

MINUTES

2010 COMMISSION

January 30, 2009
Room 136-N—Statehouse

Members Present

Dr. Ray Daniels, Vice-Chairperson
Representative Marti Crow
Carolyn Campbell
Dennis Jones
Emile McGill
Barbara Hinton
Lee Urban

Members Absent

Rochelle Chronister, Chairperson
Senator Jean Kurtis Schodorf
Representative Clay Aurand
Stephen Iliff

Staff Present

Martha Dorsey, Legislative Research Department
Sharon Wenger, Legislative Research Department

Chairperson Chronister had planned to attend the meeting via teleconference, but technological problems prevented it.

Vice-Chairperson Daniels opened the meeting.

At the request of Chairperson Chronister, Dr. Alexa Posny, Commissioner of Education, made a presentation on a variety of topics described briefly below and in more detail on the attachment ([Attachment 1](#)).

Computing Graduation Rates

In 2008, Kansas had a 74.3 percent graduation rate. Over five years, there has been no change in the Kansas graduation rate. There are several methods used to calculate graduation rates. Kansas currently uses the “leaver rate.” This graduation rate calculation measures the

percentage of students leaving high school with a standard diploma, expressed as a proportion of all those documented leaving with a diploma or other completion credential. The leaver rate is the most commonly used by states. However, every state has supported the National Governor's Association rate calculation which measures the number of on-time graduates in a given year divided by the number of first-time entering 9th graders four years earlier, adjusted for transfers.

Dr. Posny told Commission members for the first time the federal government has issued a regulation regarding calculating graduation rates. This final regulation defines the "four year adjusted cohort graduation rate" as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier (adjusting for transfers in and out, emigres and deceased students.) Dr. Posny said the problem with this approach is the assumption that only four years is needed to complete high school. She said that education commissioners across the United States were requesting the U.S. Department of Education "put this approach on hiatus." It is unclear what the future holds in this regard at this time.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Assessments

Dr. Posny discussed Achieve, which was created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders. Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. Dr. Posny described the work of Achieve as developing national curriculum standards.

When asked her opinion regarding the standards imposed by NCLB, Dr. Posny said that it was unclear the direction the new national administration would take. She also indicated uncertainty regarding meeting the goals of NCLB, especially considering that the current economic crisis likely would see funding cuts in the areas of education that made the most progress toward proficiency goals. (Attachment 1 describes this topic in greater detail.)

Federal Stimulus Package Funding

Mark Desetti of Kansas National Education Association provided information regarding proposed federal stimulus package funding ([Attachment 2](#)). Dr. Posny briefly discussed information she had obtained via a conference call with U.S. Department of Education officials and other states' education commissioners. Issues to be considered regarding any stimulus funding for education include:

- Requirements regarding maintenance of effort by states (state must maintain same state funding commitment as in the previous year);
- Requirements that federal funding not supplant state funding for education; and
- Federal stimulus funding is for only two years.

Update on Early Childhood Programs

Jim Redmon, Executive Director of the Kansas Children's' Cabinet, provided updated profiles on the Early Childhood Block Grant Program (the Program) grantees ([Attachment 3](#)).

Mr. Redmon told Commission members that the grants given to the Program grantees were for three years; however, grantees understand that funding could be discontinued at any time. Grantees will be starting activities within the next two months.

Mr. Redmon indicated that currently the federal stimulus package contains an unfunded mandate requiring the creation of early childhood advisory councils. Mr. Redmon thinks the current Kansas Early Learning Coordinating Council most likely would meet this requirement.

Mr. Redmon reported on the Strengthening Families Plan which is a program provided via the Kansas Children's Trust Fund. Its main purpose is to bring parents into pre-kindergarten efforts and programs. To encourage this, staff have held focus groups with parents throughout the state. A consistent set of questions were used with parents to determine areas of importance which will be used to determine future programming.

A brief discussion followed regarding programming for at-risk students and the need for a constant assessment of students' needs with the ability to rapidly respond when a need is determined.

The quality of professional development was discussed, and the importance of exceptional quality professional development emphasized.

The meeting was adjourned.

Prepared by Sharon Wenger

Approved by Commission on:

May 15, 2009

(Date)