

STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL DIRECTIVES

The Board of Directors

of the

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

December 6, 1995

Introduction

The School Board, elected to provide educational leadership and establish educational policies for the School District of Kansas City, and mindful of the planning tasks it faces, adopts the following educational principles to guide the Administration of the School District. We believe that every child enters school with a thirst for learning and an initial love of school and respect for teachers and principals. It is our task to capitalize on that energy and enthusiasm, to nourish it over the years, and help it grow. Our students must graduate from high school, prepared for all challenges, capable of meeting the demands of higher education, skilled to contribute economically to the community that educated them, and ready to participate as informed citizens in public life. To achieve these vital goals, we must have an effective school system. These principles are adopted for that purpose.

The School Board believes that all children are capable of meeting challenging standards and that schools must be flexible and capable of varying the opportunities for learning in terms of varied strategies to allow children to learn at their best. The School Board recognizes that the following reform principles must flow from a common vision and belief about children learning. That belief is that all children are capable of performing at high standards, and of developing deep understanding of complex concepts. Students will respond to learning opportunities if educators truly believe in their capabilities. This School Board also believes that the reforms needed to make this District successful cannot be pursued successfully in isolation from each other. Reform cannot come sequentially because a good curriculum without good instruction will not work any better than a poor curriculum.

Curriculum

The Kansas City, Missouri School District will adopt and implement a core curriculum for the 1996-1997 school year. This core curriculum will identify the *essential* knowledge, processes and skills in all content areas. It will contain a statement of aims and specific objectives, indicate the selection and organization of content, suggest certain governing principles about learning and teaching, and describe a method of assessment. The District curriculum will:

- identify content objectives in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art and music and provide a basic guide for learning at all grades.
- emphasize essential ideas and processes rather than discrete factual information.
- incorporate national and State standards for performance.
- be developmentally appropriate recognizing that not all students develop at the same rates just as all second graders do not reach 44" tall at the same time.
- promote progressively deeper understanding without saving challenging content for upper grades. (i.e., Geometry and algebra should be reflected in the K - 3 curriculum and not saved for introduction.)
- address critical thinking and problem solving abilities.
- reflect District Equity Policy.
- provide a foundation for interdisciplinary study and exploration of magnet themes.
- identify outcomes in grade ranges.
- be adaptable to the specific needs of individual schools.
- not be driven by standardized tests or textbooks.

The curriculum will be developed according to the following timeline:

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| by June 1996: | 1) a statement of District philosophy, scope and sequence charts, and performance objectives in grade ranges for language arts, math, science, social studies, music and art; 2) develop District assessment policy. |
| by June 1997: | 1) assessments for targeted performance objectives; 2) completion of technology, foreign language and physical education curriculum; 3) recommended activities & resources for language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, music and art. |

Instruction

The Kansas City, Missouri School District shall adopt and implement instructional practices that complement the new curriculum. In designing an effective instructional program, we need to change how teachers interact with students in the classrooms. These changes must be grounded in an understanding of how children learn. If we want to do things better, not just differently, we need to make changes based on educational research in cognitive studies. In accordance with current research, the instructional program will emphasize the following:

- attainment of expert performance by all students in all contents.
- selection of content and instructional strategies grounded in an understanding of how children learn, remember and use skills.
- activities that encourage student involvement such as hands-on experiments, projects, and collaborative learning.
- high-order reasoning and learning skills.
- ideas, processes and strategies that are unique to different content areas.
- application and transfer of this knowledge to real-world problems.
- student reflection, awareness and monitoring of their own learning.
- relationship between prior knowledge and new information to support assimilation and integration.

- presentation of new information through different modalities, intelligences and approaches.
- didactic methods when introducing new information, coaching when practicing performances, and dialogue when exploring ideas.
- social development as well as intellectual.

Professional Development

Teachers, administrators and other instructional staff need training to successfully implement the new curriculum and instructional practices. The purpose of staff development is to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills that will result in improved opportunities for student learning. The KCMSD must immediately develop a comprehensive plan, including professional standards for staff development. All subsequent training and development will be measured and evaluated against those standards. The training model should be designed based on current research on effective practices and adult learning theory. It should incorporate the following components:

- an understanding of child development and general learning theory that will serve as a foundation for decisions about both curriculum development and instruction.
- a deeper understanding of 1) student population we serve; 2) classroom management strategies; 3) knowledge, processes, and skills unique to each content; 4) effective instructional strategies, and; 5) ways to connect content across disciplines and to the real world; and 6) methods for effective student assessment.
- opportunities for 1) guided practice of new knowledge in the classroom; 2) for exploring best practice beyond the school such as partnerships and networks; 2) choice of training programs based on individual needs; and 3) different approaches to teacher growth and development (i.e. mentorships, study groups, peer coaching).
- encouragement of continuous teacher reflection on best practice and collaboration within the school community.
- training that engages teachers through interaction and active participation

All professional development resources not specifically dedicated to other mandated purposes, must be used next year, and in succeeding years as necessary, to facilitate implementation of these educational policies and directives.

Assessment

Assessment is the gathering of information about students' knowledge, their ability to use that knowledge, and their disposition toward such knowledge for the purpose of drawing inferences or making decisions about learning in our schools. Assessment must be closely linked to curriculum and instruction but it must be linked in a manner that assists in learning. It must avoid becoming an end to itself by shaping curriculum or instructional practices for the convenience of adults. It is thus critical that the KCMSD plan and develop for implementation by September 1996 an assessment model that will permit informed assessment of the learning of our students.

Personal Evaluations

To achieve the goal of providing excellent educational opportunities for all students, the KCMSD must be staffed by educators who are *all* knowledgeable, understand the new curriculum, use good instructional practices, have a proper disposition toward students and colleagues, and are willing to devote their professional energy to assist all children in learning. To that end, all future personnel evaluations must be tightly focused on assuring that our principals, teachers, and other teaching staff are evaluated on their performance using these measures. And, importantly, District personnel decisions must be grounded in the principle that the KCMSD will act on the basis of thorough and fair performance evaluations. All instructional personnel should know that having been given adequate opportunities to learn the District curriculum and instructional practices, and having been coached and guided in their implementation, they will be held accountable. The KCMSD will make personnel decisions in a manner that ensures that within a short but reasonable period of time all instructional staff will meet the District's high standards.

Conclusion

The KCMSD has fallen short of meeting all the educational needs of our children. The curriculum, instructional, professional development, assessment, and personnel principles adopted here are intended to give the Administration policy guidance that will enable it to marshal District resources so that, in short order, the KCMSD will offer learning opportunities that will engage all of our children in a rich and rewarding educational experience and prepare them for a productive and rewarding life.

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR MEETING WITH
ATTORNEY GENERAL JAY NIXON ON MAY 9, 1996

1. KCMUSD needs substantial desegregation funding to eliminate the vestiges of illegal segregation and discriminatory conduct relative to the adjudicated victims -- the African-American students. The most significant lingering vestige is the gap between the academic achievement levels of African-American students and white students in this district. So long as these glaring disparities persist, the vestiges have not been eliminated to the extent practicable and the KCMUSD is not unitary.

2. **Racial Isolation** - (On this question/issue, make two points):

- a. Racial isolation per se is not unconstitutional.
- b. Racial isolation is not a barrier to academic achievement.

3. **Future litigation and the State's inability for the inter-generational effects of their discriminatory conduct.**

The KCMUSD feels confident that it ^{car}prevails in court on issues relative to the State's obligation to provide adequate desegregation funding to eliminate the lingering vestiges ^{IN} the KCMUSD's education system. KCMUSD is also confident that the State's discriminatory conduct had a debilitating inter-generational effect for which it (the State) is liable... KCMUSD is prepared to litigate this question in the District Court and all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary. KCMUSD totally and unequivocally rejects the State's definition of the victims as only those students who were enrolled in the KCMUSD when the Court made its liability finding.

4. **CIP Issues.**

Under Jenkins III, suburban comparability and desegregative attractiveness may not be valid or relevant relative to attracting whites. However, the Defendants, including the State, have a legal obligation to provide the victims with adequate educational facilities. Additional CIP funding is necessary to fulfill that obligation.

5. Educational reform in the following areas necessary to completely eliminate the educational vestiges of illegal segregation:

- a. Curriculum
- b. Instruction
- c. Professional Development
- d. Assessment
- e. Personnel Evaluation