



Special Committee on Education
Testimony on Student Achievement

Mr. Terrell Davis

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12/1/2021

Madam Chair,

Thank you for your invitation to come here to share with this Special Committee on Education. Wichita Public Schools official enrollment is 47,334 students. 31% White, 20% African American, 36% Hispanic, 13% Other. 78% of our students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch. 16% of our students receive Special Education services. 19% of our students receive ELL services. There are 105 different languages spoken in our students' homes. As you can tell from these data points our schools are diverse and complex. Not only do we celebrate that diversity but we strive to ensure that every student can dream, believe and achieve!

Let me start by saying that our student achievement as measured by the Kansas State Assessments in ELA and Math are not where we would like them to be! Our data has not been as high as we would like. We can and we will do better! We have developed and outlined a comprehensive plan to address academic improvement for our district. That plan is attached to my written testimony. We would like to state for the record that we do not believe that school districts should be judged by just one data point, as this one data point is not an accurate big picture of our school district nor any school district. To gain a better big picture of school districts we would recommend that not only should State Assessments be taken into consideration but also the following: Interim Assessments, Universal Screener Data (over time to show growth), Graduation Rates, and Individual Plans of Study completion. School systems are complex organizations, teaching and learning is a complex process, and student achievement is complex and measuring that achievement should take into account those complexities. Especially

when you take systems that serve students of poverty. Poverty adds to the complexity of an already complex system.

Children who live in poverty often come to school behind their more affluent peers in terms of literacy and language development. In Educating the Other America, Susan Neuman (2008) states that more than 50 years of research indicate that “children who are poor hear a smaller number of words with more limited syntactic complexity and fewer conversation-eliciting questions, making it difficult for them to quickly acquire new words and to discriminate among words”. These students who are identified as “At-Risk” are in need of additional support to bridge the educational gap. Currently we use 76% of the state’s approved intervention programs, with mixed results. Some would ask why? Well it’s because moving the academic needle for students of poverty is complex. It’s not a cookie cutter approach, what works for one student may or may not work for another student. There is diversity within at-risk students. That’s why assuming that students who score a 2 on the State Assessment are failing or on target to fail is an erroneous assumption. There could be a number of reasons why students have scored in the 2 range and some of those reasons may not be academic.

I would like to spend my final minutes of this testimony talking about 2 students who both scored, you guessed it a 2 on the State Assessment. While at a glance you might make the mistake of assuming that both have the same issue or deficiencies, you will learn just how complex the needs were of the 2 students.

First student Dagiona, she scored a 2 in ELA and Math in the 5th grade. That fall she scored average on the Universal Screener for Math and ELA. For the next 3 years we enrolled her in intervention class for Reading as we diagnosed that she had some holes in her reading skills, she attended our Summer School to provide some extra support for her math skills, and she attended our Southwestern College campus visits. For Dagiona we addressed the learning gap with fluid intervention classes as she had missed some critical days in elementary and had some holes in her learning, we addressed the enrichment for math with an extended school year approach, and we addressed the exposure gap with the College experience. I must share with you Dagiona’s State

Assessment results, even with all of those interventions and supports she never scored over a 2 on the State Assessment even as an honor's math student. But her big picture is that she showed improvement on her Universal Screener data every year. She improved her attendance every year with over a 95% attendance rate, and she never got in trouble after her 6th grade year. She even met her goals outlined in her Individual Plan of Study. She graduated and accepted the highest Scholarship at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. She's now completing her sophomore year and has made the President's List for Academics. She's still working toward her IPS goal of Journalism and covering the Football and Basketball teams for the School's newspaper. Her 2 on the State Assessment was due to a "Swiss cheese education" she had simply missed too many days of school growing up.

Finally I want to share with you about another student who scored a 2 on the State Assessment. Unlike Dagiona, Maria is a gifted student. Maria came to middle school on grade level as determined by the Universal Screener. Over the next 3 years she would go from on grade level to above grade level to well above grade level. Maria's issue was not a "Swiss Cheese education", she had great attendance in Elementary. She mastered key concepts for reading and math. Her issue was confidence and life. For Maria, it was easier to not try than to try and possibly fail. Maria attended our Summer School not for intervention not even for enrichment, but she attended Summer School for confidence. We needed to build up her intestinal fortitude. Maria attended our zero hour that pre-taught math concepts to students because we wanted her to be confident when she went into math class. Maria came to the Capitol to page for Senator Mike Peterson because we wanted her to see the potential in herself. Maria finally scored a 3 on the state ELA Assessment and scored a 3 on the state Math Assessment but not until her 8th grade year. Let me share with you Maria's big picture, she graduated High School, completed her IPS goals, she is now a student at Newman University. She just made the all-academic team for soccer. Last year she made the Dean's list for academics. And she's still working on the IPS goal and is studying Nursing. I attached a Facebook exchange between Maria and me, where I congratulate her on her accomplishments and tell her I'm paradise proud of her. Maria's reply is truly Maria, she says, "I'm glad that I am able to give you something to be proud of! You taught me about adversity and I still

live by those words today!!” Adversity can’t be measured on a state assessment! But for Maria, lack of adversity was keeping her from moving out of level 2, not her aptitude, not the instruction in the classroom. She was not able to overcome the issues in life, and for her, those issues were more important than the State Assessment.

I share with you those 2 stories because they represent so many students who score a 2 on the State Assessment. Some would call them failures, some would say they were not “College Ready”, but that’s not looking at the big picture. They are what public education is all about, they are examples of the educational process at its best! Some students may not ever demonstrate all of their academic potential on the State Assessment, and as Legislators you should want to know the “whole story, the big picture” not just a single data point of the State Assessment. The kids of Kansas may not all start at the same starting line, some have hurdles in their lanes, others have an open track, some students are running in new track shoes, while others have old tennis shoes, some are running with aerodynamic track suits, while others are running in old sweat pants and passed down t-shirts. Our focus should be on each kid moving down the track and on each kid finishing their race!

State Assessments, with Interim Assessments, and Graduation Rates, and Individual Plans of Study completion, and Universal Screeners over time are the best indicators of Student Success not just the State Assessment! Dagiona and Maria are not the sum total of the 2’s that they scored on the State Assessment, but rather they are the sum total of many teachers, paras, administrators and caring adults who would not let them quit and provided the academic and emotional supports for them to bloom into the fine young ladies and scholars that they are today!

Very truly yours,

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2021-2022 Academic Strategy Plan

Systemic PreK – 12 Strategy Overview:

- 1) Raising the level of content that students are taught by providing **rigorous instruction** to teach to the cognitive level of the standards.
- 2) Increase teachers' **skills and knowledge** that they bring to teaching of the content through relevant and timely **professional development**.
- 3) Increase the level of student's **active learning** and **engagement** of the content.

District Academic Strategy:

Progress/Growth Outcomes	Achievement Outcomes
Decrease the % of students performing at Level 1 on ELA state assessment by 5%.	Increase the % of students performing at Levels 3 and 4 in ELA by 6.13%.
Decrease the % of students performing at Level 1 on math state assessment by 5%.	Increase the % of students performing at Levels 3 and 4 in math by 7.04%.

District - Academic	Strategy	Description
Increase district ELA state assessment proficiency (Levels 3 & 4) from 20% to 26.13% (6.13%) to stay on track to meet KSDE's goal of 75% of students proficient by 2030.	<u>Data:</u> District proficiency scales for teaching and learning at the rigor of the standard. Predictive Interim data for small and whole group core instruction. Grades and credits on track to graduate.	Monitoring performance on standards in elementary and middle school. Monitoring high school grades and credits on track to graduate.
Increase district Math state assessment proficiency (Levels 3 & 4) from 11.9% to 18.94% (7.04%) to stay on track to meet KSDE's goal of 75% of students proficient by 2030.	<u>Professional Development:</u> PreK through grade 5 focus on Word Recognition Algebra I Math Academy <u>Additional Support (ESSER):</u> Varsity Tutors - elementary math Revolution Prep – MS/HS Wednesday night tutoring - HS	Making timely adjustments for students not proficient on Predictive Interim descriptors, proficiency scales by quarter, and high school credits on track to graduate. Continuous monitoring of early warning indicators to increase student success.

Department goals supporting the district academic goal:

Department	Goal(s)
Elementary Office	Increase the Kansas Assessment Program percent proficient from 20% to 30% by May 2022
Secondary Office	Middle schools will increase the percentage of students scoring a 2 or above on the English Language Arts Kansas state assessment from 56% to 66% by May 2022. Middle schools will increase the percentage of students scoring a 2 or above on the Math Kansas state assessment from 49% to 59% by May 2022. High schools will increase the high school graduation rate from 79.3% to 80% by May 2023. High schools will increase certification and college credit to 70% with a diploma and one or more market value assets by May 2023.
Learning Services	Reduce the number of students scoring a 1 on ELA state assessments from 49% to 44% by May 2022. Reduce the number of students scoring a 1 on Math state assessments from 58% to 53% by May 2022.
Student Support Services	By 9/30/22, we will Increase our 2020-21 Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities by 5%. We will decrease the percentage of students with exceptionalities who are identified as high risk for reading in FastBridge from 65% to 55% by June 1st, 2022.
ESOL	Reduce the percent of students scoring 1 on KELPA to 15%.
Assessment and Research	Provide timely and actionable data to support improving baseline % of PreK through grade 8 students making realistic and ambitious growth on reading and math screeners from fall to spring to at least 60% by May 2022.

6:44



Maria Stephens
3d

The Community Voice
3d

Earlier this month, Stephen's solid defensive support for the Lady Jets and her strong academics earned her 2nd Team All-Conference honors and the Scholar-Athlete Award from the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association.



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Newman Universities Maria Stephens TCV Student-Athlete of the Week

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Maria Stephens
Terrell Davis awww♥️. I am grateful that I am able to give you something to proud of! You taught me about adversity and I still live by those words today!!
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Terrell Davis
Maria Stephens you can do anything that God has placed ahead of you!
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Exodus MK
That's awesome! Congrats fam
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2