

Recommendations To Improve Educator Recruitment and Retention in Kansas

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN KANSAS

“Teaching is the essential profession, the one that makes all other professions possible. Without well-qualified, caring, and committed teachers, neither improved curricula and assessments, nor safe schools—not even the highest standards in the world—will ensure that our children are prepared for the challenges and opportunities in America’s third century.”

U.S. Department of Education, 1998

More than half the educators who will be teaching in Kansas 10 years from now will be hired during the next decade: recruitment and retention of teachers in Kansas is an issue that must be taken seriously. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nationwide, 2.4 million teachers will be needed in the next 11 years. The projection jumps as high as 2.7 million when researchers factor in nationwide class size reduction efforts. The following additional facts further highlight this issue.

- Thirty-five percent of the Kansas teacher work force is over age 50, and new teachers represent less than 5% of the total teachers employed. Nationwide, one-third of today’s teachers have more than 20 years of experience and two-thirds are at least mid-career.
- Few incentives exist to encourage teachers to become licensed in high-need disciplines or to accept positions in high-challenge schools and geographic locations.
- Policies that helped to ameliorate teacher shortages in the 1960s and 1970s have ended.
- The attrition rate for beginning teachers creates ongoing pressure for hiring. Nationally, almost 30% of new teachers leave the profession within five years, and the rate is even higher in disadvantaged districts. In Kansas, the total number of new teachers hired for the 1996-1997 school year was 1078. Five years later only 719 were still teaching, which means the attrition rate for this cohort group is 33%.
- Although there has been no comprehensive study of the principal shortage, the need for school administrators through the year 2004 is expected to increase 10 to 20 percent.

To address the issues of recruitment and retention, the Kansas State Board of Education established a strategic goal in 2001 to “recruit, prepare, retain, and support a competent, caring, and qualified teacher for every classroom and leader for every school.” One objective of this goal was to design a plan that would increase the supply of qualified educators. To that end, Education Commissioner Andy Tompkins recently appointed a blue ribbon task force to develop for the State Board of Education a set of recommended initiatives that are needed in Kansas to attract and retain highly qualified, competent and

caring educators. The task force has identified the following five initiatives and accompanying recommendations to address these important issues.

I. Salaries: Teacher's salaries need to be increased to levels commensurate with professions requiring similar training.

Recruitment: The recruitment of highly qualified persons to teaching is critical to student success in Kansas. In 2000-01, the average salary for a beginning teacher in Kansas was \$25,713 excluding fringe benefits. In 1997-1998, the national average for beginning teachers was \$25,735. Therefore, in Kansas the salary for a beginning teacher lags four years behind the national average. A comparison of beginning teachers' salaries and the beginning salaries of those in other professions with comparable education reveals a similar disparity as indicated in the chart below. Currently, Kansas does not have a comprehensive statewide program to recruit teachers into the profession. However, other states throughout the nation have taken bold steps to address the issue of recruitment. Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Colorado have made considerable investments in raises for educators. Some states have also agreed to allow signing bonuses ranging from \$1,500 to as much as \$20,000, and a number of states have approved loan forgiveness programs.

	Kansas New Teacher	National New Teacher	National New Business Administration	National New Liberal Arts	National New Computer Science
1993-1994	22,624	23,231	27,768	27,852	31,728
1995-1996	23,336	24,285	30,140	29,979	35,481
1997-1998	24,241	25,735	34,831	33,600	40,920
1998-1999	24,648	26,639	36,886	34,776	42,500
1999-2000	25,252	27,989	40,242	38,210	46,495

Recommendations:

1. Provide a state minimum base salary for beginning teachers.

Clearly, Kansas beginning teacher salaries lag behind the national average. In this time of shortages and increased mobility, the need to be nationally competitive is paramount. The task force recommends that the state set a minimum beginning teacher salary of \$30,000 excluding fringe benefits and that the beginning minimum salary be adjusted annually based on the previous year's national average.

2. Enact law that would allow the use of signing or retention bonuses.

Many of the states with which Kansas is competing for new teachers offer signing bonuses. The task force recommends that Kansas school districts be given the authority to provide signing bonuses. The task force believes that the district should have the authority to give this bonus upon signing or after some specified date as a leverage for retention.

Retention: In 2000-2001, the average Kansas teacher's salary, including fringe benefits and salary for teaching summer school, was \$39,363. Without supplemental salary, extra summer pay and board-paid fringe benefits, the average teacher salary was \$35,784. Nationally, the average teacher's salary without fringe benefits or supplemental pay was \$42,855. As noted above, the 2000-2001 beginning teacher salary in Kansas equaled the national average of four years earlier. For all teachers, Kansas is just now at the 1993-1994 national level, or eight years behind. The chart below shows a nine year comparison of Kansas average teacher salaries with average teacher salaries in the nation.

	Kansas	National	Difference Kansas Lags Behind
1992-1993	30,243	35,017	13.6%
1993-1994	31,297	35,723	12.4%
1994-1995	31,815	36,933	13.9%
1995-1996	32,382	37,846	14.4%
1996-1997	32,865	38,516	14.7%
1997-1998	33,579	39,394	14.8%
1998-1999	34,369	40,464	15.1%
1999-2000	34,981	41,733	16.2%
2000-2001	35,784	42,855	16.5%

Recommendations:

1. **Set a goal to bring the average Kansas teacher salary up to the national average.**
The results produced by Kansas students taught by Kansas teachers are clearly among the best in the nation. The task force believes that the teachers who help students achieve these results should at least be compensated at the national average. The task force recommends that a goal be set to bring the average Kansas teacher salary to the national average by 2005.
2. **Provide alternate compensation incentives.**
The current salary schedules for teachers have certainly served an organizational purpose over the past 50 years. However, with the increased call for pay based on performance, the task force feels it is time to look to new ideas for organizing schedules for educator compensation. The task force recommends that an incentive program be offered to provide increased compensation for those educators who take on additional responsibilities and professional leadership roles within the school and/or district and provide seed money to local districts that are willing to look at alternate pay structures.

Governor Graves included in his enhanced budget request in the 2001 legislative session a proposal to provide additional funds for the staff in schools who either achieve the standard of excellence on the state assessments or show a substantial increase in student performance on the state assessments. The task force recommends that a similar proposal be made awarding schools up to \$100 per student in the year

following the meeting of the established requirements and allowing the funds to be used in part or whole for bonuses for staff.

3. **Increase the stipend paid to teachers who achieve National Board Certification and pay a stipend to the school that supported the teacher through the process.** Currently, the State pays \$1,000 toward the cost of National Board Certification and \$1,000 per year as a stipend for those who have received National Board Certification for the life of their certificate (10 years). Governor Graves included in his enhanced budget request in the 2001 legislative session a proposal to *a) increase the annual stipend to \$5,000 and b) award a one-time stipend of \$3,000 to the school that supported the teacher who earned National Board Certification.* The task force supports this proposal and recommends that it be included in the comprehensive plan.

II. Benefits: A comprehensive benefit package, including health insurance, is critical in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers.

Currently, 14 Kansas school districts offer no health insurance to any employee in the district. In addition, most districts in Kansas have experienced ongoing problems with rising health insurance premiums as well as loss of benefits. Two years ago, the state began allowing school districts to participate in the state health insurance pool if they met the same standards required of state employees. With two of three school districts experiencing declining enrollment and the average state increase in the per pupil funding for districts below the rate of inflation, few districts have been able to afford participation in the state insurance pool. Because health insurance is a benefit routinely available to employees in other professions, it should also be available to teachers and provided at least to professional employees.

Likewise, other benefits that would be available to employees in private business should be made available in school districts. Many businesses contribute to tax sheltered annuities for their employees, and more and more businesses are offering childcare options for employees. These benefits help businesses attract and retain employees, and could have the same affect in attracting and retaining quality teachers to Kansas schools.

Recommendations:

1. **Provide health insurance to professional employees in the school districts commensurate with the benefit paid to employees who work directly for the state.**

One of the prime factors in attracting and retaining employees is the provision of basic benefits. Health insurance has become an essential benefit especially for the professional staff. The task force recommends that the state fund the same health insurance program for professional educators as with other state employees. The task force further recommends that this benefit be phased in over a five-year period.

2. Allow school districts the authority to contribute to tax sheltered annuities for educators.

In the 2001 legislative session, legislation was introduced that would have allowed school districts to match employee contributions to tax sheltered annuities. This would have been an option for districts and would have been funded within available resources. School districts speaking on behalf of the proposal wanted the option to offer this as part of the benefit package. The task force supports this option for school districts.

The task force urges districts to seek local partners in education who could advocate for reduced mortgage rates for teachers in their area and provide childcare incentives. The task force believes these additional local efforts would be helpful to attracting and retaining teachers.

III. Work Environment: A positive and supportive work environment can reduce attrition and improve the quality of teachers in the classroom.

While money lies at the heart of attracting and keeping good teachers a report “*Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why*” published by the Public Agenda in 2000, found that many new teachers do not believe money alone will reduce attrition and improve the quality of teachers in the classroom. When new teachers were asked what factors would lead them to remain in their current position, they indicated the following:

- When given a choice between two schools in otherwise identical districts, 82% preferred schools with administrators who were strongly supportive;
- When principals were strong and fair leaders and the school environment flourished; and
- When the school had a teaching philosophy similar to their own, highly motivated teachers, and an exemplary principal.

New teachers are often given the most challenging students; asked to teach multiple subjects; assigned the responsibility of extra curricular activities; and asked to teach classes for which they are not properly trained. Nationwide only 44% of teachers report having participated in formal first-year mentoring programs, even though participation in a mentoring program is known to reduce the attrition rate by up to two-thirds. Additionally, fully certified, experienced teachers have been shown to improve their practice through staff development and assistance from peers.

Recommendations:

1. Provide ongoing training opportunities for building principals to assist them in developing leadership skills.

The State Department has provided leadership training for principals in the state. However, there has been no sustained effort to provide ongoing training on instructional leadership. The task force recommends that the State Department of

Education develop and implement a program to provide ongoing leadership training to principals throughout Kansas.

2. Build time into the school calendar for staff development and collaboration.

Ten years ago staff development was a legislative mandate; today, the amount of time devoted to staff development varies from district to district. The task force recommends a minimum of five calendar days be built into the school calendar for collaboration and staff development. The additional time would allow buildings to create and nurture an environment that encourages continuous improvement.

3. Expand funding for the mentoring program to assist not just the beginning teacher but all probationary teachers.

The 2000 Legislature provided funding for the mentor teacher program for first year teachers only. The original bill passed in 1999 envisioned a mentoring program that was available during a teacher's three-year probationary period of employment. The task force recommends that funding for the mentor teacher program be expanded to include the three-year probationary period.

4. Develop a model induction program for new teachers.

A number of districts currently provide induction programs for new teachers, however, the quality of these vary greatly. The task force recommends that the State Department of Education develop a model induction program for new teachers and provide training on this model program throughout the state.

5. Develop a peer assistance model program for local district use.

Many districts in Kansas do not have a program available to provide support to experienced teachers. The task force recommends that the State Department of Education develop a model peer assistance program and provide training on this model program throughout the state.

IV. Certification and Teacher Education: Incentives to become licensed in high-need areas and alternate routes to licensure are necessary to address current and future teacher shortages.

The greatest teaching shortages in Kansas today are in bilingual, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), special education, mathematics, science, counseling, industrial technology, music, computer science, library media, and foreign languages. Only 82% of the Bilingual/ESL teachers and only 85% of the special education teachers working in the state's classrooms are fully qualified. The requests for certification waivers in these and other areas have grown substantially over the past three years. Additionally, State Department of Education staff members are inundated with anecdotes from school district leaders about the shortage of qualified educators. Districts located in either remote rural areas or high-need urban areas of the state must overcome geographic challenges in attracting qualified teachers to their schools, even when not faced with a teacher shortage. The current teacher shortage only exacerbates the problem.

Recommendations:

1. Enhance the state-funded scholarship program administered through the Kansas Board of Regents and broaden the eligibility requirements.

The current scholarship program needs to be dramatically enhanced to encourage prospective teachers to enter fields and teach in certain locations within the state. The task force recommends that the program be expanded to provide at least 200 new scholarships each year to students entering high need disciplines and/or who are willing to locate in high-need areas and 400 continuing scholarships for a total of 600 scholarships. In addition, the current eligibility requirements are too narrow and need to be broadened.

2. Allow school districts the authority to subsidize a “grow your own” teacher recruitment and placement program.

Some school districts, especially in high need locations, are willing to subsidize tuition for prospective teachers who are willing to return to the local district upon completion of a certification program. The task force recommends that a new law be enacted to allow local districts this option.

3. Provide incentives for students and teacher education programs to place student teachers in geographical areas of high-need.

One of the problems being experienced in Kansas is the distribution of available qualified staff. The task force believes that a part of this could be solved if financial incentives were provided to encourage placement of students during student teaching in more remote areas of the state and in high-need urban areas.

4. Allow licensure flexibility and expanded access to teachers with out-of-state credentials.

The issue of portability of licenses is critical to the short-term needs for attracting qualified staff from out of state. The task force recommends that the State Board of Education allow fully certified/licensed out-of-state applicants who graduated from an accredited program access to practice for the term of their out-of-state license, not to exceed five years, before having to meet additional requirements in Kansas.

5. Offer additional “endorsements” to a teaching license based on content or performance exams.

Once the new licensure system is in place, a series of licensure exams will be required in addition to the coursework from an approved program. In addition, if teachers are seeking to move between licensure levels, additional student teaching may be required. The task force recommends teachers who hold a Kansas license and who wish to add an additional endorsement be allowed to do so as soon as they have passed the required content and/or performance exam.

6. Offer a re-entry program for teachers who have left the profession, but want to return.

70,866 individuals hold a valid educator certificate in Kansas and yet districts report only 44,066 are currently employed. An additional 74,977 individuals have expired Kansas certificates. Based on a study completed by the state department staff in 2000, 47% of people (excluding those retired) who have held teaching certificates, but are no longer practicing, would consider returning to the profession. The task force recommends that the State Board grant a five-year window during which people who have taught within the past ten years but who have let their certificate expire,

