



Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Unified School District No. 500

Testimony to the House Education Committee January 24, 2012

**Dr. Cynthia Lane, Superintendent
Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools**

The story of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is the American story. Eighteen years ago, the district was struggling to provide its students with a quality education. Fewer than 10% of students were proficient on the state assessments, and the students we graduated were not prepared to be successful in college, or in the workforce. However, through courage, focus, and hard work, the district has transformed itself into one of the most respected urban districts in the nation, where now more than two-thirds of students currently meet the state standards.

Children in KCKPS come to school with absolutely no advantages. More than 87% qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, almost 1/3 need to learn English, and hundreds and hundreds are categorized as homeless or migrants. However, their teachers refuse to use any of those statistics as reasons to feel sorry for them, to expect less of them, or to allow them to achieve at lower levels. In fact, we must expect from our students what is expected of every other student in the state: They must graduate ready to be successful in college and careers, and to become valuable and contributing members of society. Indeed, it will be their success that proves that the American experiment is still viable, and that education continues to be the ticket to the American Dream.

For them to reach their dreams, we believe that we must raise the standards we expect them to reach, and to put all of our resources and energy into helping them to reach those higher standards. To do this, KCKPS has requested a waiver from the Kansas Approved Accountability Plan from the United States Department of Education. We have aligned our curriculum with the ACT and the Common Core National Standards, and the waiver will allow us to substitute the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) family of assessments, along with the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), for the Kansas State Assessment. We believe that the EPAS assessments and the MAP are more rigorous and meaningful, and will serve as true indicators of success that demonstrate our students are fully prepared for college and careers upon graduation from high school.

The work of transforming our system, in order to prepare our teachers to teach and our students to achieve these higher standards, has been incredibly rigorous and complex. It has been work that could not have been achieved, without the changes that have enabled KCKPS to work as a system, without the additional resources that we receive to serve students with special needs, and without the belief that resides in citizens across our state, that every student in Kansas deserves a quality education, regardless of the zip code they live in, or the language spoken in their home.

The students we serve will give back much more to Kansas than they receive. They will invent things, start companies, create jobs, give back in money and service to the communities in which they live, and pass on to their children their belief in the power of education to transform lives, and change communities. Our investment in them is an investment in the future of this great state, and it is the most important thing that we can do to preserve our future.