary School. The following are some excerpts from their nominations.

Shameka Brown

"I wanted to let you know what a wonderful driver Shameka Brown was on a field trip we took to Pittsburg State University last fall. We took our trip in one of the new fuel-efficient buses and it was a great trip. She is very confident, professional and kind."

Rick Smith

"Rick Smith is the art teacher at John Fiske and he instills a love of art in every student here. Our student artwork is in the entryway as well as in the halls at John Fiske. Mr. Smith also volunteers his time and energy



March Employees of the Month: (from left) Rick Smith, art teacher at John Fiske Elementary School, and Shameka Brown, bus driver.

for an after school art club for our 4th and 5th grade students. It is with pleasure and high regard that we nominate him for Employee of the Month."

Community Town Hall Event

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The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) has received national attention and recognition for its work to improve student achievement. Recently, despite enduring several years of budget cuts from the state of Kansas, the district made the decision to accelerate that improvement by dramatically raising its academic standards. However, decisions in Washington D.C. and Topeka threaten to put these gains at risk.

Earlier this year, the district hosted a Town Hall Meeting for staff to update them on school

finance and the changes proposed by Governor Brownback. Since that time, the legislature has made a number of decisions that impact school finance, and these will be discussed during the meeting. In addition, **Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lane** will give an overview of the state of the district, touching on preparing students for college and careers, and 21st century learning. A question and answer session will follow the program.

A flyer about the meeting is posted on the KCKPS website at www.kckps.org/legislative. Questions? Call (913) 279-2242.

New Staff Position

Dr. Eva Tucker Nevels has been named District Coach of Professional Learning and Federal Programs.

In her new role, she will be responsible for implementing district-wide professional learning/development programs and providing high-level consulting services to schools around cultural intervention. She also will support the growth and professional development of newly hired or promoted administrators and teachers.

Her transition into this new position will be complete by July 1, 2012.

Roundtable Discussion

The district's final Roundtable Discussion of the year will be Thursday, April 5 at 4:30 p.m. at the Central Office and Training Center. The Discussion will center around the 5-Step Process for Excellence in Instruction.

Register at <http://tinyurl.com/7sjuea6>.



STAFF NOTEBOOK

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