LIFE
“Things ain’t what they used to be and never were.”

SCHOOLS
“The schools ain’t what they used to be and never was.”

READING
“There are three kinds of men. The one that learns by reading. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence for themselves.”

INVESTMENT
“The fellow that can only see a week ahead is always the popular fellow, for he is looking with the crowd. But the one that can see years ahead, he has a telescope but he can’t make anybody believe that he has.”

LABOR
“The more that learn to read the less learn how to make a living. That’s one thing about a little education. It spoils you for actual work. The more you know the more you think somebody owes you a living.”

EDUCATION
“Instead of giving money to found colleges to promote learning, why don’t they pass a constitutional amendment prohibiting anybody from learning anything? If it works as good as the Prohibition one did, why, in five years we would have the smartest race of people on earth.”

SPELLING
“Nothing you can’t spell will ever work.”

LEARNING
“A man only learns in two ways, one by reading, and the other by association with smarter people.”

PROGRESS
“You’ve got to go out on a limb sometimes because that’s where the fruit is.”

TRIVIA:
For how many years did Will Rogers live in the state of Oklahoma? Answer: None. Will Rogers was born in Oklahoma Territory and moved to New York then California before statehood.
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Oklahoma Academy Research Committee

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OK2SHARE, Oklahoma State Department of Health

When Oklahoma Works ... Who’s Watching Donovan?
Debbi Guilfoyle, EdD, Executive Director, Crosstown Learning Center, Tulsa

Early Childhood Services for Donovan?
Craig Knutson, Board Member, Potts Family Foundation

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Thinking Critically About Tomorrow’s Jobs
Christa Tinsley, Project Associate, Market Street Report, Thursday, July 16, 2009

Smaller Business Manufacturing in Oklahoma
Larry Mocha, President/CEO, Air Power Systems Company, Tulsa

It Takes A State
Tom Walker, President and CEO, i2E Oklahoma - Tulsa and Oklahoma City

BRIDGES: Connecting Education and the Workplace

Our Future Workers: How Will Oklahoma Educate Them?
Phyllis Hudecki, EdD, Executive Director, Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition

2009 - Organizing Effective Educational Accountability in Oklahoma
Dominic J Brewer, PhD, June Ahn, and Andrew McEachin, University of Southern California; and Kieran Killen, PhD, University of Vermont. Presented January 8, 2009

Oklahoma CareerTech
Phil Berkenbile, Ed.D., State Director
Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Stillwater

BRIDGES: Connecting Education and the Community

Connecting Community with Secondary & Higher Education
Pam Pittman, MHR, RN, Executive Director and Susan Robb, Project Manager
University of Oklahoma - Tulsa Community Engagement Center

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Yes - we know this is a big book - don’t let that put you off. It is not a novel ... and it is not a textbook ... and we do not expect you to read it like one. It is organized into digestible bites. This book is a rich resource and reference document. Think of it as a collection of short stories. We expect you to read a good portion of it - know what is in the rest - and use it to become conversational about the major Town Hall themes.

This book is a compilation of many resources and perspectives designed to help you educate yourself on relevant Town Hall discussion items. There are sections on workers, employers, schools, book reviews, historical Academy actions and a special section on about “Big Thoughts”. And there are other materials too.

Hint: Become very familiar with the Table of Contents - then go to those items that interest you. Then keep going. When in doubt - look it up!
This Town Hall - No Excuses
Oklahoma Academy Research Committee

This 2009 Town Hall
This Town Hall says “no excuses … please”. They are a dime a dozen. If the dog ate your homework - tell the dog you want it back!

While excuses are sometimes valid, they are too often used as artificial crutches. We should spend time learning how to walk without them. In the final analysis, what is the purpose of gathering for three days to generate a list of excuses about why it is a waste of time to gather for three days?

This Town Hall will address the optimal preparation of every Oklahoman to be a productive member of the workforce.

For purposes of clarity and focus, the Town Hall Research Committee stipulates that two issues are of significant influence. They are (1) individual poverty and (2) institutional funding. While both are macro concerns, the Research Committee suggests that their remedy is far beyond the scope and capacity of this Town Hall and will distract from some fundamental and structural elements. They may enter discussions, but they will not be a proscribed discussion topic. They will not be used as an excuse for doing nothing.

To quote Governor George Nigh, lets “do the best we can, where we are, with what we have”. In other words, we may not have all we want – but we likely have all we need to do the job.

No excuses!

We have been told that tomorrow will be much the same as today; but the future will be very different. This Town Hall is not about tomorrow – it is about the future. We realize that we cannot predict the future; we cannot even know what occupations may exist. But we do know that workers with excellent hard/soft skills will always be in demand. Think about children who will be born this weekend. They will turn 21 in 2030.

So when we start thinking about the future, let’s start thinking about 2030 and beyond. Let’s not try to worry too much about next year. Ten years ago the Academy created Four Futures for Oklahoma. The very plausible scenarios vividly described four very different states. The difference between the scenarios was very much our culture, leadership and public policy. Our 2009 Town Hall discussions should key off these four scenarios. When you propose a recommendation – or make an observation – always bear in mind which scenario you are describing. They are surprisingly descriptive.
OUR FOUR FUTURES

Looking Back 10 Years
Extract of Board Meeting Minutes
Board of Directors’ Meeting and Planning Retreat
May 28 – 29, 2009, Big Cedar Lodge, Missouri

Thursday, May 28
The meeting was called to order by Chairman Howard Barnett. The items to be covered during the Thursday afternoon session were to:

• Assess where Oklahoma is today from the Four Plausible Futures for 2010

The board members attending shared thoughts on the elements of the 2010 Four Plausible Futures for Oklahoma that were developed in the 1998 conference using scenario thinking and planning. The development of the four futures came from the four quadrants that were framed by a global investment perspective at one end of the vertical axis versus a local investment perspective at the other end of the vertical axis and competitive Oklahomans at one end of the horizontal axis versus non-competitive Oklahomans at the other end of the vertical axis. After some very good discussion, the board members were asked to plot on the four quadrants showing the four futures where they thought Oklahoma was today. The choices were:

Oklahoma is OK – local investment perspective/non-competitive Oklahomans
Global Wannabes – global investment perspective/non-competitive Oklahomans
Turkey Tales – local investment perspective/competitive Oklahomans
Prosperity Unleashed— global investment perspective/competitive Oklahomans

The consensus of the board is that we are in the “Oklahoma is OK” quadrant describing a local investment perspective/non-competitive Oklahomans. A clear majority felt Oklahoma today was in the upper portion of this quadrant.
Oklahoma’s Four Futures

Prosperity Unleashed

What if Oklahoma “bet the farm” and aggressively pursued a vision of being a globally-oriented and highly competitive state in the national and international economy?

This scenario describes a future where Oklahomans join together to remake our economy and institutions to accelerate us toward greater prosperity.

The ideas are big and bold, but not unachievable. Success will require a strong collective will, timely leadership, and aggressive action.

Where Are We?

A report from the 2008 State New Economy Index:

The New Economy is a global, entrepreneurial, and knowledge-based economy in which the keys to success lie in the extent to which knowledge, technology, and innovation are embedded in products and services. Oklahoma ranked 43rd of 50 states in the overall New Economy Index. It is clear that prosperity has not yet been “unleashed” in Oklahoma.”

Turkey Tales

In this scenario, we describe an Oklahoma where the investment perspective is more local than global, but where Oklahomans are demonstrating competitiveness in using advanced technology. We see an Oklahoma family that experiences the trials and tribulations of an ever-changing technological society as it applies to their personal and private lives. The story unfolds over the course of a decade in a series of political and cultural conversations held around the dinning room table. Each Thanksgiving, the family experiences new insights about technology and how it relates to their small town. As the environment grows more competitive, so does the tension among family members. Eventually, we watch as technology comes full-circle in the community and around the dining room table.

Where Are We?

A report from the 2008 State New Economy Index:

Oklahoma is the leading state in the nation for the “IPO Ranking”. This is a weighted measure of the number and value of initial public stock offerings of companies as a share of total worker earnings. States like Oklahoma, Nevada, and South Dakota ranked high, The top five states were: Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Nevada, Colorado and Texas. Source: Renaissance Capital’s IPOHome.com, 2005-2007 data. It seems that we DO have pockets of excellence and prosperity in our state; the trick is to broaden that success.
Oklahoma’s Four Futures

Global Wannabes
In this scenario, we see an Oklahoma where leaders thought “global” … but the lack of competitiveness of the state’s institutions and people precluded success. The story shows that even the super-human efforts of the “best and brightest” are rarely enough to make significant improvements in something as complex as a state.

It illustrates that less than comprehensive ideas, even when implemented, seldom have a broad impact. It demonstrates that significant state success requires a strong foundation. It requires sound institutions, collective efforts by large groups, and sound public policy investments, and the “tincture of time.”

Where Are We?
A report from the 2008 State New Economy Index:
The globalization indicators in this section measure two aspects of globalization: 1) the extent to which the state’s manufacturing and service workforce is employed producing goods and services for export; and 2) the share of the workforce employed by foreign-owned companies. Oklahoma ranked 47th of the 50 states. It should be clear that we are not “global players” - and are more likely “global wannabes”.

Oklahoma is OK!
In this scenario, we see an Oklahoma that has become non-competitive in a technologically savvy world; and an Oklahoma that has withdrawn into a local and parochial investment perspective. Oklahoma public policy worshipped the short term and ignored the long view. Low taxes, low costs of living, and populist sentiments have created an Oklahoma where outsiders regularly create and remove wealth. Oklahoma has joined a dozen other smaller states in becoming a “colony” for others to exploit. It is an irony that the “outsiders” in this scenario were once forced out of Oklahoma, and have now returned with capital, technology and a grand vision. It describes the return of the once infamous Joad family of the “Grapes of Wrath”. The Joards personified the “Okie” migrants seeking a better life in California.

Where Are We?
A report from the 2008 State New Economy Index:
The two states whose economies have lagged the most are Mississippi and West Virginia. Other states with low scores include, in reverse order, Arkansas, Alabama, Wyoming, Kentucky, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Iowa. The economies of many of these, and other Southern and Plains states depended on natural resources or on mass-production manufacturing (or tourism, in the case of Hawaii), and relied on low costs rather than innovative capacity, to gain advantage. It is likely that, in many respects, we are satisfied that Oklahoma is OK.
PAST TOWN HALLS
We’ve Been Here Before
Prior Town Hall Recommendations Related to Education

2007 Town Hall: Tribal Alliances
The State of Oklahoma must identify a shared and common vision for education in Oklahoma and identify the specific roles that tribal and non-tribal entities can play in achieving this vision.

There must be a coordinated and collaborative effort among tribal and non-tribal entities and scholars to ensure that an accurate historical view of the cultural diversity and history of the many tribes is contained in the educational delivery systems of the state.

Better collaboration and partnering must occur between the pre-K through 12 systems, the Career Technology System and the Higher Education System in providing greater awareness of the various technology and higher education programs available to tribal students once they graduate from high school.

2006 Town Hall: Transformational Ideas
Education and Workforce: As we become more and more a global community and workplace, our systems of education must provide a relevant and flexible methodology that meets the needs of ALL students at all levels.

We must begin now to develop an overarching plan to completely restructure the common education, career technology education and higher education systems. As the specific steps for the restructuring are being considered, a prototype for the School (pre-K – 12+) of the Future should be developed. The creation of this school would serve as a model for other schools.

It would include such aspects as a differentiated staff; clover-leaf, three-pod curriculum (arts, sciences and humanities); and

2001 Town Hall: Competing in an Innovative World
A number of excellent goals for Oklahoma in the next five to ten years were identified by the panelists. The primary goal was: Elevate the value placed on education and significantly increase the percentage of Oklahomans who graduate and who actively engaged in the process of lifelong learning. Focus on growing people by developing motivation to greatness. Others are:

- In 5 years 95% of our 9th graders should graduate from high school. The implementation of a flexible delivery option for a 4x4 program where students have the opportunity, accessibility, and availability to take the classes, with standardized reading and writing test scores at the 70th percentile.
- Be recognized for having an educated workforce and an education system with institutions that are safe, high-performing leading organizations, holding expectations high for the achievement of all students, and preparing them for a lifetime of learning and working.
- Adopt a “Pre-K through 14” educational philosophy with every child and student ready to learn. Ensure that 13 and 14 year opportunities are accessible and affordable for every Oklahoma student.

1998 Academy Conference: Scenario Planning
Oklahoma should provide the national model for a redefined 21st century public education. The Academy recommendation defines grades 13 and 14 as either two years in vocational-technical education & training; two years at a community college; or two years toward a four-year degree at one of Oklahoma’s public universities. If the student chooses to have grades 13 & 14 be at a private Oklahoma university, the student would pay the tuition differential.
Editor’s Comments

It is a mistake to believe that Oklahoma has never taken education reform seriously. We have. In 1990, the Legislature passed - and Governor Bellmon signed - House Bill 1017. That bill was hailed as a watershed education reform that went way beyond simply providing more money. The heartbeat of the effort was Task Force 2000. And the incubator of Task Force 2000 was the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals. Since that time there has been a dearth of honest reflection and assessment. Chairman George Singer offers that reflection here as he recalls the important aspects of HB 1017.

Task Force 2000

Just before it adjourned in May, 1989 the Oklahoma Legislature enacted legislation which established Task Force 2000. This was to be a group of 27 citizens, nine each appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the House and the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate.

The legislature also specified that the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chancellor for Higher Education and the Director of the Vo-Tech System would support the members of Task Force 2000 in ex-officio roles.

As originally designated this group of Oklahomans had a number of goals. These generally revolved around making determinations as to how Oklahoma could identify regional standards relating to support of and performance by our state’s public education system. This reflected a pretty modest set of targets for Oklahoma’s schools; how we could raise ourselves up to the average of surrounding states.

The landscape for education reform changed dramatically in July when Governor Henry Bellmon called a special session of the Oklahoma Legislature for the purposes of changing both the delivery of education in Oklahoma and how we paid for it.

Although the specific approaches devised by Lex Holmes, Governor Bellmon’s Director of State Finance, did not draw much support from members of either the state house or the senate, the special session became the catalyst for a heightened level of activity in this arena.

The Legislature could have simply adjourned the special session and let the status quo reign. Instead, the leadership of both houses and the Governor seized upon Task Force 2000 as a vehicle to explore real change in Oklahoma’s public schools. None of the members of Task Force 2000 had yet been appointed, but this was quickly remedied by the individuals designated to select them. And the legislature chose to recess the special session for a period of several weeks rather than simply adjourn it. In the interim it directed that Task Force 2000 to prepare a comprehensive plan for education reform in Oklahoma’s public schools.

The members of Task Force 2000 met for the first time on September 8, 1989 and on November 6, less than two months later, it presented a roadmap for comprehensive education reform to a joint session of the Oklahoma Legislature. In the period between those two dates the twenty-seven members of the group, along with the ex-officio members, met on a weekly basis.

Largely through the efforts of staff members “lent” to the task force by the legislature several experts in education reform were identified and brought to Oklahoma to address the citizens members and interested Oklahomans who attended task force meetings (all of which were open to the public).

Task Force 2000 members debated and voted upon every single portion of the report which it submitted on November 6 and they approved the report as a whole by a vote of 26-1.
The Task Force 2000 Report
While the Report of Task Force 2000 consisted of many dozen pages including exhibits which provided numerous types of statistical measures of education performance in the schools of Oklahoma and other states, the essence of the group’s recommendations came down to three central points.

First, Task Force 2000 unambiguously proposed that Oklahoma should have a results-oriented curriculum that applied throughout the state. This meant that students at each age and grade level should have identifiable goals as to what was expected of them. Historically educators had favored what were often referred to as Carnegie Units. This essentially set forth how much time each student would commit to study in each of several subject areas. For instance, high school students would have four years of English, three of mathematics, three of social studies, etc.

This sounded reasonable until one investigated a little bit and learned that such designations could lead to duplication of subject matter within a system or variations between different schools and among different districts. So Task Force 2000 described a curriculum in which every student faced consistent expectations with respect to discrete skills and types of knowledge they should master at every age and grade level. Instead of identifying that students of a certain age should study “English”, the curriculum would identify in depth precisely the type of language and grammar skills appropriate for those students to master.

As an aside, Task Force 2000 also explicitly assumed that Oklahoma would develop standardized tests for its students that correlated with this new curriculum. That way, because the curriculum represented what Oklahoma wanted its students to know, know about and know how to use, “teaching to the test” would become a strength rather than a shortcoming of the school system. If we tested students on what we expected them to learn and they demonstrated proficiency, then by definition educators had succeeded in teaching their students.

Task Force 2000 identified increased accountability as the second pillar of a reformed education system. The accountability should apply to everyone who was a stakeholder in our public education system—students, their parents, teachers, administrators, school board members and people who helped manage our schools on a statewide level.

Those individuals who succeeded would receive rewards and those who did not would face negative consequences. Task force members identified many examples of such pluses and minuses which included doing away with social promotion of students and putting in place merit-based compensation plans for teachers.

Finally, Task Force 2000 emphasized very emphatically that Oklahoma should adequately fund its schools and that such funds should be equitably allocated. It did not wish to perpetuate discrepancies between funding levels of different districts that derived from differences in tax bases, the amounts of tax-exempt property that varied from district to district or the continuing existence of “hold harmless” funding.

In spite of some areas where Oklahoma fell short of the goals of Task Force 2000 it succeeded very well where equity was concerned. In the first year after House Bill 1017 was enacted the funding of the lowest funded school district in the state exceeded 99% of the weighted-student average throughout the state.

On the same day that Task Force 2000 presented its recommendations to a joint session of the legislature - November 6, 1989 - Speaker of the House Steve Lewis introduced legislation (House Bill 1017) that almost perfectly mirrored those recommendations. In a single exception, he chose to exclude the recommendation to prohibit corporal punishment in Oklahoma’s public schools.

I will not go into detail here about the history of the eventual passage of HB 1017 and approval of an emergency clause to allow it to become immediately effective nor about the eventual defeat of an initiative petition that attempted to repeal HB 1017 (State Question 639).

Suffice it to say that Oklahomans had a chance to have a serious discussion about what we wanted for
our children and grandchildren, but instead mostly largely squandered it by engaging in finger pointing and wild accusations that kept us from obtaining the benefits such serious conversations could have afforded us.

My Assessment
The more important issue to address is why HB 1017 fell short of meeting the goals of its supporters. As Chairman of Task Force 2000, I cannot reasonably expect to have my opinions accepted as unbiased and objective. I nevertheless offer the following thoughts about how and why we fell short in 1989 and what we can do now to reach the goals we had almost twenty years ago. The essence of Task Force 2000’s approach to reform as set forth above was elegant in its simplicity. We would develop a results-oriented curriculum, hold everyone within the system accountable and provide adequate and equitable funding for our public schools.

In spite of this simplicity change never comes easily. That’s particularly true where the change requires several constituencies to radically alter how they thought about and carried out educating Oklahoma’s students. Task Force 2000 identified goals. The legislature has a single primary weapon on which it relies - legislation. In real life we cannot solve every problem through legislation. Even though Task Force 2000’s Report required legislation, it anticipated that such legislation would err on the side of simplification.

Instead, HB 1017 resulted in a game-plan that described how education would be delivered in Oklahoma’s schoolhouses rather than one of emphasizing goals. Furthermore, other constituencies such as teachers’ unions, the State Department of Education and many local school boards have remained focused on the details of how we run our schools rather than the big picture of what we want from them.

As we near the twenty-year anniversary of Governor Bellmon’s call to reform Oklahoma’s public schools nothing other than our own attitudes stand in the way of our trying again and succeeding where we fell short with HB 1017. Are we ready to turn our schools over to our educators and students? Are we willing to tell everyone what we expect and allow them to genuinely experiment with new approaches to the delivery of education to Oklahoma’s students? If we are then it’s certainly not too late to try again and do it right this time. Count me in if we want to genuinely revisit this topic and insist on nothing short of success this time around.

My Post Script
Mostly what is needed is for the legislature and the OK State Dept of Education to do less rather than more. They should ideally adopt the philosophy underlying the Report of TF 2000, i.e. a results-oriented curriculum, an emphasis on broad accountability and a commitment to adequate and equitable funding. They should, respectively, remove statutes and regulations that fall into the category of "how-to" educate our state's students.

A perfect example is the HB 1017 requirement that every school district had to reduce its student/teacher ratio. While this may well have been an option that districts chose, it should not be the only one they had the opportunity to implement. As a practical matter, this mandate in 1990 effectively directed all of the additional funds in a single direction. Schools had to hire new teachers resulting in no funding left for anything else. This put the legislature in the perhaps unintended position of identifying the student/teacher ratio as the only reform that would work.

With a results-oriented curriculum and accountability we can create a "marketplace" in which to evaluate a whole range of ideas for reform. By way of analogy, if the legislature appropriates all funding to deal with the problem of inmates with chemical dependency towards the construction of new prisons then treatment gets nothing.

A system that allows educators the leeway to try new approaches seems much more promising to me than one in which representatives and senators choose winners and losers without testing the options in a classroom. It may well be that HB 1017 came before its time. I believe, nevertheless, that Oklahoma has made incremental progress since its enactment; maybe we're ready to go back to the future by dusting off the original plan and giving it a genuine chance to succeed.
OUR WORKERS

The Workforce of Tomorrow
Creating Oklahoma’s Workforce Advantage
The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) brings together leaders from across a variety of private and public sector organizations to develop a strategy for accelerated economic growth and to provide direction to state administration. The Council’s vision is for Oklahoma to have a competitive advantage through integrated workforce and economic development objectives. The Council will achieve this vision through its mission to advance a demand-driven workforce and economic development system.

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Workers of the Future: Oklahomans Ages 20-64
U.S.Census Bureau, provided by Kelly Hurt, Oklahoma Academy Board

Prototypical U.S. Industry?

*Tough Choices or Tough Times: New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*
*National Center on Education and the Economy*
For centuries people assumed that economic growth resulted from the interplay between capital and labor. Today we know that these elements are outweighed by a single critical factor: innovation.

Innovation is the source of U.S. economic leadership and the foundation for our competitiveness in the global economy. Government investment in research, strong intellectual property laws and efficient capital markets are among the reasons that America has for decades been best at transforming new ideas into successful businesses.

The most important factor is our workforce. Scientists and engineers trained in U.S. universities — the world’s best — have pioneered key technologies such as the microprocessor, creating industries and generating millions of high-paying jobs.

But our status as the world’s center for new ideas cannot be taken for granted. Other governments are waking up to the vital role innovation plays in competitiveness.

This is not to say that the growing economic importance of countries such as China and India is bad. On the contrary, the world benefits as more people acquire the skills needed to foster innovation. But if we are to remain competitive, we need a workforce that consists of the world’s brightest minds.

Two steps are critical. First, we must demand strong schools so that young Americans enter the workforce with the math, science and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in the knowledge economy. We must also make it easier for foreign-born scientists and engineers to work for U.S. companies.

Education has always been the gateway to a better life in this country, and our primary and secondary schools were long considered the world’s best. But on an international math test in 2003, U.S. high school students ranked 24th out of 29 industrialized nations surveyed.

Our schools can do better. Last year, I visited High Tech High in San Diego; it’s an amazing school where educators have augmented traditional teaching methods with a rigorous, project-centered curriculum. Students there know they’re expected to go on to college. This combination is working: 100 percent of High Tech High graduates are accepted into college, and 29 percent major in math or science. Contrast that with the national average of 17 percent.

To remain competitive in the global economy, we must build on the success of such schools and commit to an ambitious national agenda for education. Government and businesses can both play a role. Companies must advocate for strong education policies and work with schools to foster interest in science and mathematics and to provide an education that is relevant to the needs of business. Government must work with educators to reform schools and improve educational excellence.

American competitiveness also requires immigration reforms that reflect the importance of highly skilled foreign-born employees. Demand for specialized technical skills has long exceeded the supply of native-born workers with advanced degrees, and scientists and engineers from other countries fill this gap.

This issue has reached a crisis point. Computer science employment is growing by nearly 100,000 jobs annually. But at the same time studies show that there is a dramatic decline in the number of students graduating with computer science degrees.
The United States provides 65,000 temporary H-1B visas each year to make up this shortfall — not nearly enough to fill open technical positions.

Permanent residency regulations compound this problem. Temporary employees wait five years or longer for a green card. During that time they can’t change jobs, which limits their opportunities to contribute to their employer’s success and overall economic growth.

Last year, reform on this issue stalled as Congress struggled to address border security and undocumented immigration. As lawmakers grapple with those important issues once again, I urge them to support changes to the H-1B visa program that allow American businesses to hire foreign-born scientists and engineers when they can’t find the homegrown talent they need. This program has strong wage protections for U.S. workers: Like other companies, Microsoft pays H-1B and U.S. employees the same high levels — levels that exceed the government’s prevailing wage.

Reforming the green card program to make it easier to retain highly skilled professionals is also necessary. These employees are vital to U.S. competitiveness, and we should welcome their contribution to U.S. economic growth.

We should also encourage foreign students to stay here after they graduate. Half of this country’s doctoral candidates in computer science come from abroad. It’s not in our national interest to educate them here but send them home when they’ve completed their studies.

During the past 30 years, U.S. innovation has been the catalyst for the digital information revolution. If the United States is to remain a global economic leader, we must foster an environment that enables a new generation to dream up innovations, regardless of where they were born. Talent in this country is not the problem — the issue is political will.

The writer is chairman of Microsoft Corp. and co-chairman of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. His wife is a director of The Washington Post Co.
BRIDGES
Will There Be A Bridge For Donovan?
Absentee Fatherhood: What Kind of American Will Donovan Be?
Howard H. Hendrick, Director, Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Editor’s Note
Since we initiated Town Halls in 2001, we have received hundreds of written contributions from public officials and private citizens. In all that time we have never received a contribution as unique and personal as this one submitted by Howard Hendrick. Mr. Hendrick is Oklahoma’s public official most involved in family formation – and family dynamics. As these are the building blocks of a productive citizen and society - his opinions are worth noting.

An initial impulse was to shorten the piece. But upon reading it we intend for it to be published as submitted even though it is longer than requested. We think the passion and personality would be diluted otherwise. So - please take some time to read this whole article, and relate it to the ones that follow.

Meet Howard Hendrick
Howard H. Hendrick has been director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services since July 1, 1998. Director Hendrick leads a staff of nearly 8,000 employees and administers a $1.7 billion budget. Hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans are touched daily by the 40+ state and federal human services programs administered under his leadership.

Before being named Director, Hendrick served 12 years as a member of the Oklahoma State Senate, representing parts of northwest Oklahoma City, Bethany, Yukon and Warr Acres. He graduated summa cum laude from Southern Nazarene University earning his undergraduate degree in accounting.

During the three years following his graduation from college, Director Hendrick passed the Certified Public Accountant’s examination and earned both an MBA and a law degree from the University of Oklahoma.

Meet Donovan
The Donovan you are about to meet is real and his plight is real. Only his name is different. I’ve never met Donovan. I met Donovan’s mom, Marsha (not her real name either) on a Monday, the day after one of my happiest Father’s Days. Her story and Donovan’s story are actual experiences. They are the story of thousands of children being reared in America’s most fragile family era.

My Job
As the leader of our State’s largest government agency responsible for serving Oklahoma’s most vulnerable citizens, I regularly schedule time to talk to all kinds of persons who use our services. I meet with parents of children with disabilities, foster children (some teens and some tots), parents who have adopted foster children, seniors receiving adult day services, persons with developmental disabilities, single parents, parents who owe and are owed child support, young married couples, cohabitating single parents, pregnant moms, food stamp recipients, recovering drug addicts, moms whose children are in foster care, homeless people, carless people, hopeless people and hope-filled people.

I meet people who sing our praises and describe how OKDHS services changed their lives and the lives of their children. I recently spoke to an executive who told me about the developmentally disabled boy he adopted 19 years ago who still receives disability services every day. He couldn’t stop sharing how well his son had been treated. I hear stories of how we saved a young couple’s marriage, their family, their future. I also hear people who say they were hurt by what happened when they worked with us on some situation. I meet people with good and bad attitudes, with false and realistic expectations, with an entitled attitude and a grateful attitude. I meet people who will forever defend our work as life changing and people we probably could never please. I take time to listen to as many as I can.
Meeting Donovan’s Mom - and Others

On this day, I asked our staff to select three moms who were using our Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Arriving early for the meeting, I went to find the meeting room, and then stood in the hallway checking e-mail. I heard the elevator bell ring behind me. I turned around and noticed an early 20’s, African American woman with a quiet demeanor step off the elevator looking unsure about whether or not she was in the right place. I extended my hand and said, “Hi. I’m Howard Hendrick.” She said, “Hi. I’m Marsha.” I had already been to the room and had seen her name on a name tent. I led her to the room and we began to talk for a few moments as the other two moms and the six to eight other agency leaders arrived. Marsha and I shared some water and began to become acquainted.

I asked ...
“Tell me about your children.”
“I have a son,” she said.
“What’s his name?”
“Donovan.”
“How old is Donovan?”
“He’s almost three.”
“When is his birthday?”
“It’s in November.”

As others came up to us, I introduced Marsha as Donovan’s mom. She was obviously proud of Donovan. I was looking forward to hearing her story.

The starting time for our meeting came and the facilitator of our group began to bring order to our discussion. Our goal was to determine whether or not the services we were delivering to these young mothers met their needs.

What kinds of things were going well? What kinds of things needed improvement? Did our staff treat you well? Did the vendors with whom we contract treat you well? What was the best thing about your experience with us? What would you change? What service do we provide that you found to be the most valuable? What service do you need that you wish we could provide? Analyzing these questions was the task before us. But first, we needed to know each mom’s story.

All of the moms were in their 20’s. Each mom had only one child. My experience is that this is true for about half of the families. There are many single moms rearing two or more children. Only one of the moms (I’ll call her Jean) had been a teen mom. Teen births are down from a decade ago. While 80% of teen births are out of wedlock, only 25% of out-of-wedlock births are to teen moms.

Jean had been reared in a healthy two parent family, but to quote her, “I was a rebellious child. My parents took me to church. I was an only child. I got pregnant when I was 14. My baby’s father was 16. My parents didn’t think he would be a good influence and his contact was limited. My daughter is now 14. She is doing great. She is involved in a suburban high school in lots of extracurricular activities including many church activities. My parents have been a terrific support for my daughter and for me. In spite of my rebellious youth, my parents have helped in many ways.”

The other moms had not become pregnant until their 20’s. All moms had dropped out of high school. One of the great things about the programs our agency was delivering was the opportunity to help these moms resume and complete their education. All of the moms had completed high school or earned a GED as a result of participating in our programs. Each mom shared her story.

They had good things to say about their TANF workers – responded promptly, stayed after them even when they wanted to quit, made them get up and get going and helped meet their needs with flexible funds when necessary to help them continue their progress.

Each mom was proud of completing her high school or GED education. Each had a career goal. One had received special training to handle office administrative software like Excel and Word.

Jean was finishing her cosmetology training and had about six months left to get her license. She had a bright pink streak in the front of her hair and was obviously excited about her new skills. Marsha was about nine months from completing her training to become a radiology technician. She was regularly
checking the newspapers for jobs in the new career for which she was nearly qualified. The average rate of pay for these jobs was about $3,000 per month – finally enough to care for herself and Donovan.

**Dropping Out of School**

“Why did you drop out of high school?” we asked. One said, “I began to run with a bad set of friends.” Jean said, “It was all my fault. My parents did everything they could to keep me in school. I was just rebellious.” The other moms had been reared in single parent households. Their moms or the other relatives who served as their parents had their own struggles.

It had been easy for them to skip school and no parent knew it for several weeks. There was no serious truancy effort. Even if they had tried to go back, they were so far behind by the time they had skipped out, they would have lost a semester or two of school. Once you are behind, it takes a lot of courage and effort to get back on track. There was a lesson there for the schools. Strong partnerships with truancy courts that catch children every time they try to skip is a must whether the school has support from the parents or not.

We are not going to stop our dropout problem by blaming parents – even though they are responsible. Courts and schools are going to have to have strong enforcement practices to stop the HUGE dropout problem plaguing our country.

The good news was that Jean had benefited from a strong family to help her with her daughter who was now 14, even though as a teen she had been rebellious. Marsha and the other mom with weaker family supports had thankfully delayed pregnancy until their twenties. All of the children were enrolled in Medicaid and each family had an open case for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps). All of the moms were receiving rent assistance from the local housing authority. Although we don’t administer housing benefits, I was adding up the costs of the failure of these ladies to get an education before they became parents.

“How much are your SNAP benefits?” I asked. “About $330 per month.” one said.

I did the math quickly. I knew benefits had just increased as a result of the efforts by the Federal government to stimulate the economy. Now, after the increase, her benefit to feed herself and a three year old boy three meals per day was about $5.00 per day per person. How could she do that? I said nothing.

**Getting Around**

The silence was interrupted with a question from the group, “how do you get to classes?” Only Jean had a car. It was paid for, but the price of gas was always blowing her budget. She was careful to keep liability insurance. But, it was all she could do to keep her car going. Her classes were across town from her home and her daughter’s suburban high school was an even further commute. The other moms rode the bus, called on friends or called a cab.

“So you rode the bus to come visit with us today?” I asked. One nodded and one said, “I had a friend drop me off.”

Just then her cell phone went off. “Sorry” she said. She glanced at the phone. It was someone she could call back later. I knew it was probably the only means of communication that any of them had.

“How’s the bus service?” someone asked. “They’re late. They will drive by and keep going” “Don’t stand beside the bus stop. They won’t stop. You have to stand under the shaded stand or they just drive by.” “They make me late for class and I get docked if I’m late.” “People drive by, roll their windows down, and yell demeaning things at you while you wait.”

**Child Care and Health Care**

“What do you do with your children while you go to class?” One mom said, “I have to find child care. I do qualify for child care subsidy. I have a very good provider now. My other provider was not too good.
But, these providers are careful and that’s important to me because my boy has apnea.”

“Apnea? He’s three and has apnea?” I asked.
“Sleep apnea. He can be sleeping and just stop breathing, turn blue and die. His new caregivers watch him closely though. They are doing a good job. We had to have his tonsils and adenoids out. That helped a lot.” I wondered how much Medicaid had paid for that. I was glad it was in place for her and for him. “So, there were lots of nights you didn’t sleep much until those surgeries were finished?” I asked. She nodded.

Marsha chimed in. “Donovan had apnea too. There were times I had to decide that it was more important to stay with Donovan than go to my class. On some days, Donovan just wasn’t feeling well. It was a hard choice. I needed the class and the money for attending the class. But, Donovan needed me too. Sometimes, I could find a family member to help, but they have their own lives to live and jobs to handle. I just prayed and did the best I could.”

Understanding all the barriers that these moms were overcoming made me proud of the work our staff was doing. These moms were getting an education, they were getting access to child care for their children, they had access to health care for their children, and we were providing basic food benefits. It was hard for each of them. But, we had the basic services they needed to help meet their basic needs.

Where Is Donovan’s Father?
But, what happened next was something for which I was not prepared. It was an innocent question. But, it was a question that hit a cord that would not play, like a guitar with a string that snapped.

“Tell me about Donovan’s dad.” I asked.

Marsha’s eyes squinted, and then clouded. Her mind was visibly racing. She was processing thousands of images. The silence was pregnant, long and deafening. She was trying to find some words. She kept processing images. Finally, she just shook her head from side to side. No words came.

I saved her and asked her a different question. “Do you have a child support case with us?” “Oh yes,” she said.

“Have you given them all of the information that you can about Donovan’s dad?” I asked. “Yes,” she said.

“Have they been able to collect any child support?” I asked. “No,” she said.

All of the moms said the same thing. All had open child support cases. All had cooperated fully. None had ever received anything. I was surprised, but not too much. Oklahoma has the highest paternity establishment rate of any state in the nation. Our collections for child support have grown at twice the national average. We will collect and distribute more than $300 million dollars in child support in the current year, more than three times our collection rate of ten years ago. These collection successes are part of the successes of welfare reform passed during the mid-1990’s. Although Oklahoma has one of the most improved child support collection systems in the nation, more than $60 billion dollars of child support remains uncollected across the country. I was listening to three more cases of the same old thing.

But, I still hadn’t had my first question answered. Who was this person who was Donovan’s father? Marsha’s pregnancy wasn’t from a high school fling. Marsha wasn’t a teen mom. She was typical of most moms having out of wedlock births. She was in her twenties. But, what was so appealing about Donovan’s dad? I thought I’d try the question another way.

“Was Donovan’s dad present when Donovan was born?” I asked. Marsha shook her head no. I then knew some of why Marsha could not find words. I was familiar with the Fragile Families study. It was a national study of about 5,000 children born out of wedlock which began during the late 1990’s.

“Donovan would never know his Dad. In spite of our efforts to locate Donovan’s dad, our child support staff had not yet found him, even with the highest paternity establishment rate of any state in the nation. I was sick.”
Donovan had experienced in utero paternal abandonment. The relationship between Marsha and Donovan’s dad was over before Donovan was born. About 40% of all American births are now out of wedlock (50% in Britain). About 20% of the out of wedlock births - 8% of all births) are children who experience in utero paternal abandonment. Their fathers were absent at birth and the relationship between mom and dad is over before the child’s birth.

The Numbers
I knew the numbers. Oklahoma has about 54,000 births per year, 62% of all births (about 33,000 births) are funded with Medicaid, 40% of all births (21,600) were to parents who were not married, and 20% (4,300) of the births to unmarried parents experienced in utero paternal abandonment – pre-birth father abandonment.

Donovan was one of the children born every two hours all year long who will never know their dad. They will never get a birthday card from dad, never get a Christmas present from dad, never get a hug, never play catch, never. . . never. . . never. Donovan would never know his Dad.

In spite of our efforts to locate Donovan’s dad, our child support staff had not yet found him, even with the highest paternity establishment rate of any state in the nation. I was sick.

I asked Jean” how long has it been since there was any contact between your daughter and her dad?” “Eight years,” she said. “No birthday cards, no Christmas presents, no phone calls?” I asked. “Nothing,” she said.

The nation’s out of wedlock birth problem was almost nonexistent 50 years ago. In 1950, less than 5% of all American births were out of wedlock. In 1964, future United States Senator from New York Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote the famous essay, The Negro Family. He was shocked that the out of wedlock birth rate among Negro families had exploded to 26%. Fifteen years later by the 1980 census, more than 65% of African American children were born out of wedlock. It has been in the 65% range for the last 30 years.

Then, Native American out of wedlock birth rates began to grow to now about 60%. Then Hispanic out of wedlock birth rates began to grow to now about 45% - which may be one of the most amazing of all due to their strong commitment to the nuclear family and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Caucasian rates are now about 30%. Asian rates are in the low teens. When the Fragile Families study began in the late 1990’s, the national out of wedlock birth rate for all births was about 32%. Ten years later, it continues to accelerate to about 40%. Teen pregnancy is mostly down. But, twenty-somethings are having children in uncommitted relationships at record rates.

Fragile Families
Lots of work has been done analyzing the problem. Kathy Edens from Harvard University is one of the investigators in the Fragile Families study. She interviewed more than 150 moms like Marsha for her book “Promises I Can Keep; Why Low Income Women seek Motherhood over Marriage”. Where are the marriageable men? Like their female counterparts, many have dropped out of school, picked bad friends, got hooked on drugs and crime, been to prison and now are stuck. Who’s going to hire them?

Paul Amato, the sociologist from Penn State University wrote about the phenomenon before almost anyone in the mid 1990’s when he wrote “Generation At Risk”. Amato noticed that much of the out of wedlock phenomenon was an echo effect from the divorce culture. Amato studied the effects of divorce on children. He concluded that about one-third of children came from parents who divorced due to a high conflict relationship. The children of divorce in high conflict relationships did better than had their parents stayed together. But, about two-thirds of children came from parents who divorced with low conflict relationships. These children did badly. They dropped out of high school, had teen pregnancies, ended up in trouble with the law, etc.
Why?

Children from high conflict divorces got relief. Children from low conflict divorces got surprised. The most trusting relationship these children had ever seen was broken and they didn’t see it coming. They came home from school one day and Dad had moved out. Mom and dad were dividing the dishes. The effects on these children were devastating. When they hit their child rearing ages, they have the highest rates of co-habitation – the pain they had from their parents is something they do not want to experience again. So, they “test drive” their relationships. Little do they realize that the research shows that cohabitating relationships are actually far riskier. Co-habiting couples have more than twice the breakup rate of couples who marry and divorce.

My mind was racing. Twenty four hours earlier I was enjoying one of the happiest Father’s Days of my life. After hearing Donovan’s story from his mother, my heart was in my stomach. There was hardly anything more I could ask or say. Marsha was obviously a huge hero. She had chosen to protect Donovan’s life, was working hard to recover the lost years of her education, trying to get enough of a good job to care for herself and Donovan. But, the mountain she was climbing was like heading up the face of Mt. Everest. I couldn’t get her story out of my head. In twenty years or so, Donovan would probably be a dad. What kind of dad would Donovan be? I was also remembering that there is a new Donovan being born every two hours.

Our agency would never be able to catch up to that rate of devastation – Marsha’s pain and those new mom’s pain being added every two hours is a gap too big for an agency that already certifies more than half the children in the state for Medicaid and more than 25% of the children for food stamps. I sat silent. I knew that the services we were offering Marsha were the best ever offered. The number of welfare moms had dropped from more than 35,000 twenty years ago to less than 3,000 now.

Child support collections were working better than ever. But, no one had a program that could give Donovan his dad. No one could even find Donovan’s Dad to help him become a dad. Donovan may learn to tie a fishing line, hold a bat or give a hug, but his teacher will not be his dad. Donovan’s dad had defrauded Marsha. That’s why she couldn’t find the words. She probably thought they were going to be an item. He surely said, “I love you.” She gave him herself. When she turned up pregnant, he left. Neither Marsha nor I said anything for a long time.

When I asked the other twenty something mom to tell me about her son’s dad, she said nothing as her cheek got wet. Someone went to get a tissue for her. So, I asked her my backup question, “was your son’s dad present when he was born?” She shook her head no. Her story was the same as Marsha’s. Different dad, different time, different place – same result. Another boy with no birthday cards, no Christmas presents, no fishing trips and no dad.

I asked them if they had participated in our program called Within My Reach. All three moms had and they were very complimentary of it. Within My Reach is a program we have developed as part of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative for single persons to teach them about the perils of mate selection. Although these moms had challenges, the most challenging cases are those with moms who have children by many fathers. I read recently of a 29 year old young man who had fathered 21 children by 11 different mothers. Fortunately, some judge had put him in jail for not paying child support. Within My Reach teaches moms or dad that often cohabitating relationships are ones into which partners “slide” instead of “decide.” The lesson is simple: Sexual relations outside a lifelong committed relationship are a recipe for great emotional pain. It seemed good at the time. The pleasure of the moment felt like commitment. But, the pain of making it work never goes away.

Thinking and Thanking

My mind turned to Donovan. How will life turn out for him? It might be great. He might end up at Harvard Law School, become a Constitutional Law Professor, get elected to the State legislature, then the
United States Senate, then become President. After all, our current Present spent part of his childhood in a single mother household.

I began to be thankful, not just for my family and the blessings I had and that I had been able to share with my children. But, I was also happy that our state had made the investment in providing health care for Donovan and we had made a strong commitment to quality child care.

Oklahoma had recently been rated the top state in the nation for child care licensing standards and monitoring. Having high quality child care was probably one of the most important things we could do to help Donovan be ready for school.

A recent abstract from the Fragile Families study shows that one of the surprising outcomes was that high quality child care helped many of these children develop in a developmentally healthy way not found in “baby sitting” climates.

While Jean had found a way to get her daughter involved in church activities, neither Marsha nor the other mom was involved in any community activities like a faith community. I wondered what difference that would make for Donovan.

Our DHS Employees
Two days later, I spoke to about 100 of our employees who are involved in our school based social worker program. These are workers who are employees of our agency, but half of their salary is paid by a local school. The local school is involved in the hiring process.

But, the workers are trained by us. They keep lots of children in school who would otherwise drop out. They go to the child’s home to make sure there’s food in the fridge, that the utilities haven’t been cutoff, and that the child is doing o.k. They help with some behavior issues of the children or their parents. I shared with these workers, the story of Donovan and Marsha. I told them that they should keep their eyes peeled for Donovan. He’ll be starting school soon. First, he’ll be in kindergarten, then elementary school, then middle school and hopefully a high school graduate.

What Will be Donovan’s Bridge
What’s it going to take to make it possible for Donovan to succeed? Donovan’s absent dad is going to cost a lot of us a lot if we are going to help Donovan make it. The key will be two words: “Heroic Interventions” There have already been many heroic interventions in Donovan’s life and he doesn’t even know it. Our workers who sat down with Marsha started part of the heroic intervention.

Our staff that developed the various programs which have helped Marsha get her GED, provide child care, food, health care and housing have contributed to the heroic intervention. The doctors who helped Donovan with his sleep apnea provided another heroic intervention. His mom’s commitment to her education and to Donovan is a daily heroic intervention. His child care providers, his teachers, and the adults who will come into his life will either help Donovan become a great father, or will only nominally interact with him and leave him to climb his Mount Everest alone.

How we treat each other, our concern and efforts to create a healthy community will either succeed or will leave Donovan isolated and alone, contributing little to his community and future family. What kind of dad will Donovan be? What kind of Oklahoman will Donovan be? What kind of American will Donovan be?

Fifty years ago, C. S. Lewis wrote an essay called The Weight of Glory. Here’s the point:

*It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor’s glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken.*
It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are—mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.

And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbor he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ vere latitat—the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.

What Kind of American Will Donovan Be?
Much of Donovan’s future is in our hands. I’m examining my heart, my hands and my schedule to find my part. If you see Donovan, slow down. Give him a hug. Listen to his story. Give him a smile and slip him a $20 for a book or a meal. Pray for him. He is a fellow American.

Donovan?
THINK!
We want you to take a break from reading - and spend some time THINKING. Go ahead - put your feet up and relax. Now look at the table to the right. It represents the marital status of the mother for all births in Oklahoma since 1975. It shows that the percentage of births to unwed mothers increased in 30 of the 32 years.

Unwed Mother Rates

1950 - Under 5%
1987 - Over 20%
1995 - Over 30%
2006 - Over 40%

Donovan was born in 2006. In that year there were 54,000 births in Oklahoma; over 22,000 (41%) were to unmarried mothers. This percentage is compared to only 11% in 1975 ... and in 1950 it was less than 5%.

As you read the articles by Howard Hendrick, Debbi Guilfoyle, Craig Knutson and all the other contributors - please think about what the birth data is telling you. What does it mean for public policy? What does it mean for our Town Hall theme? Is it really important - or is it irrelevant? Is it something to address or something to tolerate?

We are not going to draw conclusions for you. We have our own. It is best you develop yours independently. So. Tick - tock. Take a few minutes (or more) and THINK.

Then be prepared to tell your Town Hall partners what you think this data means for your community, state and our future.

Thinking About Donovan
Oklahoma Academy Research Committee
So how high can we go? Mathematical trendlines indicate that more than 6 of 10 births in 2030 will be to unmarried mothers. It is important to know that this is not just an “Oklahoma thing” - it is a national thing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Unwed</th>
<th>Married*</th>
<th>Unwed</th>
<th>Married*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4,826</td>
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<tr>
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<td>43,663</td>
<td>5,184</td>
<td>38,479</td>
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<td>45,448</td>
<td>5,499</td>
<td>39,999</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
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<td>45,884</td>
<td>6,036</td>
<td>39,848</td>
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<td>7,505</td>
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<td>8,146</td>
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<td>43,967</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45,365</td>
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<td>48,162</td>
<td>15,561</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49,354</td>
<td>16,403</td>
<td>32,951</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>48,470</td>
<td>16,098</td>
<td>32,372</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>49,712</td>
<td>17,026</td>
<td>32,686</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50,029</td>
<td>17,619</td>
<td>32,410</td>
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<td>50,310</td>
<td>18,334</td>
<td>31,976</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>50,874</td>
<td>18,869</td>
<td>32,005</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>51,157</td>
<td>19,678</td>
<td>31,479</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>51,775</td>
<td>20,228</td>
<td>31,547</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>54,010</td>
<td>22,077</td>
<td>31,933</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>54,946</td>
<td>22,703</td>
<td>32,243</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>53,671</td>
<td>22,817</td>
<td>30,854</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes small number of “unknown” marital status.
When Oklahoma Works ... Who’s Watching Donovan?
Debbi Guilfoyle, EdD, Executive Director, Crosstown Learning Center, Tulsa

Meet Debbi Guilfoyle
Debbie is the Executive Director, Crosstown Learning Center
She received her Bachelor of Human Resources from Bartlesville Wesleyan College, Bartlesville; Master of Human Relations degree from the University of Oklahoma and was earned her Doctor of Education at Oklahoma State University.

Her professional affiliations include:
National Association for the Education of the Young Child, Leadership Academy, Center for Early Childhood Professional Development, University of Oklahoma, Early Childhood Association of Oklahoma, Leadership Tulsa, Class XXVII, Advisory Board, Oklahoma Department of Human Services Stars Outreach Study. Prior to serving at Crosstown, Debbi served at VistaCare Hospice, Inc. and Saint Francis Health System in Tulsa

The Center
The mission of the Center is “Children of all economic levels should have access to quality program and services, given in an atmosphere filled with love, hope, security and excitement, leading to their development of self-esteem and decision making abilities.” The Center is a 3-Star, nationally accredited child care center located at 2501 East Archer in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is licensed through the Department of Human Services, Child Care Licensing and can care for 120 children, ages 6 weeks through 12 years.

Crosstown was the first nationally accredited child care center in north Tulsa, achieving a 3-star status and national accreditation through the National Association for the Education of the Young Child in 2001. Crosstown’s staff is enrolled in higher education classes at local colleges and universities working towards their bachelor’s degrees in Early Childhood Education.

We Care For Donovan
The preparedness of Oklahomans to join and remain employed in the Oklahoma workforce is largely dependent on making sure that their children are well cared for and safe while parents are at work. Whether parents are sitting in executive board rooms, or doing jobs that pay minimum wage, they have one thing in common. Finding and affording quality childcare for their children. This issue transcends all economic strata; everyone wants their children safe, nurtured, and given opportunities to learn. Regardless of income, or their social standing in society, most every parent loves their children and wants only the best for them. Consequently, workforce development must be aware of, and help to address the growing need for quality, affordable childcare for our state’s families.

When parents cannot find, or afford a safe place for their children so that they can work, the options are not good. Children are either left in sub-standard care which parents can afford, or, even more frightening, children are left unattended. For some who are working minimum wage jobs, they choose to quit their jobs and return to welfare rather than leave their children unattended or in substandard care. Returning to welfare and social services causes the state budget to topple overboard because of the increased demand on social services.

Affording childcare is not just a minimum wage earner’s problem. Even for people who are working in high paying jobs, we know that child care is the single highest line item in a family’s budget. It is not uncommon to spend $600.00 per month for an infant who is in full-time care, and if a family has two children in childcare full time, the combined tuition for an infant and a toddler can exceed $1100.00 per month. Today’s parents are planning the birth of their children around how many
they can afford to have in childcare at one time. This resonates right along with how families used to plan for paying for college! Trying to pass along the costs that are involved in maintaining a quality learning environment to parents is impossible. Tuition would be astronomical and virtually impossible for parents to pay. Parents, regardless of their incomes, cannot afford to pay in tuition what it costs to hire, keep and maintain a nationally accredited early care and learning center.

National accreditation has focused for the last several years on the professional development of staff. We know that individuals who work in early care and learning make less money than most other blue-collar employees. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), pre-school workers make less than janitors (NIEER, 2003). And, the opportunity for benefits and retirement are not even a part of conversation in this field.

Obviously, low wages, no benefits and a highly stressful work environment contribute to high turnover in teachers. Yet, the research in early childhood education focuses heavily on continuity of care. However, when teachers cannot afford to continue to care for children without taking a second job, or relying on supplemental assistance, they usually are not willing to make a commitment to stay in the field. Thus, children are not afforded the opportunity to bond and stay with a teacher for long periods of time. What is being done across the nation to alleviate this workforce issue offers multitudes of opportunities to consider.

Some states have created a separate cabinet position in state government to address early care and learning issues. Some states have combined the state offices of social services and state departments of education to create a new office to oversee caring for children. These are two options for Oklahoma to consider. Both have strong points in their favors; of course, they also have problems, too! Since Oklahoma is held in national regard for the work that we have done over the years in early care and learning initiatives, it is certainly not beyond our grasp to create a plan that not only works for Oklahoma, but can be replicated nationally.

It behooves us to work diligently together, bringing providers, parents and state government (both social services and education) together to begin to determine a workable solution for our citizens. One consideration should certainly be that our workplaces support quality care for their employees’ children either through on-site centers, or, helping off-set the cost of securing quality care for children while their parents work. Additionally, the State of Oklahoma should support quality early care and learning by finding the funds through our state budget just as we do to support elementary, secondary and upper education. We know that children are learning as early as birth, and we need to be paying attention to how we are addressing those opportunities.

Oklahoma has much to be proud of regarding the substantial gains that have been made in securing quality learning environments for our state’s youngest residents. We have been national leaders in early care and education initiatives which have included a quality rating system for early care and learning centers as well as homes. We have made great strides in offering parents pre-kindergarten opportunities which are a part of the elementary school system, and we continue to focus on professional development of staff, creating a strong, well-prepared and educated workforce. We must not allow the momentum to stall; this is an issue that affects all of us.

In order to address a quality workforce for Oklahoma, we must secure safe, quality environments for our children so that parents can focus on career-building opportunities. As long as children are vulnerable because there is no affordable, accessible child care, we will continue to address the same problems over and over. The barriers that are created for parents when they feel that their children are not safe are almost too overwhelming for them to try and overcome.

Oklahoma can become a much more productive state if we focus on the things that are most important. Our families and our communities will be stronger as our state’s residents pursue education opportunities knowing that their children are well cared for and safe. By securing this opportunity for children, then, Oklahoma Will Work!
A summary of The Oklahoma Summit on Early Childhood Investment, July 27, 2009: Oklahoma City

I am proud to say that Oklahoma can hold its head high and declare, without hesitation, that we have the strongest early childhood program in the nation. Not because I say it, but because of rigorous research done by Georgetown University and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

The latter declared that “Oklahoma is the model for the rest of the nation; for five years NIEER has ranked Oklahoma’s Pre-Kindergarten program number 1 nationally.”

So, it wasn’t blind luck that caused major private companies and public agencies to sponsor a summit that attracted over 400 attendees . . . to hear, among others, a Nobel Prize winning economist from the University of Chicago (Dr. James Heckman) state that “enhancement and prevention through early childhood development is more life and cost-effective than remediation.” With over 30 years of research behind him, Dr. Heckman finds investments in early childhood education “socially fair and economically effective.” It is hard to find other investments that meet that criteria.

His research, and those of his peers, have shown that years 0-3 are the best years to positively influence I.Q.; in fact, the data is very clear that it is “very difficult to boost I.Q. after age 10.” The long-term studies of note – Perry Pre-school and Abecedarian – have clearly demonstrated returns of 8-17:1; returns that are hard to beat in any investment climate.

But aside from the statistics, what Dr. Heckman was ultimately saying is that early investments in children yield more “capable, productive and valuable citizens that pay dividends to America for generations to come.” If you believe, as he does and has proven, that intelligence and social skills are set at an early age”– and both are essential to success, major investments in birth - 5 programs provide a “high return on investment to society through increased personal achievement and social productivity.” For more information visit: www.heckmanequation.org.

Dr. Sonya Anderson is the Executive Director of the First Five Year Fund, which promotes federal advocacy in support of early childhood education for at-risk children. She provided a very graphic representation of how and why brains develop they way that they do; what causes “healthy development” and the impacts of brain development affected by environmental stress.” Brain scan comparisons are powerful images; they clearly demonstrate the deficiencies of those brains that lacked the environmental influences of touch, spoken language, and exposure to a variety of sensory experiences.

Her essential scientific message was that brains are built over time, neural circuits are wired in a bottom-up sequence, and the capacity for change decreases over time. EARLY is better than later. Her job is to communicate brain science to the public and policy makers, to convince them that high-quality, research-based program models, while expensive, are effective over the long-term.

Finally, Mr. Robert Dugger spoke about investing in America’s children, and focused on the business case for such a stand. Mr. Dugger is a funding partner in the Partnership for America’s Economic Success (PAES), sponsored by the Pew Center on the States. Their mantra is: ‘We don’t have the workforce we need . . . but we know how to grow it.

But instead of focusing on the negative, PAES has researched and compiled a strategy to address those issues. They include: Good Nutrition (WIC for the economically challenged); Health Care (reverse trends in low birth-weight babies); Strong Parenting (high quality home visitation programs); Quality Early Education (evidence-based pre-kindergarten programs); Proven Early Childhood Programs; and Reliable Child Care Programs. Additional information on PAES can be had at www.partnershipforsuccess.org . Their number 1 priority is the “life cycle success of every American child!

As Dr. Anderson stated, you’re at the top, but it is going to take “awareness, advocacy, and activism” to keep you there!!!
Thinking Critically About Tomorrow’s Jobs
Christa Tinsley, Project Associate, Market Street Report, Thursday, July 16, 2009

Market Street Report
Founded in 1997 and located in Atlanta, Georgia, Market Street Services enables cities, counties, states, regions, chambers of commerce, corporations, and other clients to proactively shape their own future. The comprehensive development strategies we deliver take into account every dimension of economic opportunity and quality of life. We guide our clients to break out of the status quo and manage change in a self-directed way. (http://marketstreetservices.com)

On Monday, the White House published the report “Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow” (Note 1) by President’s Council of Economic Advisors. There aren’t a lot of surprises here for people who have been following the changes in American jobs: manufacturing will continue to decline; health care will keep growing; jobs that require more education are growing faster than those that don’t etc.

But while communities are scrambling to compete nationally and globally by creating biotech clusters, expanding their health care sectors, transitioning low-skill manufacturing to pharmaceutical and green manufacturing, and enhancing technical and higher education opportunities, the less tangible needs of our nation’s firms and workforce are not being addressed as eagerly.

The report also highlights the importance of critical thinking, problem solving, analytic, and interactive skills for future prosperity. High-paying jobs require these abilities and employers identified such skills as crucial for new entrants to the labor market.

Meanwhile, employers seem to be pretty unanimous on the fact that these are the skills new workers lack. In “The Ill-Prepared U.S.Workforce” (Note 2), released this week by The Conference Board, employers were surveyed on the readiness of their employees and the in-house training provided to bring new workers up to speed. Among survey respondents, the areas that were both the highest need AND where the most training gaps occurred were in the following:

- Creativity/innovation
- Ethics/social responsibility
- Professionalism/work ethic
- Lifelong learning/self-direction
- Critical thinking/problem solving

According to the report, over 91% of respondents rated critical thinking and problem solving as high need. These five areas listed above are all skills that drive innovation, but firms are struggling to figure out how they can train unprepared employees to master these competencies.

In college, I used to alternate between defensiveness and self-deprecation when I would tell people I was majoring in English. I would either remorsefully point out that I would have no marketable job skills, or defend the importance of a humanities education in understanding the world. Either way, I had no real idea what I would do with an English degree. It wasn’t until I was forced into the harsh realities of earning a living in a field totally unrelated to literature that I realized the value of the thinking, writing, and communication abilities I had previously only practiced in the academic world.

However, not every American worker should have to spend four years toiling through Pynchon and figuring out the dirty jokes in Chaucer to learn how to reason, clarify, and intellectually engage. America’s Pre-K-12 schools and community colleges should be honing these skills in students’ minds just as relentlessly as a university’s philosophy department. The application of critical thinking skills transcends scoring well on the LSAT or writing a passable senior thesis. These are the abilities that firms desire most in a job candidate and long-term employee.
Local economic development strategies should reflect how crucial these high-demand soft skills are in PreK-12 public schools and beyond. For children and teens, the importance of opportunities to master these skills is on par with vocational and technical training, college prep, and post-secondary opportunities. With so much flexibility in workforce trends, hard skills may need to be learned or re-learned from occupation to occupation, but critical thinking will be applicable in every job setting.

Nearly a decade ago, educational psychologist Linda Elder wrote *Why Critical Thinking is Essential to the Community College Mission.* (Note 3) She lists the nature of job requirements in the new economy for which workers must be prepared:

1. The definition and status of virtually every job is in a state of increasing flux.
2. Entire fields of work now disappear with greater and greater frequency (and unpredictability).
3. More and more jobs involve increasing complexity.
4. It is increasingly common for employees to have to understand and work with abstract systems (which are themselves in a continual state of flux).
5. Employees are increasingly expected not only to use established procedures but to suggest new ones and be open to change and self-assessment.
6. There is increasing emphasis on the ability to clearly communicate with others about mutual problems and the interfacing of multiple systems.

Think about what our economy looked like in 2000 when Dr. Elder made the case for teaching critical thinking in the two-year college setting. If anything, these characteristics have become even more acute and pronounced while our education systems and workforce development programs have not caught up. According to the White House’s report, 25% of American workers hold jobs that just 40 years ago weren’t listed by the Census Bureau. If that’s the case, how do we prepare the future workforce for occupations that may not even exist right now?

These two points from the White House’s report “the need for critical thinkers and the rapid changes in what jobs are out there” demonstrate so clearly what the knowledge economy is all about. The shift from the product-based economy to one that delivers intangible services requires an emphasis on soft skills and workers able to adapt quickly to changing conditions and evolving technology.

From moving up the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Note 4) in second grade science class to promoting creative problem solving in vocational apprenticeship programs, workforce development professionals and educators need to be aggressive in fueling our nation’s prosperity and innovation through a workers with critical thinking and problem solving skills.

How deeply is the value of critical thinking ingrained in your community? What analytical methods are your public schools building upon from grade to grade that can adapt to any job? What is your community doing to reinforce your local workforce with skills that can weather any shift in technology or competition?

Posted by ctinsley@marketstreetservices.com (marketstreetservices.com/profile.aspx?username=ctinsley@marketstreetservices.com) at 8:04:02 AM, July 16, 2009

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Note 1: Preparing the Workers ... (www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Jobs_of_the_Future.pdf).
Note 2: The Ill-Prepared Workforce ... (www.coworkingfamilies.org/system/files/ILL_preparedWorkforce_RR.pdf).
Note 3: Why Critical Thinking ... (www.criticalthinking.org/page.cfm?PageID=529&amp;CategoryId=73).
Note 4: Bloom’s Taxonomy (projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Bloom%27s_Taxonomy#Terminology_Changes)
We know that for every dollar of manufactured goods generated in America, there is an additional $1.37 worth of additional economic activity. More importantly, manufacturing invents the future. Manufacturers are responsible for more than 70 percent of all business R&D which ultimately benefits other manufacturing and non-manufacturing activities. It makes sense for Oklahoma to be paying attention to the manufacturing sector of its economy!

The manufacturing community is facing dramatic changes. They are being forced to compete with countries with low cost labor in an economy that is sputtering at best. They are being encouraged to “change” and to become environmentally friendly. It’s a contrast of values between those in America who make the rules and those in other countries who don’t have rules. It is ironic that we as consumers demand products that have the lowest costs as this results in our own manufacturers choosing to begin manufacturing in other countries to achieve the lower costs.

The mature American manufacturing worker is caught in the middle. The National Association of Manufacturers says manufacturing is on the “front lines of the most intense global competition in history where it is virtually impossible to raise prices”. They have seen their industry decline over the years and listen to blame being put on poor productivity and high wages. Their competitive advantage which was once based on ingenuity and performance is lost to other countries that have poor working conditions and low wages.

Manufacturers who seek entry level employees are surprised to find applicants with a lack of education in math and science. They also lack basic interviewing and social skills. Many of the applicants knocking on their doors are high school drop outs who can’t pass a drug test. They seem to be the product of an educational system that does too little, too late.

“Manufacturers who seek entry level employees are surprised to find applicants with a lack of education in math and science. They also lack basic interviewing and social skills. Many of the applicants knocking on their doors are high school drop outs who can’t pass a drug test. They seem to be the product of an educational system that does too little, too late.”

And, we must teach the principles of continuous improvement. Students need to understand early in life that we must learn and change in accordance with our changing environment. In the manufacturing industry, we call it “continuous improvement”. Maybe we should call it “common sense”. Appropriate education should start at an early age and students should be made aware that education and learning should be ongoing throughout life.

As challenging as the future is, Oklahoma manufacturers stand ready to compete. The larger challenge comes with our local and regional economic conditions including education.

Leaders must begin equipping our young people with a quality, competitive education and marketable skills. Educators at all levels need to be encouraged and equipped to help students prepare for the next educational level. If some students show a lack of maturity or skill, they should be retained at the current level until they are successful. Students should not advance before they are ready to advance.
Industrial science should also be a part of basic education. Some students will advance with technical skills that can help them develop into technical leaders. Vocational technical education should be promoted in the same way that a college education is promoted. It should be emphasized that not all students need to go to college but nearly all students need to continue their education.

Quite frankly, the maturing “older generation” is being pushed out or leaving the manufacturing industry. Those entering the markets now looking for employment, represent the gap in our basic education system. Our future cannot support or afford any more educational gaps. Future leaders in our world need a stronger base of education, new source of education for social skills and common sense, and a basic knowledge of industry and manufacturing.

Oklahoma should capitalize on its “right to work” environment. Right to work is one tool that can be developed in recruiting other manufacturing companies. Other tools such as lower taxes, a favorable legal environment and favorable quality of life are also tools that can be used to recruit as well as help existing manufacturers.

Manufacturers should be more active in communicating to their legislatures about the importance of manufacturing. They need to explain why tax breaks should be given to manufacturers and how retail and others will enjoy the gains from those breaks. It makes sense for Oklahoma to be paying attention to the manufacturing sector of because of the significant contributions it makes to all economic sectors.
From the original Sooners and wildcatters who settled Oklahoma and built the oil industry, to the inventors and engineers who succeeded in aerospace, to today’s entrepreneurs who are creating Internet companies, commercializing green energy, and applying nanotechnology to battle disease, the entrepreneurial spirit is embedded in our state’s DNA.

Education provides the spark and direction to this spirit and is the accelerating force behind Oklahoma’s next generation of entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs are different. They act on ideas and intuition. They are tenacious and take risks that others might not be willing to take. When they solve big problems for large markets, they create new industries, jobs, and wealth. Successful entrepreneurship isn’t magical or mysterious. It takes discipline, good business practices, strong networks, and resources.

Nurturing entrepreneurship can begin in grade school by finding creative ways to interest more of our young people in math and the sciences. These subjects source the pipeline of innovation in many ways. Students don’t have to become inventors or mathematical geniuses to develop into entrepreneurs, but they do need to develop active imaginations and a curiosity about what is possible. Once established, these interests can be expanded and channeled toward professional careers through Oklahoma’s many excellent public and private colleges, universities, and research institutions.

Today all our universities have some form of an entrepreneurship school. This wasn’t the case ten years ago. As we teach the dynamics of becoming an entrepreneur, we also need to embed entrepreneurial training in our legal, accounting, engineering, and marketing curriculums.

Not every person is wired to get a bachelor or advanced degree. The more we build advanced...
technology companies, the more diversified our workforce needs to be. Oklahoma offers a great education system for career technologists. Our Career Tech system, community colleges and other state education institutions offer associate degrees and certification programs in areas such as wind energy. In both Oklahoma City and the Tulsa region two-year certification programs in biotechnology are provided. We have the experience and infrastructure to expand these types of educational opportunities and certification programs.

Whether it is lemonade stands or 4-H, “garage software” projects for high schoolers, or internships for university students seeking advanced degrees, grounding classroom learning with purposeful, real world experience accelerates entrepreneurial competence. Perhaps the single most important thing that every entrepreneur must learn is the nuts and bolts of developing and writing an effective business plan. Programs like the annual Donald W. Reynolds Business Plan Competition give hundreds of college and university students an early start on learning how to create business plans that potential investors want to read.

The exposure to entrepreneurial education doesn’t end once graduates earn their degrees. In fact, recent research from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, MO reports that Americans between the ages of 55 and 64 had a higher rate of entrepreneurial activity than those aged 20 to 24 in every year from 1996 to 2007. This is why it is so important for us to invest resources and promote the growth in programs that provide networking and continuing education in the many aspects of entrepreneurship to working professionals who have been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug.

Building an entrepreneurial ecosystem is multidisciplinary. The workforce that supports an entrepreneurial economy looks a lot different from twenty years ago. Service professionals may hold the same degrees, but they are wired differently. Entrepreneurial economies, like those in Austin, California, or Boston, operate a differently than under the traditional fee-for-service model. We need to prepare Oklahoma’s attorneys, CPAs, marketing consultants, bankers, and other professionals to operate successfully in this new frame.

For an entrepreneurial ecosystem to flourish there must be established, informed, and available sources of capital. The people and institutions with the money must be given the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of start-up and early stage investing. Just as entrepreneurship is different from working in an established company, investing in start-ups and early stage firms is different from other kinds of investment. Financial institutions, state legislators, and accredited individual investors will benefit from learning about the capital needs, risks, and potential return at each stage of commercialization from proof-of-concept to growth.

Many successful start-up businesses grow at a faster rate than established companies do. Internet-based companies require far less capital, have significantly lower barriers to entry, and draw revenue into Oklahoma from other states and from international markets in foreign nations around the world. Perhaps most importantly, companies in biotechnology, information technology, and advanced manufacturing create jobs at all levels that pay a multiple of our state per capita personal income.

At the end of the day as far as entrepreneurial education goes, there is no single silver bullet. We need to maintain an entrepreneurial focus in all the aspects of our education system because the power and importance of entrepreneurship and new advanced technology businesses to Oklahoma is undeniable.

Awareness of the realizable potential that advanced technology business offers Oklahoma, broad-based, realistic education about what it takes to commercialize a technology, and a steady pipeline of homegrown entrepreneurs with access to investment capital will position Oklahoma to prove that advanced technology and entrepreneurialism can flourish in the center of the United States as effectively as on either coast.
BRIDGES
Connecting Education and the Workplace
As a state, Oklahoma is making progress in early childhood and continues to have many good options for higher education, but we desperately need to focus on making our K-12 system competitive. Oklahoma high school graduates will soon face a fast-changing job market and fierce competition in college. In a global economy, Oklahoma students need every advantage to compete against peers nationally and internationally.

Likewise, if our state is going to be competitive, we must have a highly educated workforce to attract businesses that pay enough to help our families realize a higher standard of living and generate more revenue for improving our state’s infrastructure. The health of the economy is dependent on how well the education system performs by producing graduates employable in well-paying jobs.

It isn’t news that Oklahoma needs to increase the number of college graduates, but it may be news that “college graduate” doesn’t necessarily mean a degree from a four-year institution. It also means degrees from two-year and technical colleges that are badly needed to meet the demands of many of our fastest growing and most promising job opportunities.

Rethinking education in Oklahoma will require taking a hard look at our results. For example, a recent analysis of Tulsa public high school graduates revealed only 7% were college ready. We must be honest about how we prepare our students for their future and the future of our state. It means moving out of our comfort zones and putting the future of our state ahead of protecting adult jobs, systems, or governance structures.

Oklahoma schools have done and will continue to do a good job of educating students in the top academic quartile. Those students and their supportive parents will insure they are successful. The other three-quarters of our students, comprising the bulk of our workforce, deserve much more of our attention and in different ways.
We have to rethink our assumption about what a high school diploma should mean.

Instead of the end of formal education, it should be viewed as the ticket into the rest of your life. We must graduate all students as college and work ready. Under the leadership of Governor Brad Henry, the Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) law was enacted to give more meaning to a high school diploma by raising graduation standards. Yet the question still lingers: Do all students need a rigorous academic core in high school, especially if they are headed to work instead of college?

Results from a recent study done by ACT provides empirical evidence that high school students need to be educated in the same rigorous academic core in reading and mathematics regardless of whether they go to college or to workforce training programs after high school. The study confirmed in order to be ready to learn job-specific skills for today’s workplace, students need the same level of math and science as those who are going to be successful in college. The answer is “Yes” because “college ready” and “work ready” are synonymous.

Richard L. Ferguson, ACT CEO, said, “We can’t afford to have one expectation for students who plan to attend college and another for those who plan to enter the workforce or workforce training programs after high school.” He continued, “Students who graduate high school without the skills they need for college are also likely to lack the skills they need to successfully complete job training programs (http://www.act.org/news/releases/2006/05-08-06.html). Paraphrasing the report’s recommendations to state policymakers:

- Commit that all students will be prepared for college and workforce training programs when they graduate
- Require that all students take rigorous high school core preparatory courses
- Hold schools and states accountable for this preparation
- Ensure state standards reflect the skills necessary for this preparation
- Measure student progress with aligned assessments and intervene appropriately
- Use college and workforce readiness as a prerequisite for entry into funded training or development programs

With increased recognition that large percentages of students are dropping out, it is important to dispel the myth about WHY they drop out.

It is true we cannot educate students who are not in school and dropouts become an economic liability. What isn’t true is the myth that requiring rigorous coursework will cause students to drop out. Most students drop out because they are not challenged or do not have the necessary foundational skills. According to Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Graduates, “…two-thirds of dropouts in a survey say they would have worked harder if more had been demanded of them (higher academic standards and more studying, and more homework)” (http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf).

Additional studies clearly reveal that students are willing to work harder to meet higher expectations. See Achieve’s accompanying “Math Works” available at http://www.achieve.org/mathworks.

We can no longer let our assumptions and concerns about dropouts translate into watered-down requirements, especially for our at-risk students, often arriving at our schools academically behind their peers. Unfortunately, we have given these students “less” in our expectations and choices for them. To close the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-K through college, the Education Trust advocates for higher standards, conducts studies, and analyzes achievement data.

In “African American Achievement in America” (2003), Atlanta’s Centennial Place Elementary School, composed of 91% African American and 79% low-income, not only placed in the top 10% of the entire state of Georgia in reading but also outscored 88% of other Georgia schools on the state’s math test.

Studies of Latino Achievement reveal similar results. Aldine’s Hambrick Middle School, 71% Latino and 85% poor, scored “in the top fifth of all Texas middle schools in both reading and math, in both 7th and 8th grades,” over a three-year period. These examples illustrate that instead of performing poorly, at-risk students excelled when given challenging
Ed Trust’s research confirms practices of all the top performing, high risk schools:

- **Clear goals: the role of standards**
- **Providing all students challenging curriculums aligned with standards**
- **Extra instruction to students when they need it**
- **Good teaching matters more than anything else**

Given the inseparable relationship between education and the economy, the business community understandably has been and will continue to be a driving force behind improving education in Oklahoma. During the past legislative session, business leaders pushed hard for policy changes to increase transparency and accountability in our public school system.

One important result was the creation of a P-20 Data Council. In order to improve our education system and more accurately track the participation of our students, the state must develop a unified P-20 longitudinal data system to give us the ability to look at results over time.

Analysis of information from a fully functioning data system allows targeted, timely decision-making, such as narrowing achievement gaps, intervening earlier, providing feedback to stakeholders, determining efficacy of programs and spending, following students over time to study trends, colleges’ evaluating their teacher prep programs, etc.

Improving our K-12 system is both an economic and moral imperative for us as a state. We have to give every child a chance to succeed.

We must summon the political will to make changes by raising expectations and standards and designing the education infrastructure to provide a solid, quality education our students and state deserve.
Preface
Over the past decade, standards-based educational accountability has become the dominant policy paradigm in U.S. K-12 education. The approach consists of a set of standards and outcomes that students, teachers and schools should achieve, with consequences for success or failure.

Accountability systems consist of multiple components – standards, assessments, data reporting, rewards and sanctions. Decisions about these elements determine the effectiveness of accountability as a tool for motivating students and educators. A key but understudied factor influencing the effectiveness of accountability is the way it is organized and administered.

The purpose of this report is to describe and evaluate Oklahoma’s system of educational accountability from this organizational standpoint. Our goal is to provide an overview of existing accountability related structures in Oklahoma including the evolution of the public school accountability system, the current student assessment system, administrative data collection, and data reporting, and research and analysis capacity. We evaluate the effectiveness of accountability in the state and provide recommendations for changes to existing structures.

This report was supported by the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition (OBEC). However, all views expressed are those of the authors.

Executive Summary
The governance of public education systems is a complex and political process. However, developing effective governance is an important ingredient in improving student achievement; especially within the current standards-based accountability movement.

Governance matters, and how a state system is structured has significant implications for how accountability is administered, schools operate, teachers work, and students learn. In this report, we describe and evaluate Oklahoma’s system of educational accountability from this organizational standpoint.

There is no perfect blueprint for organizing standards-based educational accountability. As states have developed their systems they have set up institutions and processes to handle the various components of the structure—standards-setting, student assessment, data collection, data reporting, rewards and sanctions—differently. It is fully expected that these systems evolve over time as the external context changes and as elements prove to be more or less effective.

Oklahoma, like most states, has tried to use the structures established for an input-based compliance operation for one in which school districts are held accountable for outcomes.

Oklahoma’s structure is one in which the major role is played by the State Department of Education (SDE). The set up therefore vests considerable authority in the office of the State Superintendent. Major decisions about test design and contracts, data reporting, and rewards and sanctions are left to the SDE.

The one exception is the Office of Accountability, an independent agency charged with some reporting and review functions. However, its role is limited in at
least two ways – it is dependent on the SDE for the
collection of all performance and most other data,
and it cannot implement recommendations that result
from its school reviews.

Oklahoma has a fairly lengthy experience with
standards-based accountability. The good news is that
all the essential elements of the system are in place.
The strong position of the elected State
Superintendent as head of the SBE and SDE provides
for clear accountability. The Office of Accountability
as an independent agency provides for independent
data reporting, in principle at least.

The bad news is that it appears overall levels of
student achievement are low by national standards.
Most significantly there seems to be a lack of trust in
the way the system operates – in particular in the
fidelity of student assessment.

The large discrepancy between National Assessment
of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement levels
and Oklahoma’s own assessments, and stakeholder’s
perceptions of little transparency in the way
standards are set, data can be accessed and how it is
reported, appear to us to be significant problems.

The strong position of the SPI and SDE is a cause for
concern among some stakeholders and reflects a
relative imbalance in the structure, absent other
checks and balances.

This problem is magnified by a lack of capacity in
the legislature, Office of Accountability and in the
academic community in the state to provide for the
kind of policy analysis and research that are
necessary for guaranteeing data improvements,
honest data reporting and policy adjustments over
time. Although there are issues with the quality of
content standards and the willingness to aggressively
follow through on rewards and sanctions, these issues
are less serious.

In summary, the incentives in the current structure in
Oklahoma do not provide for sufficient faith that
standards are set at a high level, that achievement is
measured accurately and data are available freely.

The solution is to change the incentives through a
series of structural adjustments.

Most critically, any change must:

• Increase the transparency of standards-setting,
  student assessment and data collection.
• Improve the standards-setting, test design and
date reporting processes to include more external
  input and build greater technical expertise.
• Strengthen the checks and balances on all parts
  of the accountability system including
  systematically enhancing legislative oversight
  and research capability in the state.

Changes should also be made in a way that promotes
the most flexible long term arrangements and
capacity building, rather than short term expedient
fixes to get around a current problem.

As the table below shows, our assessment is that
Oklahoma performs fairly well in standard setting
and reward systems. Nonetheless, the state has
potential to improve dramatically in areas such as
standards-setting, data collection and reporting.

Our main recommendations can be summarized as
follows:

1. Strengthen the role and autonomy of the Office
   of Accountability:

This independent reporting agency has provided the
state with robust data reports and school report cards.
Strengthening the capacity of this agency would help
improve transparency, increase trust in the
accountability system, and better monitor the state’s
progress in improving student achievement.’

2. Develop external capacity and culture for the
   examination of Oklahoma’s educational
   performance:

Oklahoma needs to develop expertise in a variety of
areas. For example, state staffers with an
understanding of test development, and the
psychometric requirements of tests, can better
facilitate the alignment of tests to state standards.
Furthermore, an active research agenda overseen by skilled policy analysts – whether in-house or with University partnerships – will help the state address critical policy issues. Whatever arrangements are adopted, we believe it is essential for the state to develop informed users of state accountability data.

3. Change the role of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (SPI):

One option is to eliminate the elected SPI position. This would require a constitutional change but other states have done this in the past. The SPI would be appointed either directly by the Governor or by the State Board of Education (SBE). Ideally the position of Secretary of Education would be merged with an SPI functionary so there is only one state-level educational leader.

If an elected SPI is retained, there may be ways to improve elections law such as term limiting the SPI (or not term limiting the Governor/legislature), requiring the election be non-partisan, increasing the openness in campaign financing, limiting lobbying of the legislature by SDE or local school districts, and so on.

It also makes sense for the SPI to be only an ex officio member of the State Board of Education not its President, so that the SBE becomes a more independent body with a direct connection to the Governor rather than so beholden to the SDE.

Although, we do not have sufficient information to judge whether the existing setup has led to poor outcomes, it is clear that many stakeholders lack faith in the SPI and SDE.

In summary, the incentives in the current structure in Oklahoma do not provide for sufficient faith that standards are set at a high level, that achievement is measured accurately and data are available freely.

*The solution is to change the incentives through a series of structural adjustments.*

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**OKLAHOMA 2009**

**Summary of Findings by Major Accountability System Component**

<table>
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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standards-Setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content Standards</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Standards</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assessment and Data Collection</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Reporting</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards/Sanctions</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**OKLAHOMA 2009**

**Overview of Oklahoma Accountability System by Characteristic**

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<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative, Flexible and Responsible</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent/Open</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple/ Efficient</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Meet Phil Berkenbile
Dr. Phil Berkenbile is a member of the Oklahoma Academy of State Goals.

He was named state director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education on Jan. 6, 2004, by its State Board.

He began his career in Oklahoma as an agricultural education instructor for Morrison Public Schools. He joined the Oklahoma Department of CareerTech in 1988 as the agricultural education northwest district supervisor and curriculum specialist. In 1994 he became the agricultural education assistant state supervisor.

A year later he left the agency to become the superintendent of schools in Morrison. He returned to the agency in 1999 as the associate state director of educational services. In April 2003, he was selected as chief of staff, and in May 2003 he began serving as interim state director.

Dr. Berkenbile serves on the Governor’s Taskforce on Aerospace and Information Security, the Governor’s Taskforce on Healthcare, the Oklahoma Manufacturers Alliance Board, the State Insurance Advisory Council, and the State Workforce Development Board. He is past-chair of the Oklahoma Education Technology Trust (OETT) Foundation, Vice-President of the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technology Education (NASDCTE), Board member of the Oklahoma Community Institute, and is member of the Oklahoma College Savings Taskforce.

He received his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in agricultural education from Oklahoma State University. In 2006 he received the OSU Graduate of Distinction Award in agricultural education.

Creating a Culture of Learning
To accelerate economic prosperity, Oklahoma must tap the capacity of its workers at all stages of their careers as well as recover talent not currently deployed. Embedded in Oklahoma’s success is a rich culture of learning and collaboration, which characterizes the spirit of career and technology education (CareerTech).

Working in concert with the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development, business, industry, government, and citizenry, CareerTech is engaging key initiatives to develop Oklahoma’s talent. It is using innovative career and college-readiness strategies, promoting key and emerging industry sectors, and providing business solutions that advance industrial competitiveness. These initiatives provide optimum opportunities for Oklahomans to pursue high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand careers.

Career and College-Readiness Strategies
CareerTech is implementing targeted career and college-readiness strategies to prepare students to participate in postsecondary education and the high-skilled workplace. Cooperative Alliance Agreements enable high school and adult students to earn college credit at technology centers while earning industry credentials. Through the new Carl Perkins legislation, Tech Prep supports curriculum alignment to industry standards in associate and baccalaureate degree programs that lead to high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand careers.

Comprehensive career guidance programs assist students and their parents in making informed educational choices and plans of study. An important aspect of career readiness is understanding credentialing and postsecondary training requirements. For example, Oklahoma’s Career Readiness (OCR) Certificate is increasingly being
used to document new and incumbent workers’ skills in math, reading and locating information. Technology centers and other educational entities throughout the state administer WorkKey assessments for these credentials and provide skills upgrade training. Once achieved, OCR certificates facilitate job placement, retention, and career advancement.

To recover and redeploy talent, CareerTech’s Dropout Recovery initiative allows out-of-school youth to complete high school credential requirements, stabilize their lives, and return to their home high school to continue their education. Through this initiative, these students can receive academic credit and career-specific training.

Another program, the Young Offender/Probationer Project, prepares young offenders/probationers for employment by ensuring they have the knowledge and work ethics to succeed. Diverting young people away from crime, and ultimately prison, helps Oklahoma by saving incarceration costs and creating a skilled workforce. Skills Centers serve a similar role by providing technical and life training for adult offenders. Recovering talent by raising expectations is fundamental to these initiatives.

Working in partnership with the Southern Regional Education Board, High Schools That Work and Technology Centers That Work are two key school improvement initiatives that raise expectations for CareerTech students. These initiatives are founded on the conviction that students can master rigorous technical and academic studies in a supportive environment.

**Promoting Key and Emerging Industries**
To promote Oklahoma’s key industry sectors, the CareerTech system has transitioned to the Career Clusters framework, which is organized around 16 industry clusters. It combines rigorous academic skills, challenging technical training, and lifelong career preparation to increase students’ abilities to transition, within the CareerTech system, to multiple careers and to postsecondary education.

The Career Cluster model ensures that traditional and new career and technology majors provide Oklahoma employers a value-added workforce.

Career Clusters are instrumental in developing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) talent. CareerTech STEM academies focus on key industry sectors and provide students identified pathways into college/university degree programs for pre-engineering, biomedicine, or biotechnology majors. Academies work with higher education and industry to integrate upper-level math and science courses and have an ongoing advisement process.

CareerTech’s Gateway to Technology curriculum for middle schools challenges and engages students in science, technology, problem-solving, and teamwork applications. Teamwork is a cornerstone of the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition. FIRST introduces students to engineering by challenging them to use robotics and other technologies to solve real-life design problems.

CareerTech also advances emerging technologies and careers by integrating nanotechnology and green technology into its career majors and developing new career majors that focus on wind energy, environmental technologies, cyber security, digital forensics, supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems, and others.
Advancing Industrial Competitiveness
To advance industrial competitiveness, CareerTech provides customized training and services for new companies locating in Oklahoma, to existing companies, and to entrepreneurs or other small businesses. CareerTech’s Training for Industry Program (TIP) and Existing Industry (EI) program serve as key state economic development incentives.

TIP fosters new job creation while EI is a job-retention program that helps existing firms expand their operations. Industry Specific (IS) training is customized to each business’s unique needs. According to the Center for Applied Economic Research (CAER) at Oklahoma State University, the net benefits of these programs are substantial. A recent CAER study suggests that job training produced estimated direct benefits of $37.3 million in added wages to employees and $137.3 million in costs savings for employers.

In addition, the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network (OBAN) helped 625 state firms win contract awards for goods and services totaling $465.8 million in FY2007. Occupational programs further advance lifetime wage gains. For example, students completing occupational career majors add an estimated $371,000 ($152,500 in current dollars) to their lifetime earnings stream. In fact, CareerTech graduates add $2.4 billion annually to the state’s economy.

CareerTech further increases industrial competitiveness by helping companies improve business processes by training workers to use proven quality techniques to cut waste, reduce rejections, and implement LEAN practices.

These services, as well as leadership, team training, and targeted consulting, help organizations achieve business excellence. In addition, CareerTech’s Adult and Career Development courses develop talent by offering adults opportunities to upgrade skills or transition to new careers.

Developing talent using innovative career and college-readiness strategies, promoting key and emerging industry sectors, and providing business solutions that advance industrial competitiveness currently ensures CareerTech is providing a robust workforce, aligned to economic development initiatives. Conversely, is Oklahoma ready for the future culture of learning?

Future Ready?
Technology, generational, energy, and environmental issues will greatly impact the culture of learning for Oklahomans. Digital technology is migrating into every aspect of our lives at an accelerated pace. The i-Kids or millennials are the first generation to grow up with a constant connection to cell phones, I-pods, computers, instant messaging, texting, and social media such as MySpace and Facebook, not to mention the ubiquitous and virtual world of the Internet.

Technology is creating a new culture of instantaneous learning or “learning on demand.” Virtual learning simulations and games are embedded into all forms of media and e-learning applications. Avatars gliding through virtual worlds are commonplace to Oklahoma’s youth. Is Oklahoma prepared for the world of virtual teaching, instructional coaches, holographic simulations, digital intelligence or robotic assisted instruction?

Currently, there is unprecedented emphasis on reducing our nation’s energy dependence and protecting the environment. “’Going Green” is everywhere æ from current legislation to product labels. America is “greening.”

A multitude of existing and new sources of energy are being researched, developed and promoted. Agriculture, construction, manufacturing, energy, healthcare, transportation, aerospace and the automotive industries are just a few sectors impacted by America’s greening, which creates the need for new curricula and career options for Oklahomans.

These forces require our state to embrace a new culture of learning that taps the capacity of its workers throughout their careers and recovers all talent. This culture recognizes the impact of technology on learning, the importance of rigorous technical and academic studies as well as importance of leveraging existing collaborations and forging new ones. Oklahoma’s jobs of the future will require
BRIDGES
Connecting Education and the Community
The OU-Tulsa Community Engagement Center (OUCEC) creates and sustains community partnerships that advance teaching, research and service learning. Through a partnership with the University of Pennsylvania’s Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships, OUCEC serves as the Southwest Regional Training Center for Community Schools. OUCEC brings together resources from universities, public schools, and organizations to create experiential learning environments that improve student achievement and develop strong communities.

The Center’s current focus is on developing internships and career pathways for Tulsa area high schools. Research shows a strong link between achievement and applied learning. Students who engage in problem-solving activities outside the traditional classroom show increased retention and motivation as experiences are valued as valid sources of knowledge (Choate, 2009). Preparing students for postsecondary choice requires developing and following a metaphorical career exploration and access map. Including roads or pathways that require critical information, this map is to be used as a navigational aide instead of a puzzle with hidden pieces that are hard to locate or difficult to decode (Smith, 2009). The program with the school district involves curriculum changes in both the university and high schools.

University classes are increasingly designed with service learning components, and high school classes include real-world application to theoretical based subjects. OUCEC is linking high school classes to post-secondary education which requires establishing, monitoring, evaluating and sustaining strategies that bridge these systems focused on

The Center’s vision is to bridge and strengthen bonds of social capital and promote service learning through outreach, research and education; assisting university faculty and administrators integrate teaching curricula and research, particularly interdisciplinary research, with the needs of the community’s citizens, businesses and organizations.

**Meet Pam Pittman**

Pam holds a Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University of Oklahoma. She earned a graduate with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in nursing and is a board-certified Registered Nurse. Pam also earned a Master’s Degree in Human Relations with a Concentration in Applied Behavioral Research. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the OU College of Education. She was the funding director of OU CORE – Center for Outreach, Research and Education; and transformed it into the OU Community Engagement Center. The Center partners with the Univ. of Pennsylvania Netter Center and has multiple affiliations with local education leaders.

**Meet Susan Robb**

Susan is a native Tulsan with a B.S. in Education from the University of Tulsa. She worked for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma for 20 years, the last 7 of those as Vice President of Benefits Administration. She has been with OU since July, 2007. Susan is a graduate of Leadership Tulsa Class XVII, and has served on the Board of Directors of the American Red Cross in various capacities over the last 15 years—as Director, Board Secretary, and also Board Chair. She serves on the Board of the Oklahoma Association for Infant Mental Health.
student engagement and achievement in urban environments.

University students spend time in the high schools teaching practical application for subjects such as math, science, and English, while high school students spend time outside the traditional classroom engaging in activities that create successful service learning pathways to college, provide internships, and college career mentoring experiences with people working in the field.

The goal of these applied activities is to help students connect what they learn to career pathways and develop problem-solving skills. In addition, it offers students the opportunity to engage in activities that transcend cultural, socioeconomic, and racial lines.

The OUCEC’s work with high schools builds on Tulsa Area Community School Initiative’s (TACSI) work with elementary and middle schools. Linking these two programs creates a support system for schools that leverages university, school, and community resources to create seamless learning environments that encompass entire neighborhoods.

The community school model fills the educational pipeline gap for successful transition from elementary to middle school and high school and ultimately to post-secondary education.

**OUCEC 2009- Recent Advancements**

**OUCEC Higher Ed Forum**

OUCEC initiated and facilitates a collaborative Higher Ed Forum. Shifting expectations from high school graduation to include college enrollment and completion requires unified and coordinated efforts (Smith, 2009). The Higher Ed Forum will offer diverse, multi-disciplinary opportunities into the college pipeline during high school. The Forum, during Summer/Fall 2009, is deliberating and organizing a collective process to assist schools by offering a clearinghouse through OUCEC that supports post-secondary enrollment and graduation regardless of student socio-economic factors.

Aimed to decrease unintentional yet traditional fragmentation, the Forum will host quarterly General Session meetings where community leaders in education can attend to provide additional networks of information, build relationships of resources, or learn of current regional Forum projects and grant partnerships. At least two administrative decision-making individuals from nine area institutions participate in monthly meetings. The aim is to leverage post-secondary resources to meet the needs of public schools and neighborhoods.

Currently, the Forum is reviewing a model that incorporates RFP (request for proposal) processes from aligning OUCEC and the Tulsa Public School Office of High School Re-Design leading to service-learning projects, internships with colleges, career exploration and career access.

Actual application of high school curriculum concepts provided by internships allow students to apply their knowledge and skills (Choate, 2009) and on site experiences that link exploration of choices to career path options.

Social cognitive theory recognizes the importance of individual differences and contextual influences in the career decision-making process (Rogers and Glendon, 2008). Career exploration is associated with goals and social supports, whereas career planning was associated with self-efficacy, goals, personality and an interaction the supports goals through levels of planning (Rogers and Glendon, 2008). The transparency of the Forum supports post-secondary education outreach of credibility and organizational integrity.

Activities and meeting agendas will be housed on the OUCEC website, currently under revision. Oklahoma Campus Compact will be invited to observe, participate and educate on a state-wide basis.
the direction and successful outcomes this Forum will provide the Northeast Oklahoma region.

**E3 Model: Engage, Empower, Educate**

The E3 Model, developed by OUCEC, was implemented in McLain High School, Tulsa Public School District, during the 2008-2009 school year. E3 provided resources that address the issues research demonstrates as reciprocal effects between academic self-concept, achievement and post-secondary educational attainment over adolescent years (Marsh and O’Mara, 2008).

The program is gender specific and is designed to engage, empower, and educate at-risk female youth. However, a gender specific model for adolescent males is currently in early stages of development.

Gender specific research support that in the case of less satisfactory relations with parents adolescents can compensate for the deprivation of their dependency needs by an increased support seeking in their relations with friends (Luvpuscek, 2006).

Weekly hour long E3 group meetings is based on a pre-selected 15 member peer group foundation of engage, empower, education curriculum divided into 3 month (12 week) sessions. Specific topic lessons build on each other and, interwoven throughout the year are trust building activities, supportive peer group process, social and communication skills assessment and training throughout the year.

Empirical evidence has shown that several aspect of trust—benevolence, reliability, competence, integrity, openness and respect are strongly connected with school performance and student outcomes (Daly and Chrispeels, 2008). Longitudinal studies indicate positive association between math achievement test scores with students regularly engaged in school-sponsored activities (Dumais, 2009). An E3 student relayed that she attained a 3.75 GPA in the 2008-2009 school year in contrast to past years of 2.0-2.5.

When asked what made the difference, she stated, “I found I needed to work harder in school to get my diploma to go to college. The group taught me about integrity, doing the right thing and was like family to me…nothing is impossible once you make up your mind and I don’t need boys all the time”. Another E3 student who has her first summer job through OUCEC ties to Workforce Youth Council and Tulsa iJobs, stated the group “helps me be around role models who make good choices. I am setting goals now and making choices to tell the truth and not steal”.

One of the Empower segments, the conflict resolution and emotional intelligence session, addresses self-identifying and managing emotions. Students are provided with a journal and learn this is a safe expression of the variety of emotions and reflections that characterize the student learning experience.

Utilizing this important vehicle increases self-awareness, illuminates the complexity of students’ feelings about learning and being assessed, stressing the importance of contextualizing and interpreting the interrelation of learner identity, learner change and learner achievement (Gleaves and Grey, 2008).

E3 is linked with workforce development to provide career training and internships. In this highly competitive climate for admission into the “best
colleges”, the children of working-class and low socioeconomic status parents are increasingly marginalized, lacking the economic and social resources to help their children in the college admission process (Smith, 2009).

During the Educate segment, sessions incorporate guest speakers from the Tulsa Community College Tulsa Achieves Program with assistance in application processes for FAFSA, Pell Grants and other federal student aid available, documentation needed for college enrollment. Specific guest speakers are invited to describe and encourage submission for local foundation scholarships available.

Aligning with pedagogical foundations for counseling needs of girls and women, the design and teaching methods of the E3 curriculum can be provided by OUCEC trained corporate mentors, multiple higher education disciplines obtaining college service-learning credit, or non-profit skilled individuals drawn to engaging with urban youth. OUCEC will provide training for replication of the program, currently being planned for University of Tulsa and Tulsa Community College to expand across Tulsa area high schools.

Inaugural Annual 5 State OUCEC Conference

OUCEC will host the first annual Community Schools Regional Conference on November 9-10, 2009 - “Community Schools 101: Linking Higher Education and High Schools for a Better Community”.

University and high school leaders from Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas will share strategies for linking high schools to higher education through internships, career access, and service learning opportunities.

The University of Pennsylvania Netter Center Executive Director, Dr. Ira Harkavy and Associate Directors Joann Weeks and Cory Bowman will be attending. Opening remarks by the welcoming address by OUCEC Executive Director, OU-Tulsa President Gerard Clancy, M.D., and Mayor Kathy Taylor. Other attendees and presenters will include Tulsa area businesses, organizations, and foundations.

REFERENCES


EDUCATION
GOVERNANCE
Who Is Responsible For Education?
Editor’s Introduction
Sandy Garrett is Oklahoma’s State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of Education and President of the State Board of Education. The Academy Research Committee requested that she prepare a primer for Town Hall members about legal basis for public education in Oklahoma - or “who’s responsible for what?” That discussion is the basis of this article. It is important to know that the purpose of this article is to inform about ”what is” - not to debate the merits of various forms of educational governance or delivery. We thank Superintendent Garrett for doing a thorough job. In August 2009, Superintendent Garrett announced she would not seek re-election.

The availability of free public schools to the citizens of the state is a vital constant in more than a century of Oklahoma’s constitution. Governance of public schools is set out in the state constitution and state statutes and at statehood, Oklahoma had 5,656 school districts. There are currently 532 boards of education elected locally; a State Board of Education, which is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the State Senate; and the chair of that board, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is elected by statewide vote every four years.

Title 70 in Oklahoma Statutes gives the supervision and administration of independent, elementary and technology center school districts to their “respective boards of education.” Voters in every school district elect the local policymakers annually to staggered terms on the local board of education. Statewide, approximately 2,700 school board members serve on boards that have from three to seven members; they are elected by registered voters within the school district community, and are not paid for their service. Vacancies in unexpired terms are filled by vote of the remaining members of the local board, unless a quorum cannot be achieved, requiring a vacancy be filled by gubernatorial appointment.

Board members must be registered voters in the district at least six months prior to filing for office, must hold a high school diploma or GED, and cannot have been convicted of a felony or of a misdemeanor involving embezzlement. Members must comply with state nepotism laws.

Elementary districts (Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8; formerly called “dependent” districts) have three members elected to three-year terms. Independent districts (Pre-K through Grade 12) have either five members elected to five-year terms, or seven members elected to four-year terms. School board members must complete 12 hours of instruction specifically on education issues including school finance, Oklahoma education laws and ethics, and duties and responsibilities of board of education members.

Continuing education workshops are also required. Each year, the filing period for local board of education members is the first week of December and local school board elections are held the first Tuesday in April. Oklahoma City is the only district to elect a chairperson district wide.

The state constitution and state and federal laws have changed many times since statehood but mostly in terms of adding mandates and programs. However, one of the original structures in the Oklahoma Constitution was the Office of County Superintendent, with supervision over what were then “dependent districts,” meaning they were dependent upon another district for their high school.

In 1990, Oklahoma’s landmark education reform law, House Bill 1017, included sending a state question to voters to abolish the county superintendent function. Dependent district principals then became elementary district superintendents.

Local school boards are responsible for adopting school policies to comply with rules and regulations in state and federal law and State Board of Education regulations. Yet, the administrative powers in a school are held by the superintendent, who is employed by the local board to handle the daily operation of the school sites and serves as executive officer of the board.
School boards oversee the school budget including bond issues and school construction or renovation; adopt curriculum, set school calendars, and handle business with outside vendors. Boards are responsible to see that state and federal academic goals are met for the children who reside there or who transfer into the school under the state’s open transfer or emergency transfer processes.

Section XIII of the Oklahoma Constitution places “supervision of instruction in the public schools” with the State Board of Education, and specifies, “The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be President of the Board.” The State Board of Education is the governing body of the Oklahoma State Department of Education, whose CEO is the State Superintendent. The State Board has the authority to adopt policies and operational rules necessary to implement or enforce state and federal laws, and to act as the federal government’s representative/agent in the state.

The State Board is comprised of seven members: five members appointed to represent each Congressional district, one appointed at large, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, elected as both president and a voting member. Members appointed by the Governor cannot be from the same county, city, or town, and must be confirmed by the State Senate to serve in staggered six-year terms.

If a vacancy occurs before a State Board member’s term has ended, the Governor can appoint a new member to fill the unexpired term, with confirmation by the State Senate. Board members receive no compensation, only reimbursement for travel expenses incurred.

Each fall, the state board submits a budget to the Governor that must provide for the anticipated funding needs of supervision and aid to schools, and accountability to taxpayers. The State Board also provides the Governor and Legislature an annual report that includes all statistics, revenues and expenditure data of the State Department of Education and the state’s public schools.

The State Board’s powers include specifically: the accreditation of each public school; the adoption, review and revision as necessary of the state core curriculum; the licensure and certification of school personnel; the proper distribution and accountability of state and federal funds for the public school system; requirement of reports from administrative school personnel regarding school activities; management of the school meals program and the supervision of the transportation and health and safety of children and school personnel. State and federal auditors monitor all programs administered by the State Department of Education on behalf of the state board.

Oklahoma’s state superintendent is also a constitutional and statutory member of numerous boards and commissions including the State Board of Career-Technology Education, State Board of Equalization, School Land Commission, and the Board of Regents for the Regional University System of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has had 12 state superintendents since statehood, six of whom were appointed by governors. When a vacancy occurs in an unexpired term, the governor appoints a new state superintendent pending the next election.

Most recently, Governor Henry Bellmon appointed Gerald Hoeltzel as state superintendent in 1988. In 1990, State Superintendent Sandy Garrett was elected after previously being appointed to the post of Cabinet Secretary of Education by Governor Bellmon. In recent years, governors have had the option of appointing a cabinet level secretary of education.

Responsibility for making free public schools available to all children starts with locally elected school board members. Numerous checks and balances at local, state and federal levels serve purposes of accountability and transparency, as well as providing opportunities for input from the public and, specifically, parents.

“The Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of free public schools wherein all the children of the State may be educated.”

Section XIII-1,–Oklahoma Constitution
Senate Bill 834, also known as THE SCHOOL EMPOWERMENT ACT, has generated a great deal of debate across the state.

Opinions of those inside the field of education, as well as those outside the field, were divided as to the impact the passage of this Bill would have on the quality of education our students would experience in the State of Oklahoma.

Supporters
Those in support of this Bill cite an end to legislative mandates that limit the ability for individual school boards to prioritize and address needs at the local level. Curricular, instructional, and operational mandates, such as class size, restrict options in the way districts can expend general fund revenue.

Many districts have also found themselves boxed into restrictive negotiated agreements that make it difficult to consider compensation methods that involve some type of merit or incentive pay. A key component of this legislation for many proponents was the change in the teacher termination process. By eliminating the trial de novo benefit, supporters believe the ability to dismiss ineffective teachers would be strengthened.

Opponents
The opponents of this measure are as passionate about the negative impact this Bill would have on our educational system. They believe that important reforms in what is considered the landmark educational legislation H.B. 1017 would be lost. Those leading the fight against S.B. 834 believe that, without legislative oversight, requirements such as counselors, librarians, and class size limits would be in jeopardy. Reforms and programs, such as all-day kindergarten, gifted programs, teacher certification, as well as minimum school day/school year requirements would no longer be mandated. Those opposed worry that without these mandates, legislators could actually reduce financial support for public schools in a year when the state faces budget shortfalls.

My Thinking
As a District Superintendent, I have followed both sides of the argument. It is clear that proponents and opponents have valid reasons for concern.

As an administrator, I found myself torn as to how this Bill paralleled with my beliefs as a public school administrator. On the one hand, I do believe in high expectations for all students. I support state and national standards as well as strict accountability measures. In my opinion, certain mandates ensure equity in access to quality services for all students in our state. At the same time, I believe local school boards and administrators should have the freedom to determine how they can best meet those standards and then should be held accountable for performance.

My Conclusion
In the end, I determined that the local control intent of the Bill outweighed the negatives of what could happen if local boards and administrators abused the flexibility the Bill provided. Those issues would have to be addressed by individual schools with their communities.

In retrospect, I believe my real concern with S.B. 834 was not so much with the content or the predicated ramifications. My issue was with how the Bill was being touted. The Bill called by some THE SCHOOL EMPOWERMENT ACT was purported to “even the playing field” for regular public schools and charter schools.

I support the concept of choice.

Charter schools, private schools, home schooling, as well as virtual schools, all have a place in serving the diverse needs of our students. I believe the concept of school choice can strengthen all institutions that serve students. While the opportunity for choice may be healthy, clearly the mission of these instructional models is different than regular public schools. The one defining characteristic of regular public schools not addressed in S.B. 834 is student admission and retention requirements. In short, it is our mission and
obligation to serve all students without the establishment of admission requirements such as grades, behavior, attendance, or parent involvement.

No amount of deregulation will change this fundamental difference. The apples to oranges comparison of these various educational models serves no real purpose.

Our goals must focus on how to improve student achievement for all students regardless of where they attend school. The real danger in S.B. 834 is not in the intent of the Bill but how the “even the playing field” mentality would be applied in measuring the success of our public school system. Going forward we must focus on how we strengthen all learning environments available to students. I believe building one system at the expense of another will not result in our goal of quality for all.

Henry said the measure would allow administrators to create their own rules and ignore more rigorous standards, he said.

“Senate Bill 834 would also endanger such worthy programs as full-day kindergarten and alternative education in addition to making optional such critical personnel as school librarians and counselors,” Henry said.

In his veto message, Henry said the measure would do a disservice to public school teachers by weakening or eliminating their rights and benefits, including due-process rights.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber was disappointed by the veto, said Susan Harris, senior vice president of education and workforce. “We look forward to working with him to develop legislation that he can sign that addresses our schools’ needs to have more flexibility, better data and better accountability,” she said. The Oklahoma State School Boards Association also supported the measure.

Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City, said it would have unleashed schools to educate students “in a manner most benefiting their unique situations.”

Earlier this week, legislative leaders said they didn’t think they had the votes to override a veto.

Senate Minority Leader Charlie Laster, D-Shawnee, said Henry made the right decision. “I want all the kids across the state to have a quality education, and allowing school districts to ignore quality standards is not the way to do it,” Laster said.

The president of the local teachers union said he was “ecstatic” about Henry’s decision. “We are still going to be here as an association to make sure our teachers and our students have the best working conditions and to work positively with our (school) district,” said Denzel Kesterson with the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association.
Summary of Educational Governance Arrangements at the State Level

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For a full discussion of governance issues, see previous article titled 2009 - Organizing Effective Educational Accountability - Oklahoma Dominic J Brewer, PhD, June Ahn, and Andrew McEachin, University of Southern California; and Kieran Killen, PhD, University of Vermont. Presented January 8, 2009. These tables are cited from pp 13-14, of that source.
EDUCATION SYSTEMS

K12 - Technical - College - Other
Schema For Student Progression Through The System
Tough Choices or Tough Times: New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce
National Center on Education and the Economy
Meet Martha Gregory
Martha Gregory is a professional researcher, adjunct instructor and consultant for business and economic development. She has edited and published on a variety of historical topics. During her term as director of the Economic Development Information Center in Tulsa from 1986-1989, she compiled and published the Tulsa Data Book. Other publications include “Economic Development in a Boom-Bust Economy” in Keeping the Books, Urban Libraries Council, 1992, and various studies and reports.

Ms. Gregory has a masters degree from Oklahoma State University. She is a member of the Oklahoma Academy, a research group on statewide economic, social and political issues. She is currently Coordinator of the Research Wizard service of the Tulsa City-County Library System, Tulsa, OK. Ms. Gregory has presented on market research and competitive intelligence to groups throughout the state during the past 25 years.

Headlines like these across the pages of Oklahoma newspapers don’t help the state’s deflated image of its educational system. We have a complex about our schools when we see them compared against other states. Too often we are at or near the bottom.

At least that’s what the paper tells us. What do the rankings mean, anyway? How discouraged should we be? Is there something behind the data for us to see? What wisdom can we derive from the numbers?

Perhaps our canvas is too big.

Comparisons are risky and all fifty states do not make a level playing field. We can reduce that risk and at the same time get a more manageable set by narrowing the field to states that share some of our demographic, geographic and socio-economic characteristics. A smaller sample may also give us a clearer and more focused view. Our finalist group of 15 “sister states” includes Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas.

What the Numbers Say
The National Center for Education Statistics tracks school characteristics and performance through the National Assessment of Educational Progress. NAEP does profiles on every state, with a robust collection of data for each. The critical variables are those that reflect achievement. The NAEP State Profiles report proficiency scores that indicate achievement levels for math, science, reading and writing. Achievement at both fourth and eighth grade levels is given for math, science and reading. Grade eight alone is available for writing.

Proficiency numbers for the states in our group show that Oklahoma places just slightly below the average across all achievement types, with the exception of science where we are the midpoint.

A feature of the achievement scores that holds true for Oklahoma and for all our sister states is the
decline in proficiency from 4th to 8th grade, with the exception of science. The group’s math average of 35% at 4th grade falls to 28% by grade 8. The group reading average shows less of a decline, from 30% to 28%. Oklahoma does a good job of keeping up its reading proficiency levels during the climb from 4th to 8th grade by losing only a single percentage point. The group science average holds steady at 25%, with some states improving their scores from 4th to 8th grades.

What the Numbers Mean
Variables that impact school achievement are commonly tied to money and time. Let’s look to them for possible correlations. For our purposes we have chosen the following NAEP variables.

- Percent of students in Title 1 schools
- Percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- Per pupil expenditures
- Pupil/teacher ratios
- Number of days in school for the year
- Instructional expenditures as a percent of total expenditures

Here is what the data shows for our select group of states.

- Percent of students in Title 1 schools:
  Oklahoma, at 63.1%, has more students that qualify for Title 1 school funding than the average of our competition (58.4%). States range from a low of 26.2% in Colorado to 87.4% in Louisiana.

- Percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch:
  Again, at 55.2%, Oklahoma has more students that qualify for free or reduced price lunches than the average of 47.9%, with a range from 33.8% for Ohio to 67.5% for Mississippi.

- Per pupil expenditures:
  Oklahoma is second from the bottom at $7,484 per pupil, with a low of $7,460 for Mississippi to $9,920 for Ohio.

- Pupil/teacher ratios:
  Oklahoma is right at average with a pupil/teacher ratio of 15.1%, and a range from 13.2% for Alabama to 21.3% for Oregon.

- Number of days in school for the year:
  Oklahoma with 180 days is close to the average of 179 days per year.

- Instructional expenditures as a % of total expenditures:
  Oklahoma targets the lowest percent, 60.5%, of its budget to instruction. Iowa tops the list with 66.0%.

The NAEP State Profiles clearly tell us that, compared with most other states, Oklahoma pays a bargain price for its education.

(View State Profiles at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/)

The Importance of Money
The variable of per capita income was chosen because it lies outside the educational system parameters and it adds another dimension to the money equals results equation. We see that it reinforces the importance of money in positioning the states relative to educational achievement. When we look at Oklahoma compared with our sister states, we see that we are six up from the bottom on per capita income, and that we range between five and seven up from the bottom across the achievement variables of math, reading and writing. The correlation between educational achievement and per capita income is clear, and it holds not only for Oklahoma but for our sister states as well.

There is some indication that the pupil/teacher ratio correlation may not hold as strongly. Oregon with very high achievement rankings has a poor pupil/teacher ratio with more pupils per teacher than any other state in our group. Louisiana, with quite low proficiency rankings, allocates more money per pupil than all but three other states, and it also has a good pupil/teacher ratio. The data may suggest that simply spending more money by itself is not the optimum solution. An elevation in per capita income may be just as essential a correlate as educational investment is to academic achievement.

The numbers suggest that Oklahoma schools do more with less than perhaps any other state in our group. We spend the smallest percentage of our total school dollars on actual instruction. Yet, we are just short of
a mid-range position in mathematics, reading and writing proficiency at the 4th and 8th grade levels. Perhaps this says something about how efficiently we use our instructional dollars. Could it be a reflection of the quality of our teachers and their success in stretching the resources they have to best advantage?

What is the bottom line? Notwithstanding the fact that there is plenty of room and need for improvement, the numbers suggest that given our resources we are already doing a pretty good job. Of course, we want to do better. But, we may already be doing the best we can with what we have, and that the only way up from here is to elevate the standard of living in the state. That brings us full circle to economic development and the myriad workforce and education issues that impact upon and are impacted by it.

The National Education Association (NEA) looked for connections between funding, schools and economic development in several intensive studies of state-by-state practices. Here are some results of those studies. (NEA studies are available at www.nea.org.)

These findings are from The Effects of State Public K-12 Education Expenditures on Income Distribution. NEA, 2004.

- From an analysis of state spending during the 1970-1995 period, those states that spent more on public education experienced larger increases in all incomes in 2000.

- Public education expenditures by the states and the District of Columbia contributed to reductions in poverty rates.

- Public education expenditures per pupil by the states have contributed to decreases in income inequality.

- Positive effects of the states’ public education expenditures were cumulative and took several years to materialize.

This important discovery is reported in School Funding, Taxes and Economic Growth: An Analysis of the 50 States. NEA, 2004.

When the NEA examined the various taxing, funding and budgeting practices of each of the states, they discovered that the number of jobs created by increasing education spending is larger than the number of jobs lost from increasing taxes to support that spending. In other words, spending on education results in a net gain of jobs, even if taxes are raised to do it.

These conclusions were reached in this study entitled K-12 Education in the U.S. Economy: Its Impact on Economic Development, Earnings, and Housing Values. NEA, 2004.

- Government spending on primary and secondary education exerts a measurable and statistically significant influence on economic development.

- Financing an increase in public K-12 education expenditures by any means except a state budget deficit or by cutting public expenditures on health or higher education will lead to both short and long term increases in a state’s personal income.

Leveraging Available Options & Resources

The Education Commission of States (ECS) was the first national agency to administer the system of rating and ranking school achievement levels of all the individual states. During the Reagan administration, this responsibility was shifted to the NAEP. Following this move the ECS redirected its energies into analysis and comparative studies of the states’ educational status, initiatives and progress. (View ECS reports at www.ecs.org.)

In one of its State Notes on mathematics and science, the ECS looked at the optimum requirements for increasing success after high school. Reports from Cliff Adelman, ACT and American Diploma Project (ADP) claim that it is more effective to require specific math and science courses in sequence, rather than simply more courses in any fashion. In light of this, the ECS examined course choices made by the various states.
Oklahoma is one of just three states to abide by both the math and science recommendations suggested by these agencies.

Oklahoma is scheduled to require by 2010 the optimum high school math sequence of Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and the optimum high school science sequence of biology, chemistry and physics. This represents a positive way to work within constraints and make the most of options that are available.

ECS has also examined states for their dedication to those subjects that particularly nourish economic development. It is assumed that educational excellence is required in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in order to foster and support innovation and the development of new technologies.

Seventeen states have legislated STEM initiatives that embrace all four disciplines. The initiatives range from teacher training programs to workforce and economic development activities of various kinds. Oklahoma is not on the list of states.

Oklahoma has a better showing when it comes to entrepreneurship. When ECS looked at legislative initiatives to support entrepreneurial education it found Oklahoma among seventeen states with various kinds of programs.

Some operate within schools K-12, some work with students at the post-secondary level, others have created “entrepreneurial education centers” while many have launched more modest public/private cooperative initiatives. Oklahoma places in all categories except K-12.

In summary, we can say for Oklahoma schools that we have little of which to be ashamed. The state is doing a good job of creatively using the resources it has to overcome constraints that many other states do not face.

We’re Doing Great, Except for ….
Visit the Oklahoma State Department of Education website and you will find this intriguing and hopeful list of national rankings – all suggestive of the relative success Oklahoma enjoys in spite of poor funding investments. (View at www.sde.state.ok.us/Services/NatRank/default.html)

• **National Model:** Oklahoma is the national model for pre-kindergarten programs, conferred by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

• **Nationally Certified:** Oklahoma ranks 8th in the number of new National Board Certified Teachers, and ranks 10th in the total number of teachers who have national certification, according to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

• **National Assessments:** Oklahoma is one of 14 states to improve math scores at grades 4 and 8 in 2007.

• **Quality Counts:** Oklahoma ranks 25th nationwide in *Education Week* magazine’s 13th annual “Quality Counts” report.

• **High Tech:** Oklahoma ranks 12th on a composite score in “Technology Counts 2009,” by *Education Week* magazine.

• **High School Graduates:** Oklahoma ranked 20th nationwide in the graduation rates of public high school students for the 2005-2006 school year, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

• **High Standards:** Oklahoma’s Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) state curriculum ranks 10th nationally by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 2006.

• **State Investment:** Oklahoma ranks 46th nationally for per-pupil expenditures and 42nd for average teacher salary.

Just imagine what we could do with a little more support!
# Proficiency in Peer and Regional States

*Martha Gregory, Academy Research Committee*

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics - 2007*

## Writing 8

<table>
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## Title 1

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## PT Ratio

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* Science Achievement data is for 2005.
** Iowa fourth grade Science Achievement data is for 2000; eighth grade data is for 1996.
*** State averages for Science Achievement are based upon 13 states, excluding Kansas.

## Data Sources:

## Definitions:
Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is the largest federally funded educational program. This program, authorized by Congress, provides supplemental funds to school districts to assist schools with the highest student concentrations of poverty to meet school educational goals. Schools qualify based on demonstrating that they have a sufficiently high percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

F&R - Free or reduced price lunch; PCI - Per Capita Income; PT Ratio: Pupil to Teacher Ratio; PP Exp - Per Pupil Expense.
## Proficiency in Peer and Regional States

*Martha Gregory, Academy Research Committee*

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics - 2007*

### Math 4
- **Kansas**: 51%
- **Ohio**: 46%
- **Iowa**: 43%
- **Colorado**: 41%
- **Texas**: 40%
- **Missouri**: 38%
- **Arkansas**: 37%
- **South Carolina**: 36%
- **Oregon**: 35%
- **Kentucky**: 35%
- **Oklahoma**: 33%
- **Alabama**: 26%
- **New Mexico**: 24%
- **Louisiana**: 24%
- **Mississippi**: 21%

### Math 8
- **Kansas**: 40%
- **Colorado**: 37%
- **Oregon**: 35%
- **Texas**: 35%
- **Iowa**: 35%
- **Ohio**: 35%
- **South Carolina**: 32%
- **Missouri**: 30%
- **Kentucky**: 27%
- **Arkansas**: 24%
- **Oklahoma**: 21%
- **South Carolina**: 19%
- **Alabama**: 18%
- **New Mexico**: 17%
- **Mississippi**: 14%

### Science 4
- **Kansas**: NA
- **Iowa**: 36%
- **Kentucky**: 36%
- **Missouri**: 36%
- **Ohio**: 35%
- **Colorado**: 32%
- **Oregon**: 32%
- **Kentucky**: 31%
- **Oklahoma**: 25%
- **South Carolina**: 25%
- **Texas**: 25%
- **Arkansas**: 24%
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- **Louisiana**: 20%
- **New Mexico**: 18%
- **Mississippi**: 12%

### Science 8
- **Kansas**: NA
- **Iowa**: 36%
- **Colorado**: 35%
- **Ohio**: 35%
- **Missouri**: 33%
- **Oregon**: 32%
- **Kentucky**: 31%
- **Arkansas**: 25%
- **Oklahoma**: 25%
- **South Carolina**: 23%
- **Texas**: 23%
- **Alabama**: 19%
- **Louisiana**: 19%
- **New Mexico**: 18%
- **Mississippi**: 14%

### Reading 4
- **Iowa**: 36%
- **Ohio**: 36%
- **Colorado**: 36%
- **Kansas**: 36%
- **Kentucky**: 33%
- **Missouri**: 32%
- **Texas**: 30%
- **Alabama**: 29%
- **New Mexico**: 24%
- **Louisiana**: 20%
- **Mississippi**: 19%

### Reading 8
- **Iowa**: 36%
- **Ohio**: 36%
- **Colorado**: 35%
- **Kansas**: 34%
- **Missouri**: 33%
- **Texas**: 28%
- **Kentucky**: 28%
- **Arkansas**: 26%
- **Oklahoma**: 25%
- **South Carolina**: 25%
- **Alabama**: 21%
- **Louisiana**: 19%
- **Mississippi**: 17%

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* Science Achievement data is for 2005.
** Iowa fourth grade Science Achievement data is for 2000; eighth grade data is for 1996.
*** State averages for Science Achievement are based upon 13 states, excluding Kansas.

**Data Sources:**
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2007. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) (Per Capita Income)
- Education Commission of the States. 2007. [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org) (Instructional Expenditures as % of Total; Number of School Days)

**Definitions:**
- Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is the largest federally funded educational program. This program, authorized by Congress, provides supplemental funds to school districts to assist schools with the highest student concentrations of poverty to meet school educational goals. Schools qualify based on demonstrating that they have a sufficiently high percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

- F&R - Free or reduced price lunch; PCI - Per Capita Income; PT Ratio: Pupil to Teacher Ratio; PP Exp - Per Pupil Expense.
Accountability in Oklahoma Education

Jeff Wallace, Assistant Director, Office of Accountability, OK Education Oversight Board

The Office of Accountability, under the direction of the Education Oversight Board, was created in 1990 as a part of HB 1017, the Oklahoma Educational Reform Act. The Office carries out two programs; the Oklahoma Educational Indicators Program and the Oklahoma School Performance Review Program.

The Oklahoma Educational Indicators Program has an award winning track record of providing high quality reports on school performance at the State, District, and School level. The Office of Accountability’s charge is to provide school performance information that is comparable and in context. The office is painstaking in its efforts to gather accurate and valid data and keep it consistent over time. Collectively, over 100 statistical measures of curriculum, budget, educational programs, student performance, and community characteristics are generated and provided to education stakeholders.

The reports of the Educational Indicators Program are the most comprehensive, consistent, and accurate source for Oklahoma educational statistics that exist. Reports are provided to parents, educators, researchers, grant writers, and policy makers. The office serves as a clearinghouse for education data and shares its information with all who desire it. The office is the State’s “one-stop-shop” for educational statistics.

The Oklahoma School Performance Review (OSPR) program was created in 2001. The program is designed to help school districts make operations more effective and efficient with the ultimate goal of improving student performance. Areas Targeted for Review include: Management, Personnel, and Communication; Instructional Delivery; Business Operations; Facilities Use and Management; Support Services (Safety and Security, Food Service and Transportation).

Student Attrition: Class of 2008

How to keep students from dropping out of school before they graduate has long been a tough question for educators to answer. Analyzing the data for the Class of 2008 from their 9th grade year until their graduation will help paint the current picture of student attrition in Oklahoma. For the Graduating Class of 2008, we looked at all high schools with grades 9 through 12 at one site (districts such as Broken Arrow with 9th and 10th grades at one site and 11th and 12th grade at another are not included). There are 397 high schools in this sample out of the 467 senior high schools across Oklahoma.

For the Class of 2008, 27.2% of the 9th graders from four years earlier did not graduate. There were 25,034 high school graduates in 2008 from the 34,384 students that started 9th grade in 2004. This equates to 9,350 students that started 9th grade but did not graduate. Out of the 9,350 who did not graduate, 35.6% started 9th grade did not make it to 10th grade and of the 10th graders, 30.6% did not make it to 11th grade. If students made it to their senior year, most graduated. Only 9.7% of the students who started their 12th grade year did not graduate. Historically, student attrition has been dropping but work still needs to be done to have even more students complete their high school education.

There is a discrepancy between races in the percentage of student attrition. Between 9th and graduation, white student attrition is 25.0% and American Indian student attrition is 25.5%, while student attrition for African Americans is 37.3% and 38.6% for Hispanics. The student attrition increases even more when you also include gender with African American and Hispanic males being lost at a rate of 41.0% and 45.7%, respectively. Taking this
one step further, those schools with the largest number of students not finishing school by race was determined. If you isolate the ten schools with the greatest African American student attrition, the rate increases to 55.0% and for Hispanic students the loss rate increases to 58.0%.

For all students, 35.6% of the students who do not graduate do not finish the 9th grade. The percentage jumps to 42.9% for Hispanics and 49.0% for African American students. When the ten schools with the greatest number of African American students not graduating is analyzed, the student attrition between 9th and 10th grade is 59.7%. When looking at the ten schools for Hispanic students not graduating, the 9th to 10th grade attrition is 54.6%. The majority of these schools are in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Putnam City school districts.

If student attrition could have been raised to that of the state average for just the ten schools with highest African American and Hispanic student attrition, then 484 (61.6%) more African American students and 365 (73.3%) more Hispanics students would have graduated with the Class of 2008. This number of students does not seem large but the percentage increase is outstanding. This increase in the number of African American and Hispanic graduates is an excellent goal and should be at the forefront of all educational leaders.

Legislation has been passed and signed by the Governor to help combat the dropout problem. What can each of us do to get the African American and Hispanic attrition rate to fall in line with that as all students? An excellent beginning would be to give urban school district parents, teachers, and administrators the tools to fight this problem.

The 70% Performance Benchmark

The Education Oversight Board selected the 70% Performance Benchmark in 1998 to evaluate the overall performance of schools in preparing students for the state’s core curriculum tests (OCCT). Seventy percent was chosen as a reasonable minimum performance benchmark for schools to achieve – similar to getting a “C” on a report card. To achieve this benchmark, a school was to have 70% of its students score satisfactory or better on all tests administered at a given grade.

In the first school year for the benchmark, 1996-1997, there were five tests for fifth and eighth grades. The next year, 1997-1998, there were six tests for both grades. From 1998-1999 to 2002-2003, there were seven tests for fifth and eighth grades and since 2003-2004 there have been five tests for the two grades.

For the 1996-1997 school year, only 85 schools offering eighth grade were able to meet the 70% benchmark. In 2003-2004, there were 183 eighth grade sites meeting the benchmark, an increase of over 100% in seven years. For 2007-2008, there were 306 eighth grade sites meeting the benchmark. This is an increase of just over two-thirds (67.2%) from 2003-2004. There were 137 fifth grade sites meeting the 70% benchmark in 2003-2004 and 499 sites meeting the benchmark in 2007-2008, an increase of over 250%.

The Office of Accountability uses the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch as an indicator of a district’s economic status. Districts with rates below the state average are better off economically than those above the state average. In 2007-2008, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch was 56.0%. This is an increase from 47.9% ten years earlier.

In 2003-2004, 95 eighth grade sites below the state average for free or reduced price lunch eligibility and 88 eighth grade sites above the state average met the 70% benchmark. This difference is not major but there is a noteworthy difference when looking at fifth grade sites. There were 94 fifth grade sites below the state average eligibility level and only 43 fifth grade sites above the state average meeting the benchmark. A significant gain is noted when comparing results of 2003-2004 to 2007-2008. There is much improvement in the number of eighth grade sites meeting the benchmark with the better improvement coming from those schools above the state average eligibility for free or reduced price lunch. While the eighth grade improvement is significant, the improvement for fifth grade sites is outstanding. There were 362 more fifth grade sites meeting the 70% performance benchmark in 2007-2008 than in 2003-2004 with over half of the sites having above
average free or reduced price lunch eligibility. These economically disadvantaged sites improved from 43 sites meeting the benchmark in 2003-2004 to 231 sites meeting the benchmark in 2007-2008.

While there was improvement across all grades and economic statuses, there are still a few schools that did not reach the 70% benchmark on any of the five tests given in 2007-2008. Two fifth grade sites and one eighth grade site did not have 70% of their students score satisfactory or better on any of the five tests. This is down greatly from 2003-2004 when 71 fifth grade and 12 eighth grade sites did not have 70% of their students scoring satisfactory on any of the tests.

The table above displays the number of sites with 70% of students scoring satisfactory or above by number of tests for fifth and eighth grade for 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 along with above and below free or reduced price lunch eligibility. Parents, teachers, and administrators need to work together to insure all Oklahoma students are meeting the required standards. Without a quality elementary and secondary education, students will not have the skills necessary to move on to higher education, career tech, or the workforce.
Creating A Culture of Learning
Jeff B. Mills, PhD, Executive Director, Oklahoma State School Boards Association

There is no doubt that the educational landscape in our country is changing at a very rapid pace. And while the external environment is changing, some would say that our educational structure has changed very little in the last fifty years. Creating a culture of learning in our state will require a deep understanding of the factors outside and inside the classroom that are impacting learning, and the development of collaborative solutions that reconnect communities and schools.

Student body demographics are also changing. The National Center on Education Statistics states our student population will change from 69% Caucasian to 50% by the year 2050. Student bodies will be comprised of 15.8% African Americans, 23.6% Hispanics, 1.1% American Indians, and 6.9% Asians. These are not new figures to policy makers and leaders in our state, but they do impact the classroom. Schools must think differently to meet the diverse needs of students from different cultures. Schools today are dealing with more societal issues than ever before.

In Oklahoma over 362,697 (56.25% of student population) of our students are eligible for a free or reduced lunch (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2009), 76 out of 100 marriages result in divorce (Ross, Bobby, Oklahoman, 2002) and we have over 39,000 grandparents raising grandchildren (Youth and Family Resource Center Inc., 2005). We also lead the nation in the incarceration of women.

With over half of Oklahoma students being eligible for free or reduced lunch programs. These numbers rise significantly in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, to over 80 percent. In Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, a recent study by David Berliner, Regent’s Professor at Arizona State University (2009), he identifies six out-of-school factors (OSFs) resulting from the poverty issue:

- Low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences
- Inadequate medical, dental, and vision care – often due to a lack of medical insurance
- Food insecurity
- Environmental pollutants
- Family relations and stress
- Neighborhood characteristics

These factors influence a child’s ability to succeed in school and are manifested in several ways, such as attention disorders, excessive absenteeism, and behavioral problems, just to name a few. The OSF act cumulatively in schools serving disadvantaged communities, where their limited resources are overwhelmed by the issues students bring to the classroom. “Efforts to improve educational outcomes in these schools, attempting to drive change through test-based accountability, are thus unlikely to succeed unless accompanied by policies to address the OSFs that negatively affect large numbers of our nation’s students,” Berliner states. “Poverty limits student potential; inputs to schools affect outputs from them.” Although accountability and bottom-line test results dominate our discussions of education, Berliner suggests that our exclusive focus on school outputs with little attention to the inputs is poor public policy that creates huge barriers to student success.

One area where Oklahoma has led the nation in addressing OSFs is early childhood education, specifically the pre-kindergarten program. Even though we believe in expanding these efforts, many districts are unable to add the full day program due to building, staffing, and new program costs. The output focused era has placed schools in a continual cycle that requires more state and federal oversight and less local control, which concerns the Oklahoma State School Boards Association.
Even as school boards work to meet the challenges for their students’ success they have less control over their strategies for meeting the standards.

To meet the needs of our diverse students we need the ability to develop learning skills in each and every child, which requires additional, ongoing support from school staffers, outside agencies and communities. As budgets continue to tighten we must look for ways outside our normal resources to meet the needs of students. The benefits of strong community support for our local schools include financial support, volunteers, mentors, student services, instruction, expertise, and advocacy. David Matthews, author of, “Is there a Public for Public Schools” discusses the need for more community engagement and deliberative dialogue to assist schools in meeting the needs of students.

The OSSBA is launching a strategic community engagement initiative to work with local communities, school boards and educators to create and influence the future of education in Oklahoma. Community engagement is a process that encourages dialogue and discussion, builds relationships and common ground, and gives people the opportunity to have ownership and involvement in the issues and challenges facing our education system. It is time for new mechanisms for school board members, educators and policymakers to use to bring more authenticity and meaningful accountability to our work. We believe that our children and communities will be better off when we bring the “public” back into our system of public education.

With the changing needs of our students and our state, it is time to rethink the structure of the school year, including extending the number of days students are in school. Adding days (190-200 at a minimum) will cost more money to cover staffing, transporting, and feeding students. This change would allow more student remediation time, enrichment, and training for our professional staff. These additions would help students to be more successful in school and allow Oklahoma to increase the number of college graduates and better prepare students for the workforce.

Yet increasing the amount of time students spend in school alone will not be enough. In most schools we still operate in an industrial-era format, with rows of desks, lecture-type instruction and a lack of technology integration. When students step into many of our schools they step back in time and are often bored by our methods. Equipping teachers to be facilitators of learning will require an investment in technology, professional development and curriculum development. It is something we must do to keep our students engaged, excited and involved in learning.

Along with increased investment in retooling our teachers and schools, we must consider the professional pay of our Oklahoma teachers. We are nearly last in the nation in teacher pay particularly when you consider the small gap between an entry-year teacher and a long term career professional. There is only a $10,725 difference in a beginning teacher’s salary and that of a 25+ year professional, which doesn’t even keep up with a minimal 3% inflation factor. Raising teacher’s salaries is not always a popular subject, but we must invest in them in order to improve student success. It is a reality we must face. That reality is becoming more evident as we look at over 49% of our teacher force being eligible to retire in the next few years and Oklahoma colleges seeing a reduction in the number of college students going into the teaching field.

Creating a culture of learning will require the involvement and hard work of all of us. We must recognize that learning doesn’t start or stop at the classroom door. Much of what we learn and the factors that affect our learning occur outside of our schools. There are no silver bullets or quick fixes, and educators certainly don’t have all the answers to the challenges we face.

We believe in our state and the future of our public schools. There are many successful initiatives that are currently working in our state, including pre-K and full day kindergarten programs. As we measure the success of these programs, replicate and constantly improve, we should view the cost as an investment in our future. Whether we are contemplating extending the school day, retooling our schools, increasing our investment in teachers and technology, or looking for new and innovative ways to shape the future of learning, we must do so through ongoing dialogue, grassroots involvement and a spirit of collaboration. Understanding that we all own our schools and are responsible for creating
Leaving No Future Behind
Sandy Garrett, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Oklahoma

Meet Sandy Garrett
Sandy Garrett is the only woman in Oklahoma history elected to the constitutional office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In November 2006, she became the only Oklahoma woman elected to a statewide office for a fifth consecutive term.

As Chief Executive Officer of the State Department of Education, Superintendent Garrett has led the timely implementation of the mandates of Oklahoma’s landmark Education Reform Act of 1990, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the state Achieving Classroom Excellence Act of 2005. Since taking office in 1991, she has downsized the Department, saving taxpayers a cumulative $50.5 million. Constitutional posts include chair of both the State Board of Education and the State Board of Career and Technology Education, and membership on the State Board of Equalization, the School Land Commission and the Board of Regents for the Regional University System of Oklahoma. The state superintendent serves numerous other statutory roles both state and national.

In August 2009, Superintendent Garrett announced she would not seek re-election.

The following is based on the 2009 State of Education Address, “Leave No Future Behind,” delivered July 15 by State Superintendent Sandy Garrett at the annual “Leadership” conference for school leaders

Some of you may remember “Little Boxes,” from the early 1960s, written and performed by Malvina Reynolds and a hit in 1964 for Pete Seeger. Once considered social commentary, today “Little Boxes” is the theme song for a cable television show. The song depicts what many considered the American dream at a time when a “cookie cutter” approach to life was promoted as the ideal.

With few exceptions, the structure of those schoolhouse boxes have not changed – the school day, school calendar, school year, four years of high school, and only teachers talking. Schools must be transformed for the future and the future is now. As the President said in a recent speech, “The future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens.” Now, our work is to become the state that best educates its citizens. We may not have everything we need, but I know we can break free of the little box mentality.

A perfect storm
American education’s “perfect storm” is a simultaneous occurrence of events in America and around the globe that came together producing an emergency situation. The forces of this perfect storm are:

• The worst economic crisis since the Great Depression;

• Divergent skill distributions within a potential workforce;

• Changing demographics.

We are going through one of the most turbulent times in the nation’s economic history. The Wall Street meltdown, debt addiction, and housing debacle are restructuring the U.S. economy. Technological advancements and progress require a knowledge based workplace.
According to the Census Bureau, shifts in jobs continue toward college labor market clusters, technical jobs, and high-level sales positions. These changes require constant rethinking about what kind of education all citizens need in order to become productive, and specifically to get—and to keep—a quality job.

A second force changing our future relates to the significant disparities nationally in literacy and numeracy skills among citizens. Skills are not evenly distributed among socioeconomic groups. “The basics” in 2009 include a broader range of cognitive skills, plus soft skills—interpersonal and communication skills, as well as initiative, collaboration, moral responsibility and integrity. More and more employers are placing a special importance on the ability to think and create. There is a widening gap between high school and college graduates’ lifetime earnings. A high school diploma must be meaningful and should be only the beginning for 21st century lifelong learners.

Nationally, high school graduation rates reached 77% in 1969, falling to 70% in 1995. That’s approximately where they’ve stayed since. Yet, graduation rates for the largest minority groups in this country hover around 50%. Oklahoma’s graduation rate was 78% in 2006 and our minority graduation rates, particularly in urban districts, reflect the 50% average seen nationally.

As Tony Wagner points out in “The Global Achievement Gap,” today’s young people not only compete with each other and millions of newly arrived immigrants but also with equally, or better, skilled workers in lower wage economies, such as India. Sweeping demographic changes are also identified in the policy report “America’s Perfect Storm,” which cites Census projections of immigration accounting for more than half of our nation’s population growth between 2000 and 2015. Hispanics are expected to be 1 out of every 5 Americans by 2030.

Oklahoma’s public school enrollment has never been higher but demographics have changed. The Hispanic student population has increased from about 3% in 1990 to almost 11% in 2008. In various areas of our state these changes are magnified. In Oklahoma City Public Schools, 40% of students are Hispanic; in Guymon that age is 62%.

Native American students have increased to 19% of Oklahoma students; white students now account for 57% of students.

In just one year, there has been a 3% increase in the number of Oklahoma students qualifying for free or reduced priced meals; the percent age of students living in poverty statewide is over 56%; and, the number of homeless students in our schools has increased a shocking 11%, with schools serving nearly 9,200 homeless students last year, compared to about 800 in 2004.

In the midst of this perfect storm, we must calm the waters and chart a course. It makes me recall the ancient fisherman’s prayer that was in the office of President John F. Kennedy:

Dear God, be good to me;  
The sea is so wide  
And, my boat is so small.

We know we can’t do this alone. Charting a course for the future will require the efforts of us all.

**Charting a course**

Leaders in Washington have responded to the economic crisis with stimulus funding. And, the new administration has laid out the plan with five education reform initiatives—strategies that can chart a course through this perfect storm. We were already working on these reform initiatives before they were adopted by Washington and I’m proud of the progress we’ve made. Yet, I fully agree with the President that we must do “a far better job than we’ve been doing of educating our sons and daughters in this new and changing world.”

**Promoting innovation and excellence**

More than ever, student success hinges on looking beyond the box and seeking innovative solutions. This relates to when, where, and how children learn. Time, place and technology have never presented such an opportunity.
On our Web site is a video of students from KIPP Reach College Preparatory Charter Middle School in Oklahoma City, an innovative school achieving excellence beyond what might be expected from a school with 85% student poverty. Yet, KIPP requires more hours of instruction than any school in the state: 1,589 hours last year. KIPP students attend class from 7:25 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Their parents assure completion of two hours of homework each night, one Saturday of school each month, and two weeks during the summer.

Is this a choice that would work in every community? No. This model obviously cannot fit in every school but the results are undeniable and elements of the school are worth replicating. These students are achieving at stellar rates.

For the last two years, we’ve talked about the quantity and quality of time as among the most important issues in education today. It is. Lengthening the school year is costly, but can we afford a school calendar that no longer addresses the needs of students and our economy? The existing calendar puts our students at a disadvantage. It’s that simple. American students spend a month less in school every year than children in South Korea. There is a wider disparity with other countries. And, consider, too, that Oklahoma still has one of America’s shortest school years.

The Quality Time Analysis Tool we provided to administrators and teachers to use in evaluating school time can help schools maximize instructional time. Aggregate results will be announced soon, and we appreciate the National Center for Time and Learning and the Broad Foundation for their great support of these efforts.

Increasing choices available to parents is imperative. Choices in Oklahoma include traditional public and private schools, public charter schools, online courses and virtual academies. There are magnet and specialty schools, language immersion schools, and two international baccalaureate schools.

Oklahoma is one of 41 states allowing charter schools, albeit in only two of 77 counties. Like other public schools, charters are held accountable for results. Free from some regulations to which traditional schools adhere, charter schools cannot be freed from federal regulations. We had 15 public charter schools serving 5,400 students last year: 12 in the Oklahoma City Public Schools; two in the Tulsa Public Schools; and one in Tulsa sponsored by Langston University.

Innovative uses of technology engage students with the tools they use every day - and will eventually use in the workplace. Teachers and students now use PDAs, blogs, podcasts, wikis and other tools like chat and instant messaging tools. The world is their classroom. And, outside of it they are connected to each other and the world through such social networks like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Technology can and should revolutionize the way educators teach.

Today, 98% of Oklahoma school districts use computers for curriculum, assessment and administration. Impressive, considering the funding for hardware, software, and connectivity primarily comes from local bond issues and federal grants or e rate discounts. One third of classrooms have interactive whiteboards and nearly half of schools subscribe to digital streaming.

Several districts are pursuing 1:1 learning, which provides students with their own laptop computers. A handful of schools are issuing iPods to students to enhance learning. These are all great examples of
using multiple digital technologies for enhanced learning.

However, these examples are the exception rather than the rule in most schools, where students generally ‘power down’ when they enter.

**Better standards and assessments**

A second reform initiative in Oklahoma and across the nation is for more rigorous curriculum standards and better assessments. While Oklahoma’s curriculum standards have been validated by a number of external groups, they also have an automatic, periodic review that gives us the opportunity to revise and update them. This year, we revised math standards; next year, reading standards. Standards review and revision processes involve many teachers statewide working with our testing companies, and as overseen by the Oklahoma Testing and Accountability Oversight Team of national experts.

Our participation in the American Diploma Project has facilitated our work with higher education and others. Alignment with higher education and workforce standards is essential. In 2005, Oklahoma passed the state’s *Achieving Classroom Excellence Act* (ACE), putting us in a high stakes environment with new end-of-instruction (EOI) tests to be developed. ACE required EOI tests in seven specific areas. The ACE Steering Committee advised the State Board of Education in the development of these new tests and their proficiency standards.

When No Child Left Behind mandated development of tests for Grades 3 through 8, they allowed a multi-year phase-in beginning in 2003. That created a challenge that prevented a consistent proficiency benchmark, and outliers emerged in the results over years. However, we needed a uniform proficiency band to eliminate outliers and we needed proficiency benchmarks more in line with NAEP – the National Assessment for Educational Progress. So, this spring, we directed our testing vendor, Data Recognition Corporation, to address band misalignment and increase the rigor of student proficiency standards in Grades 3 through 8. DRC facilitated meetings of math and reading panels of teachers, administrators, college faculty, business and community leaders and others to set new benchmarks. And, early this summer, the State Board of Education, which I chair, approved their recommendations.

We have asked school administrators to meet with their teachers promptly about the 2009 reading and mathematics test scores, Grades 3 through 8, and make a plan toward meeting the new proficiency benchmarks. High school test scores must be used in a similar way to design remediation and improve instruction toward our goal of a 100% high school graduation rate.

Next steps in this area are better tests. We will continue to call for enhanced tests with open-ended and short-response questions like many other states have. But we realize this is costly. And, note, too, that Gov. Henry and I recently committed to joining most states in the pursuit of the development of common core standards in math and language arts. There is no justification for math or reading being different in Oklahoma than in Ohio, Iowa or Alaska.

**Recruiting and rewarding outstanding teachers**

Better preparing, recruiting and rewarding outstanding teachers are also goals of the new administration. Oklahoma has quality teachers, who do a good job under difficult circumstances. One of the ways Oklahoma rewards teachers is the National Board Certified Teacher bonus. We rank 10th nationally for the number of nationally certified teachers and are one of only six states with more than five% of the teaching workforce nationally certified.

Since 2005, the Legislature has appropriated Academic Achievement Awards to reward teachers and schools for high or greatly improved Academic Performance Index (API) scores. And, in the 2009 legislative session, Oklahoma lawmakers passed a new law that allows other candidates with bachelor degrees to be alternatively certified through the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE). Forty-five Oklahomans were teaching last year through Troops to Teachers. And, in the last year, more than 1,700 educators achieved alternate certification, while more than 22,000 chose the traditional route.
To better serve our customers, we have infused technology to allow online certificate renewal. And, the State Board provides the online service, TeachersTeachers.com to aid schools’ recruitment efforts.

Our communities should not let new teachers sink or swim! We should find out why teachers leave a school. Are they leaving for better pay or working conditions at another district? Or, going outside the state? Or do they not have the support they need as a new teacher?

**Postsecondary education**

Providing every American with a quality postsecondary education – whether it’s college or technical training – is key in this global economy. Aligning PreK through 12th grade and postsecondary education systems to improve our workforce pipeline is crucial. We are working with the Chancellor’s office, the Director of CareerTech and others, in connecting the Wave – Oklahoma’s student information system – toward completing a “PK20” longitudinal data system.

Using data for informed decisio-making is critical in this time of shifting global power and uncertain economic vitality. That is why Oklahoma must have a robust student data system. Through each school’s student information system, the Wave has assigned a unique testing identifier to all Oklahoma students. The Wave is an interactive system, using the Schools Interoperability Framework to connect different software each school uses to the state’s system. For example, the Wave will be able to track concurrent enrollments of students in high schools or CareerTech centers taking classes at Oklahoma universities. In the 2007-08 school year, there were 6,802 high school students who took more than 48,000 credit hours of concurrent enrollment courses from colleges throughout the state. Recent efforts to increase the number of high school graduates have included the “State Superintendent’s Dropout Summit” in March, sponsored by America’s Promise Alliance, State Farm and others. The fruit of that summit, the “OK Graduation: DO IT” project, is developing “dropout intervention teams” (DO IT) throughout the state.

An updated “Earning Skills for Success” brochure of graduation requirements under the ACE law, and a new “ACE High School Graduation Checklist” are on our Web site, (www.sde.state.ok.us).

**Early learning**

The President has also called on states to raise the quality of early learning programs. Oklahoma obviously has a head start! We began pilot programs for four-year-olds in the 1980s; we’ve had state funding for Pre-Kindergarten since 1990 and available to all schools since 1998. Today, almost all school districts choose to offer PreK programs – and for the last six years, Oklahoma has been ranked No. 1 among all states for early childhood education! Of note, greater numbers of four-year-olds are attending full-day vs. half-day programs.

The National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University says Oklahoma is among the states with the highest quality indicators for PreK. We’ve built a national reputation for early learning – crucial in a poor state where drug abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse and incarceration continue to impact children.

PreK is clearly a market-driven change with parents of approximately 72% of eligible four-year-old children entrusting their education to public schools. Most parents want to give their children an earlier start with a program that, according to Georgetown University, is increasing early reading and math skills.

We can do even more by expanding public/private collaborations that support early education for all students. The Oklahoma Partnership for School...
Readiness has an ongoing project focused on healthy growth and development called “Smart Start Communities.” And, in 2006, Oklahoma began a pilot program to provide comprehensive, full day, full-year services for at risk children aged birth to 3. The inspiration for the pilot is Educare, which is making historic strides in changing the lives of poor infants and toddlers. Tulsa Educare founder and businessman George Kaiser recently observed, “Your future in life depends on how early the brain’s architecture is structured.”

Today, when jobs can be shipped wherever there’s an internet connection, when a child born in Muskogee is competing with a child in New Delhi, India, and when your best job qualification is what you know – early education is not just an opportunity, it’s a prerequisite for success.

**Visionary leaders**
National leaders have sounded the perfect storm alarm and set forth a crisis intervention plan, with stimulus funding and five education reform initiatives. Oklahoma has already taken many steps toward implementing these and now is the time to move forward with urgency.

When “Little Boxes” first became popular, it satirized Americans’ tendency to conform to the local community standards of the past. Today, we must concern ourselves with the mores, threats and opportunities of the global community – which means focusing schools on the future.

Long after we’re gone from this place and time, people will know what was important to us and if we were visionary leaders or not. Will they see our students gained the knowledge and skills to be successful or will they observe opportunity lost?

Heed the forces of the perfect storm converging around us. Chart your school’s course to making them the best they can be for all students. Doing nothing isn’t an option. Every child in Oklahoma deserves a bright future. Do whatever it takes to leave no future behind!

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**Public School Demographics: 1990 - 2008**
*Wendy Pratt, State Department of Education*

*Black and Asian students have remained relatively constant at 11% to 10% and 1% to 2% respectively*

![Bar chart showing changes in race demographics from 1990 to 2008](chart.png)
Meet Janet Barresi

Armed with an undergraduate degree in Education and a master’s degree in Speech and Language Disorders, Janet Barresi began her career in the Harrah and Norman public school systems as a speech pathologist. While in Harrah, Janet also ran a special summer clinic for severely handicapped children in need of remediation for speech and language problems. In 1984, Janet earned her DDS degree and ran her successful family dental practice for 24 years.

In 1996, with her twin sons facing middle-school, Janet worked to improve our education system by establishing Independence Enterprise Middle School in Oklahoma City. In 1999, convinced more could be done, she sought passage of Oklahoma’s landmark charter school law and converted Independence Enterprise to Independence Charter Middle school—the state’s first charter school. Now in its 11th year, Independence serves 350 students in sixth through eighth grades and has a waiting list each year for acceptance.

After seeing the success of Independence, Janet was asked to help start Harding Charter Preparatory High School, where she served as board President. Serving 400 inner-city poverty level students, Harding offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. The school has produced a National Merit Finalist and its students, this year alone, have received more than $1.6 million dollars in college scholarships. In its sixth year of operation, Harding was recently named one of the nation’s best high schools by Newsweek magazine.

Janet has been active in education reform efforts, serving on the Governor’s Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) Task Force, as chairwoman of ACE II, Speaker Chris Benge’s Teacher Performance Pay Initiative, and on the Education Funding Reform TF.

Janet and her late husband, John, are the parents of twin sons, Joe and Ben, age 23. Ben is a recent graduate of the University of Oklahoma, and Joe is completing his degree.

Editor Note:

Dr. Barresi was asked to share her views because of her pioneering work in establishing Oklahoma’s first charter school. It takes an extra degree of commitment to be the first. Therefore Dr. Barresi offers the most practical experience and most data on the subject. Harding has received national recognition for its results.

The Arguments

The issue of charter schools has been a hotly debated subject in the education reform movement.

On one side are those who believe that if all schools were relieved of cumbersome mandates and allowed to operate in a manner that best fits the needs of their students, they could post similar results to those achieved by charter schools.

Supporters of the charter concept offer that competition in education coupled with operational flexibility—but stringent accountability—has resulted in schools that flourish.

Both sides of the argument offer valid points, but to hail one or the other as the solution to all of the ills that face public education is inappropriate. What is clear to all is that the concept of “one size fits all” is an outdated and failed strategy.

Around Oklahoma and the rest of the country there are islands of excellence located in school districts of all sizes—whether traditional public schools, charter schools, or private schools or home schools—and with all types of student demographics. Rather than spending so much time debating whether traditional modes of delivering public education are better or worse than school choice, perhaps a different question needs to be asked: What works?

We need to study the best of each form of education delivery and ask if there is a common thread that runs through each successful program. A closer look at each reveals some important facts. First and
foremost, all schools that deliver an outstanding education have high expectations of each child’s abilities. They know that for a student to grow intellectually the child must be challenged daily, and they have every expectation the student will meet education challenges.

Second, these programs deliver a rigorous, stimulating curriculum beginning with the very early grades. By the third grade every student must be able to read at grade level and be able to do grade appropriate math calculations. After this grade, the student no longer learns to read, they read to learn. Students are taught how to think. Teachers foster skills in abstract reasoning, problem solving and inquiry.

Third, in each of these programs testing is not the object of teaching; it is the consequence of effective instruction. One would be hard pressed to find teachers in these programs stuffing facts down children to simply regurgitate on an examination and soon forget. On the other hand, as students are presented with enriched, proven and rigorous curriculums, testing is merely a tool for empowered teachers to measure student progress. Testing is not viewed as a “got ya” strategy utilized by administrators but as a “with ya” attitude that refocuses everyone’s attention on achieving improved academic outcomes for each child.

Finally, the concepts of accountability, transparency and honesty in reporting these results do not give teachers or education officials heartburn as they await reaction to school results. They stand by their results, figure out where to make improvements based on student performance, and then get to work in a constant effort to deliver the best education for each student with respect to the unique environment that surrounds each child.

**Harding High School (photo at right)**
I have the distinct honor to have been the founder of one of these schools. While Harding Charter Preparatory High School is a grade 9-12 charter school, there is nothing that is done in this school that cannot be carried out in any other school in Oklahoma. Harding Charter Prep has just been named one of the best high schools in the country by *Newsweek* magazine after only six years in operation.

What is remarkable about Harding is that its application process is open – no cherry picking. The school’s only requirement is that students must be residents of the Oklahoma City School District.

The demographics of the school show better than 50% of the students are on Free or Reduced Lunch status. It is a racially diverse school with 46% minority population compared to a statewide minority population of 42%. 7.4% of the students are Special Education students and 3.2% are English Language Learners. The senior class had 20% of students who were first-time high school graduates in their family and nearly 65% were the first in their family to be accepted to a college or university.

All students have access to a full array of 18 Advanced Placement (AP) or PreAP courses. In order to enable academically challenged students to develop the tools they may need to be successful in AP courses, the school offers a companion curriculum called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

The AP and AVID curriculums are nationally benchmarked curriculums so Harding student results can be compared to students throughout the nation. The school has adapted many of the major AVID strategies in all classes so all students experience the same mode of effective teaching. Harding is the first charter school to adopt this program, but the AVID curriculum has proven to be a major player in student success.

The faculty engages in constant school improvement strategies including monthly meetings devoted to vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum.
and monthly meetings to assure success in the AVID curriculum. All teachers use their planning periods effectively through use of both solitary and group planning periods. AP certification is earned by 98% of the faculty and to date 75% are AVID trained.

Results
Testing results are just as impressive. Harding students participated in Oklahoma’s first year of high-stakes testing in seven subjects. The results released by the Oklahoma State Department of Education show 95% of students passed the Algebra I exam with 98% passing the Algebra II exam.

Additionally, 84% passed the Geometry exam and 93% passed the English III examination. With respect to AP end-of-instruction examinations, 163 students took an astounding 343 exams. Students experienced a high rate of passage of AP exams which is the equivalent of passing a college level course. The school boasts the highest number of female Hispanic students in the state who took AP exams.

As would be expected, many student awards followed. The school has one National Merit Finalist, 4 National Merit Commended Scholars, and one student was recognized as an Academic All-Stater. For their efforts, this spring’s class of 68 Harding graduates was awarded $1.65 million in scholarships.

What This Means
All of the components of the curriculum, focus and education programs Harding offers can be accomplished in any other high school in the state.

Does this mean that it should be?

Perhaps this exact curriculum does not fit the needs of every district in the state but its’ formulae of a challenging nationally benchmarked curriculum taught by an empowered and dedicated faculty is an excellent model that prepares students to be successful in college and the new world of work. It is a model that all citizens of our state should embrace and promote to assure that our most precious resource, our children, are adequately prepared to achieve the promise their lives hold and the prosperous future our state deserves.
Science and Math Education in Oklahoma

Dr. Edna Manning, President, Oklahoma School for Science and Mathematics

Meet Edna Manning

Edna Manning is the founding president of the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics (OSSM), a public, state-funded, residential high school for juniors and seniors with exceptional ability in mathematics and science.

Dr. Manning is a native of Texas City, Texas. She holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics, a master’s degree in counseling psychology, and a doctorate in mathematics education from the University of Houston. Her extensive experience in public school administration includes having served as Assistant Superintendent of Edmond Public Schools and Superintendent of Shawnee Schools in Oklahoma. In her home state of Texas, Dr. Manning was Superintendent of a suburban Corpus Christi school district. She has had extensive experience in teaching at the high school and university levels, teaching mathematics at the University of Houston, at San Jacinto College, and at Oklahoma State University, and serving as a teacher, principal, and counselor in high schools in Texas.

Dr. Manning has several publications and numerous professional presentations to her credit and in 1984, she was named one of the “Top 100 School Administrators in North America” by a publication of the National School Boards Association.

Under Dr. Manning’s guidance, 960 students have graduated from OSSM. They have been offered scholarships in excess of $68.8 million dollars. Students from all of Oklahoma’s 77 counties have attended the school and the graduating classes 1998 and 2000 achieved the highest ACT composite scores of any high school in the United States.

In her “other life” Edna Manning is a cattle rancher! She lives on her 1,500-acre ranch in Slaughterville, Oklahoma, where she raises limousin cattle.

“The most rigorous program of its kind in the nation.” Julian C. Stanley (see endnote)

2009 marked the fortieth anniversary of the United States putting a man on the moon and bringing him back to earth successfully. The successful Russian launch of Sputnik in 1959 gave America a call to prepare our future scientists and engineers. We were behind in the space race, and that was not a comfortable position for America in any race. President John F. Kennedy established the goal to put a man on the moon by the end of the sixties. Our country had a scientific agenda and a goal, and we succeeded.

Since the sixties, however, as a country we have been more focused on the financial markets, the service industry, and business than on scientific endeavors. Our young people have followed a path that led to careers in those areas. We seem to have forgotten that science, mathematics, and technology are the base of a successful, sustained, and sustaining economy. We have not had a clear scientific agenda, and we have followed a more fragmented effort in the support of scientific research. While much has been accomplished in the past four decades, one wonders what would be possible if we once again as a nation focused on a clear scientific agenda.

In response to the downturn in the economy in the early 1980’s and to the lagging investments in science, visionary leaders in Oklahoma took bold action to help our long-term economic picture by creating and supporting the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology and the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics, by creating programs for Oklahoma’s Academic Scholars, by creating the Endowed Chairs Program, and by strengthening K-12 education in Oklahoma. The results of these actions are now beginning to pay a return on the investment. The remainder of this
writing will focus on the success of one of those initiatives, the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics.

The Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics (OSSM) opened its doors in 1990 and graduated the first class in 1992. OSSM is the state’s residential program for juniors and seniors from all over Oklahoma who are willing to work hard and who have special interests and talents in science and mathematics. During the years from 1992 to 2008, OSSM graduated approximately one thousand students well-prepared for the academic challenges of serious collegiate work in science, mathematics, and technology. The educational model established at OSSM was one of excellence in all areas. OSSM strives to be the best school of its kind in the world. Success in International Academic Olympiads and other international competitions validates the accomplishing and the sustaining of excellence. Students are expected to work hard and to achieve. Faculty are well-prepared academically and are skilled communicators. Academics drive the program at OSSM, not activities. The high school culture changes from that of a social life that includes a cursory look at some academic areas to an academic life in which socialization takes place in discussion of academics. Every aspect of life at OSSM is structured to lead to student success. Students develop habits and practices that lead to success.

More than half of the OSSM graduates have remained in Oklahoma for undergraduate education. More than eighty-five percent of them have earned degrees in science, mathematics, or technology.

In excess of three hundred are practicing engineers. Seventy-eight have earned MD’s. Ten have earned a DO. Forty-five have earned a doctorate in mathematics, science, computer science, or engineering. Two have earned a DVM, and three have earned a DDS. Twenty-five have earned a JD and are practicing law. Three are serving in the ministry. Forty are currently serving in the military.

OSSM alumni with PhD’s or MD’s are teaching at MIT, Stanford, Michigan, Texas, The Citadel, UC-Berkeley, UC-Merced, Southern Utah University, Johns Hopkins College of Medicine, Wake Forest College of Medicine, Duke University College of Medicine, University of Texas Southwestern College of Medicine, United States Air Force Academy, and United States Air Force Institute of Technology.

Four OSSM alumni are teaching for OSSM. Other alumni have returned to Oklahoma after working out of state. Ten graduates have started their own businesses or professional practices in Oklahoma. More than half of all the alumni who have been out of school long enough to complete a degree and who have entered the work force are working in Oklahoma. OSSM graduates who have left Oklahoma for school and/or work begin to look to move back to Oklahoma when they reach their thirties and want to be closer to home to raise their families.

The investment in these young people is beginning to pay dividends for the State of Oklahoma. It is only a matter of time until OSSM graduates assume leadership roles in the professions which they choose and in the communities in which they live. They are people who will help create jobs, who will help increase the tax base, and who will even help our nation develop a scientific agenda with a focus on the improvement of quality of life for all our citizens.

Julian C. Stanley, Ph.D., (1918-August 12, 2005) was a professor of quantitative psychology and Director of the Center for Talented Youth (CTY), which he founded in 1972 at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Stanley visited OSSM in January 1995.
In 1997, the Oklahoma State Legislature passed Senate Bill 1, establishing the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics Regional Centers to provide advanced science and mathematics curriculum for high school students at selected sites throughout the state. The bill mandated that the centers be implemented at local vocational-technical school sites or at local colleges or universities, allowing qualified students to take advanced physics and calculus courses while attending their home high schools for other classes.

A selection committee comprised of the Director of the State Department of Career and Technology Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the OSSM president chooses Regional Center sites after careful review of proposals submitted by interested school districts.

The first center opened at Central Oklahoma Area Vocational Technical School in Drumright in January 1998 to provide instruction to students from 17 high schools in surrounding communities. The Drumright program has graduated approximately 235 students, most of whom have gone on to college. They have been awarded over 3 million dollars in scholarships.

Additional programs are now operating at:

- Green Country Technology Center/Oklahoma State University, Okmulgee, with 8 area high schools;
- Gordon Cooper Technology Center in Shawnee servicing 27 communities;
- Autry Technology Center, Enid, with 16 area high schools;
- Indian Capital Tech Centers at Tahlequah, Muskogee, Sallisaw, and Stilwell with 34 area high schools;
- Northeast Technology Center – North Campus, Afton, with 13 area high schools;
- Northeast Technology Center – South Campus, Pryor, with 12 area high schools;
- Northeast Technology Center, Kansas, with 4 area high schools;

- Classes began in August 2002 at Southern Oklahoma Tech Center in Ardmore for 17 area high schools;
- In August 2005 at Pioneer Technology Center in Ponca City for the 9 high schools in that area;
- In August 2006 at Kiamichi Technology Center in Poteau serving 14 area high schools;
- In August 2007 at Mid-America Technology Center in Wayne serving 18 area high schools.
- In August 2008 at Canadian Valley Vo-Tech in Chickasha serving 9 area schools.
- Centers in Alva/Fairview and Burns Flat will open in August 2009.

Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics officials administer the Regional Centers with funding from the State of Oklahoma, as designated by the state legislature, providing equipment, supplies, and textbooks. The instructors at the centers are employed by OSSM, and OSSM faculty and staff establish the curriculum and instructional strategies, assuring the quality of learning. The area technical school or institute of higher learning, together with the school districts, provides a facility, student transportation, and liaison support.

Students are selected in much the same way as the candidates for the residential program. After submitting a written application with a high school transcript, teacher recommendations, and records of their standardized test scores, semifinalists are interviewed by a selection committee.

Dr. Jack Herron, Jr., OSSM’s Outreach Coordinator, is responsible for overseeing the operation of the Regional Centers. For more information, Dr. Herron can be reached by phone at 405-521-6436, by email at Jack.Herron@ossm.edu, or by US mail: 1141 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73104.
WE THE PEOPLE of the Great State of Oklahoma, in order to secure a more prosperous climate for our citizens, hereby acknowledge that quality education is the key to job creation, stability, growth and economic advancement. We recognize that economic vitality is tied more to the ability to satisfy the workforce needs of a community’s job providers than any other incentives that could be offered.

In order to successfully achieve a stable foundation for growth and prosperity, a quality educational system must be appropriately funded and administered. In an effort to evaluate the quality of our nation’s common education system, a 2007 study conducted by the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, detailed the status of K-12 education systems in every state. In that study, Oklahoma received an “F” in Academic Achievement and a “D” in Academic Achievement of Low Income and Minority Students. This is unacceptable.

In an attempt to revise the state’s funding mechanism for Oklahoma’s common education system, an initiative petition called Helping Oklahoma Public Education (H.O.P.E.) was circulated in the fall of 2008 by the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA). The petition garnered enough signatures to be verified valid by the Oklahoma Secretary of State and placed on the statewide ballot in November, 2010 (or an earlier date if established by the Governor). The ballot measure is SQ 744. If adopted, the ballot measure would amend the state Constitution to require Oklahoma common education expenditures to equal the average per pupil expenditure level of our six-state region comprised of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas.

Each year, the state legislature has one constitutional requirement, the passage of a state budget. With the latest comparison figures available, in 2007, Oklahoma’s total budget was approximately $6.7 billion. Of that, common education received almost $2.8 billion in state appropriations, or 41% of the total state budget. For comparison purposes, the 1997 total state budget was $4.15 billion with $1.53 billion, or 37%, spent on common education. As noted, the common education funding in Oklahoma has significantly increased in both dollars and percentage of budget over the past ten years.

When dividing the state’s number of students by state expenditures, Oklahoma’s “per pupil expenditure” is certainly below the six state regional average. However, other factors such as federal and local funding, which vary significantly in every state, must also be taken into consideration. In addition, other “hidden” instructional costs, such as secondary school students enrolled in Career Technology Centers, are not considered when determining “per pupil expenditures” for common education. Oklahoma’s Career Technology system indicates that in 2008, this number equaled more than $136 million in instructional costs for 314,000 students enrolled in at least one program.

According to the OEA, if SQ 744 was fully implemented during this year’s budget negotiations, the increased allocation to common education would have been $850 million over and above what was appropriated. This represents approximately 12% of the entire budget. Although the state question, if passed, would phase in the funding increases over a three year period, the budget impact seems clear.

In addition, the economies of other states are based on different foundations than ours, and Oklahoma cannot predict the actions of other states on education funding. A state in our region, for example, could decide to pass a constitutional amendment similar to SQ 744, requiring “per pupil expenditures” be equal to or exceed the regional average. Or a state in our
region could increase education by legislative action. In either event, the regional per pupil expenditure is an ever increasing moving target.

Taking it a step further, one of our neighbors could pass a constitutional amendment tying education funding to the national average. With SQ 744 in place, Oklahoma’s per pupil expenditure would then be based on a national average. In any event, SQ 744 leads to a potential budgetary disaster for the State of Oklahoma.

The major question under consideration should be “how efficiently are Oklahoma common education dollars spent?” There is no doubt that Oklahoma’s common education system is “top heavy”. Compared to the regional states as determined by SQ 744, the average common education school district per student is one district per 2,359 students. Oklahoma averages one district per 1,038 students.

These statistics seems to be extremely disproportionate and assures a lopsided portion of Oklahoma expenditures go to administration and not the classroom. Yet we hear no word about the prospect of tying the number of school districts or administrative costs to a regional average thereby enhancing efficiency and reducing Oklahoma’s excessive inefficiencies.

Enhancing funding for an inefficient system and expecting a better result is of significant concern. Many in Oklahoma’s education community promised a resolution to the funding, support and school performance woes with the passage of H.B. 1017 in 1990. Then there was the funding mechanism housed within the tribal gaming compacts which would pour money into the common education system.

The most recent revenue stream deemed adequate to resolve finance distress was the Oklahoma “Education Lottery”. Although all these efforts have been put into place, the OEA still sued the state of Oklahoma for additional funding and lost their case in the Supreme Court. This, of course, led us to the H.O.P.E. Initiative Petition and SQ 744.

Every entity or agency receiving state funds should be extremely concerned with SQ 744. Funding for Transportation, Infrastructure, Municipalities, Counties, Higher Education, Career Technology, Health, Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Corrections, etc. would be in serious jeopardy. The only way to address this unavoidable consequence would be either massive agency funding cuts or significant tax increases on Oklahoma citizens and businesses.

Those interested in enhancing appropriate funding to Oklahoma’s common education system, which we all should be, should focus on achieving efficiencies which will, in turn, accomplish this important goal.
What Is Economics? Why Is It Important?
Sue Lynn Sasser, PhD, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond

Walk into almost any classroom, ask students about economics, and you will get a variety of answers. Most will tell you it is about money.

But does that really explain the importance of economics?

The answer is “no”. Money is actually a very small part of economics and, while important, it doesn’t explain the reason that our youth need to learn about economics.

Economics is about allocating scarce resources, both public and private. It teaches students the importance of weighing expected costs and benefits to improve their capacity to make good choices. Making good choices about scarce resources allows business, individuals and governments to provide the goods and services needed to survive and prosper. Using resources wisely is the key to maintaining a productive society and promoting economic growth and development for generations to come. It provides the structure for considering the impact of choices today and tomorrow. Making decisions without considering both the immediate and long-term consequences can have undesirable outcomes for society that are hard to overcome.

The Oklahoma Council on Economic Education has been promoting economic and financial literacy for all Oklahomans for 55 years. Affiliated with the national organization, Council for Economic Education, OCEE provides training and materials to classroom teachers to help them integrate economic reasoning and economic concepts into their course curriculum. The Council believes that every child benefits from learning economics, personal finance and entrepreneurship. And what is good for our children is good for our State.

Currently, 17 states require an economics course for high school graduation, but Oklahoma is not among them. Consequently, the majority of our students do not receive the essential real-life economic skills they need to become knowledgeable consumers, prudent savers and investors, and productive members of the workforce unless it is integrated into another subject area. That is why OCEE works to help teachers incorporate free enterprise education into various disciplines.

In addition, thanks to HB 1476: Oklahoma’s Passport to Financial Literacy, the state now has a mandate requiring all students graduating from one of its public schools to successfully complete 14 specific areas of content in personal finance, as of 2014. OCEE is designated in that legislation to assist the Oklahoma State Department of Education in implementing the new mandate and to provide teacher training for all teachers involved in teaching the course content. OCEE also played a key role in establishing the state standards for personal financial literacy, ensuring that economic reasoning is a strong component of the new requirements.

Economics lays a foundation for students to learn precise, systematic, analytical skills and provides a framework for making choices that impact everyone’s personal lives and personal finances as well as government, businesses, communities and others. Teaching students how to determine profits or how to incorporate new technologies or expand employment gives them a better understanding of how business operates. Teaching them the impact of consumer credit and credit cards allows them to make informed choices about what to purchase, how to purchase it, and how to control their spending behaviors. Teaching students about monetary and fiscal policy encourages them to understand the role of taxes and the impact of inflation and unemployment.

Integrating economic concepts into the social studies provides a framework for better appreciating historic events such as the Civil War and the demise of the Soviet Union, and gives perspective to geography.
and its role in the growth and movement of populations. Integrating economic concepts into math makes it come alive with real life examples of interest rates, saving and investing, the cost of production and business profits. Integrating economics into the sciences provides a foundation for making choices about energy, conservation and the environment.

Using economic reasoning helps students examine problems and decisions from a broader point of view, not just from their own limited experiences or personal views. Most importantly, it expands their breadth of knowledge to solve complex issues from yesterday or today. And, it prepares them for building a better tomorrow for themselves and their families.

Learning basic economics provides a framework to predict the costs and benefits of choices that are essential in a market-based economy built on democratic principles. An economically literate society allows consumers and citizens to maintain economic and political freedoms that are the foundation of a market-based system. As young people become voters, their participation in the political process influences the decisions of elected officials and public policy in general. Their political power was shown in the last Presidential election, giving them a significant role in setting the economic future of the United States. Without a grasp of basic economic concepts, voters today and tomorrow have limited ability to understand complex issues or find workable solutions to intricate problems.

Economics also impacts students’ personal lives. The current economic crisis and the subsequent confidence gap has its roots in a lack of knowledge about basic economic principles. Being able to make informed choices about mortgages, insurance, investments and other financial matters would have diminished the number of people easily swayed to overspend on housing, participate in fraudulent schemes, or be sucked into high risk lending practices.

While education may not prevent future problems, it does allow individuals to gain greater access to information, improves their chances of making good decisions and improves their job satisfaction.

Engaging students in economics introduces them to the fundamentals of owning and operating a business. They learn the value of ethical business behavior, the legal types of business organizations, how prices are set, and the value of investing in human capital. Because most start-up businesses and the expansion of many small businesses are financed with personal credit cards and lines of credit, learning basic money management skills increases the importance of a comprehensive program in economic education.

Economic education can start early in a child’s life. Youngsters can quickly learn that their choices have positive – and not so positive— outcomes. Helping them be aware of their choices and the outcomes teaches them to consider the expected costs of a decision along with the expected benefits. It also helps them understand that no one can have everything because people have unlimited wants with limited resources. Emphasizing the economic concepts in children’s books involves them in learning personal responsibility, delayed gratification, and other character-based traits.

Helping students learn the fundamentals of economic reasoning and personal finance can have a boost for individuals and business alike. For example, some of the potential costs of a financially stressed workforce include increased absenteeism, turnover, theft and embezzlement, potential for accidents, worker’s compensation claims, and violence. Research shows that financial stress impacts all income groups and decreases overall productivity. Financially stressed
employees will spend an average of 20 hours of work time per month dealing with their personal financial affairs, and one of every four workers reportedly has some level of financial stress. Financial security ranks as the number one concern for young professionals. At the same time, nearly 80 percent of consumers say they could do a better job planning and saving for retirement and 50% are emotionally distressed about retirement, expressing uncertainty, worry or fear of making a mistake.

Oklahoma needs and deserves an educated, informed population that can participate in the challenges ahead. Oklahoma needs students who are empowered through economic and financial literacy to make informed and responsible choices throughout their lives as consumers, savers, investors, workers, citizens, and participants in our global economy. In Oklahoma, economic education IS the key to future growth and development. And, OCEE is the key to provide well-prepared teachers to help our students learn.

Sue Lynn Sasser is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economic and International Business at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. She is also Executive Director of the Oklahoma Council on Economic Education, housed on the UCO campus.

Footnotes


Do You Know About “Middle College”?
Carol Brogan, Principal, Pathways Middle College High School, Oklahoma City Public Schools

Introduction
When people hear the term “middle college” they have numerous questions. Some of those questions include: 1) What is middle college; 2) Where did middle college start; 3) How is middle college different from traditional schools; 4) What are its design principles; and 5) How successful is the middle college in helping students achieve their goals? The best way is to answer each of the first four questions separately and then to highlight the successes of Pathways Middle College High School in Oklahoma City.

What Is Middle College?
Middle College is a high school located on a college campus. Its focus is on identifying students who are most likely to do well in a college setting and who have a real desire to attend college. A middle college combines the best of high school and college with an emphasis on learning, as opposed to teaching, to enhance the educational experience. The environment is small with a strong relationship between students and staff that enhances the learning taking place within the school.

Where Did Middle College Start?
The first Middle College High School started at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, New York in 1974. The mission of the school is to provide a seamless secondary/post-secondary educational continuum, use innovative curricula, and create a small nurturing environment on a college campus. The intended outcomes are: to decrease the high school dropout rate and increase the college-going and completion rate.

How Is Middle College Different?
The location of the middle college on a college campus symbolically signals to under-served students that a college education is possible and the next natural, logical step in their lives. Students in the middle college are with college students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds who also had to overcome obstacles to a college education. Financially, both institutions profit from the cost effective sharing of resources and a reduction in college level remediation courses. The visionary cadre of faculty and administrators of the Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College have seen a decreased dropout rate, increased attendance and course pass rates, increased graduation rates (up to 80%) and increased college-going rates (more than 85%).

Additionally, students at a middle college demonstrate more mature behavior when they are around their peers. The presence and influence of academically serious adults helps to increase student self-control.

What Are Its Design Principles?
In 1993, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, an informal network of Middle Colleges coalesced and became the Middle College National Consortium. The Consortium is a professional development organization for secondary and post-secondary educators. The Consortium provides ongoing technical assistance and support to both new and established middle colleges. The Middle College National Consortium developed a set of educational reforms called Design Principles to assist middle colleges in helping students meet high academic standards. The Design Principles include: 1) Power of the Site; 2) Teaching and Learning; 3) Student Assessment; 4) Student Support; 5) Democratic School Governance; and 6) Professional Development. Each of these design principles begins with the basics for starting any middle college and ramp up to a mature implementation level for each principle. The Design Principles recognize the importance of and support the efforts for each of these areas.

Some evidence of mature implementation includes: the school and all of its students are located on a college campus; partnerships are formed with community members and businesses that can contribute to student achievement; curricula
emphasize literacy, numeracy, communication, analysis and application in all disciplines; student assessment is continuous, on-going and interwoven with classroom activities; all adults see themselves as counselors and mentors; shared decision-making supports the intellectual quality of instruction and strengthens the professional community of the school; and the staff participates in on-going, embedded professional development that focuses on student success and provides training for the unfamiliar roles that they play as counselors/mentors and as decision-makers.

**How Successful Are They?**

Perhaps the best way to determine if middle college is successful in helping students achieve their goals is to look at Pathways Middle College High School in Oklahoma City.

Pathways Middle College High School is located on the campus of Oklahoma City Community College. It is a partnership between Oklahoma City Public Schools and Oklahoma City Community College.

Pathways opened its doors in January 2001 with 15 eighth graders from south Oklahoma City middle schools. The school was initially opened to offer an additional educational choice to the students in south Oklahoma City middle and high schools. In the beginning the school had a teaching principal and one other fulltime faculty member.

In August 2001, the school added ninth grade to the site, two fulltime teachers and a fulltime principal. The addition of grades, students and staff continued until the first senior class graduated in May 2005.

Since Pathways Middle College High School accepts students only after an application and interview process, the number of students who knew about the school and its opportunities was small. In the fall of August 2002, Pathways started to accept students from any Oklahoma City middle or high school that had a strong desire and the determination to graduate high school and attend college. Through this recruitment effort, Pathways grew to approximately 60 students. Today, Pathways has approximately 80-90 students per year in grades 8-12.

The administration and staff of Pathways Middle College High School completely embrace the middle college concept of college enrollment for bright, but, under-served high school students. With this goal in mind, they understand the need for development of curricula, assessments and on-going projects for students to demonstrate their ability in the areas of literacy, numeracy, communication, analysis and application of material.

The Pathways staff recognizes the social-emotional needs of the students. They are willing and enthusiastic mentors for the students. The staff believes that relationships with their students have to be built and sustained in order for them to really enhance their students’ learning. Students understand that their teachers insist that they challenge themselves academically in order for them to really enhance their students’ learning. Students understand that their teachers insist that they challenge themselves academically in order for them to really enhance their students’ learning.

The mission of Pathways Middle College High School is to prepare students to take college courses when they become eligible to do so. This preparation begins as early as eighth grade with enhancement classes in mathematics and English and continues through their senior year.

Pathways students must meet the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education requirements for concurrent enrollment in order to take college courses with other college students. In addition, students must maintain at least a “C” average on their college transcript to remain in good standing with the college.

The Pathways staff and parents recognize the importance of community involvement. This community involvement takes the form of thirty-two hours of volunteer service for each year that a student is enrolled at Pathways. Students must complete all of their volunteer service as part of their graduation requirement.
The College Board, a not-for-profit membership organization composed of more than 5,400 colleges, universities, and other educational entities, reports that the tuition prices at many universities continue to outpace inflation (see chart below; 5.6% inflation in 2008). As costs for high education have soared, so have average debt loads per student – up 18 percent since 2000 (calculation uses 2008 constant dollars). The average debt load among students at four-year colleges and universities is now approximately $23,000.

With funding sources drying up and increased financial pressures at home, students and parents are considering cheaper options for higher education. This, coupled with declining endowment contributions and poor endowment fund management at universities, has raised questions about the long-term viability of some private schools. (In October, Forbes ran a story about the feeble condition of America’s undercapitalized small, private colleges.

It reported on the Antioch University system’s decision to close its flagship institution, Antioch College (in Yellow Springs, Ohio - where Coretta Scott King graduated from), due to declining enrollment, declining faculty confidence, and an enormous long-term projected deficit. Earlier this month, the failed college’s alumni association and the Antioch University system board announced a deal that would make Antioch College independent from the University system that was unwilling to subsidize its rising costs.

More recently, Vanity Fair ran a story called “Rich Harvard, Poor Harvard” profiling the University’s financial crisis. Between 1990 and June, 30 2008, Harvard’s endowment grew from $4.8 billion to $36.9 billion. Their seemingly bullet-proof investment strategies facilitated increased financial aid packages, aggressive capital investments in state-of-the art research facilities, securing more property and real estate around the University campus, and expansion of country club-type amenities for students. Then the market crashed and its endowment, which the University relied heavily upon for operating costs, shrank by between 25 to 30%. The result: staggering multi-million deficits in many of the University’s colleges, faculty layoffs, and suspension of many services. The article paints a grim financial outlook of our nation’s oldest university.

With so many college towns relying on the stability of educational institutions that support areas businesses, provide amenities that enhance the community, and promote vitality – it is scary to think about the impacts shuttering colleges would have on local and regional economies.

To follow news and dialogue surrounding the potential higher education bubble, I recommend checking in on The New York Times “room for debate” section online. Posted by eanderson@marketstreetservices.com at 12:37:18 PM

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Higher Education in Oklahoma

Dr. Glen Johnson, Jr., Chancellor, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

Meet Chancellor Johnson

Dr. Glen D. Johnson Jr. is a long time member of the Oklahoma Academy and is the chief executive officer for the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. He leads a state system comprised of 25 state colleges and universities, 10 constituent agencies, one higher education center and independent colleges and universities coordinated with the state system.

He is an honors graduate of the University of Oklahoma, with an undergraduate degree in political science and a juris doctor degree from the OU College of Law. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa at OU and received the Letzeiser Award as one of OU’s outstanding seniors.

Dr. Johnson served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 1982 to 1996 and was Speaker of the House from 1990 to 1996. At the time of his election he was the youngest sitting Speaker in the United States.

BRIEF HISTORY OF OSRHE

On March 11, 1941, the voters of Oklahoma passed a constitutional amendment to create the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). OSRHE was charged with coordinating the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education (State System). Having a coordinating board helped eliminate waste in program and coursework duplication. At the time OSRHE was formed, Oklahoma had 38 public institutions of higher education and over time the number of institutions has dropped to 25. This is one example of eliminating duplicate programs.

Twenty five public colleges and universities in Oklahoma make up the State System. OSRHE is the coordinating board for the State System. The board is made up of nine persons appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Each member serves a nine year term and could be reappointed. The board delegates operational authority to the Chancellor.

CHALLENGES

Many challenges face higher education in Oklahoma including changing economic, demographic and political environments. These include older students and non-traditional students that may be seeking job skills or degree completion. Growing Hispanic populations have unique college-going characteristics.

The current global financial and economic crisis and it’s relation to student and family financial need and legislative budget issues also present hurdles to higher education. The changing political environment in Washington D.C. and at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City is also presenting new challenges for communicating about higher education’s role in the economy.

Other factors affecting higher education include changing technology, green technologies, energy efficiency, globalization, terrorism, workforce competencies, core competencies in the K-16 system.

The overarching challenge for Oklahoma higher education is reaching a higher level of educational attainment in the population. Significant research relates college degree attainment to greater economic output and improved quality of life for a state’s citizens.

A better educated population will improve per capita personal income, make us more competitive in a global, information based economy and reduce public expenditures on a variety of costly social ills ranging from crime to teen pregnancy to smoking.
Getting Ready for Work: Education & Workforce

OSRHE  
PUBLIC AGENDA

IMPROVING OUR FUTURE BY DEGREES
Finding consensus on important state issues is rare, yet virtually every major report or strategic planning document for the state of Oklahoma over the last several decades has identified educational excellence and economic development as two of the most pressing areas that need improvement. The 2009 Public Agenda for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education is predicated on the understanding that no entity can help Oklahoma reach those goals more quickly and more comprehensively than higher education.

HIGHER ED-HIGHER IMPACTS
An analysis recently conducted by Regional Economic Models Inc. indicates that for every $1 of state-appropriated funds spent on higher education in Oklahoma, an additional $5.15 is pumped into the state’s economy. Higher education indirectly and directly accounts for approximately 23 percent of the state’s economy.

The majority of our college graduates remain in the state, contributing significantly to the state’s economy and to opportunities for sustained growth. The latest State Regents’ Employment Outcomes Report shows that 92 percent of associate degree graduates and 89 percent of bachelor’s degree graduates who are Oklahoma residents remain in the state one year after graduation.

KEY OBJECTIVES
For Oklahoma to achieve educational excellence and enhance economic development, the State Regents have adopted key objectives that will allow our state to increase its educated workforce, increase the number of college graduates and better compete globally.

There are six key objectives:

1. Strengthen financial support for OK students
2. Improve student success & instructional quality
3. Increase access and quality of technologies to support agency programs and services
4. Utilize performance funding to enhance student success and academic quality
5. Broaden economic development activities
6. Efficiency and innovation

Objective
Strengthen financial support for OK students
Despite the significant investment of public resources, financial barriers to higher learning persist for many academically qualified low-income students. The State Regents and the Legislature have developed several programs that enable Oklahoma students to have financial access to, and choice of, postsecondary educational opportunities.

- **Oklahoma’s Promise**, a state scholarship program, is recognized by many as America’s best college access program and is considered a model that combines emphases on academic preparation and financial support for college. Since 2001, Oklahoma’s Promise has grown from just over 2,000 qualifying students to nearly 17,000 and continues to grow.

- **Cooperative alliances** are partnerships between 29 technology centers and 18 higher education institutions across the state. Students are provided with tuition waivers, although a small academic service fee is charged to cover the costs of services delivered by the college or university. Since the first agreement was formed in fall 2005, the number of credits earned has increased from approximately 7,000 to more than 39,000.

- **Concurrent enrollment** allows outstanding junior and senior high school students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. High school seniors are also eligible for a tuition waiver of up to six credit hours per semester for their courses at Oklahoma public colleges and universities. Since its inception in fall 2005, the program has served more than 15,000 students who have earned more than 105,000 hours of college credit before graduating from high school.
Objective
Improve student success & instructional quality
The State Regents continue to focus on student preparation to ensure a common message and expectation of how students must be academically prepared to succeed in college and compete in the workforce.

- The Oklahoma Educational Planning and Assessment System provides assessments of college readiness and helps teachers, students and families identify the need for academic improvements. EPAS serves nearly 500 school districts, including 48 private schools. More than 83,000 students in the eighth and 10th grades took EPAS assessments during the 2007-08 school year.

- GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federally funded program designed to better prepare middle and high school students for college through academic preparation programs, professional development activities for educators and college access information for students and parents. Since its inception, this program has impacted thousands of students, parents and educators through professional development and information on college preparation, financial aid and course work advisement.

- The Campus Access Challenge Grant Program is funded with more than $915,000 the State Regents received from the U.S. Department of Education to expand current initiatives aimed at increasing the number of students who complete their degrees. The CACGP is a two-year formula grant program based on poverty levels and provides grants to states to meet the needs of students and families from underrepresented populations.

- ReachHigher, Oklahoma’s Degree Completion Program, is designed for adults who have attended at least two years of college but didn’t complete a bachelor’s degree. Since its inception in March 2007, enrollment in the program has grown 638 percent. The ReachHigher program celebrated its first graduating class in fall 2008 with 15 students receiving Bachelor of Science degrees in organizational leadership.

Objective
Increase access and quality of technologies to support agency programs and services
The State Regents embrace the use of new technologies to deliver our academic product more effectively and efficiently.

- OneNet is Oklahoma’s telecommunications network for education, government and research and provides high-speed communications to approximately 70 percent of public K-12 schools as well as career technology centers; public colleges and universities; public libraries; local, tribal, state and federal governments; rural health care delivery systems; and programs engaged in research.

- Unitized Data System (UDS) collects student, course and faculty data from all Oklahoma higher education institutions providing a rich source of information for reporting and decision making since the early 1980s.

- Enhance enrollment management capacity
Enrollment management activities encompass student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes. The State Regents effectively administer and track programs that will result in more students enrolling at the institutions and attaining their educational objectives.

- OKcollegestart.org provides students, parents and high school counselors with a “one-stop shop” for college planning and preparation. Through this student information portal, students can create individual portfolios, access campus information, apply for federal and state financial aid, apply to many of our colleges and universities, and get their transcripts transferred to institutions. Approximately 54,000 user accounts have been created on OKcollegestart.org since its launch. There have been more than 9.6 million page views on the site since it launched in spring 2007, with an average of more than 14,000 per day. More than 20,000 college applications have been received through the site since launch, and approximately 14,000 students have applied online for...
Oklahoma’s Promise since the application became available in January 2006.

- The annual Enrollment Management Conference mobilizes institutional and statewide initiatives to support enrollment management; provides tools and support for enrollment management and the Brain Gain initiative; promotes higher education visibility; showcases institutions; and encourages support and provides interaction among and within institutions.

✓ Objective
Utilize performance funding to enhance student success and academic quality

Student achievement is important to the success of our higher education system and to the state as a whole. The State Regents have used the principles of excellence and accountability to create targeted initiatives and strategies designed to help students succeed in their postsecondary education.

- Brain Gain promotes the improvement of graduation rates, and the results are evident in the chart below. Performance funding rewards institutions that improve or reach peer targets for first-year retention, graduation and degrees conferred. Incentives are provided to institutions most in need of improvement to implement new projects.

✓ Objective
Broaden economic development activities
The role of higher education as a major driver of economic development is well established, and this role will increase as further changes in technology, globalization and demographics impact the state. To remain competitive in light of these changes, the State Regents have taken leadership roles in many programs to address the needs of the state.

- Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development brings together leaders from across a variety of private and public sector organizations to develop a strategy for accelerated economic growth and to provide direction to state administration.

- Grow Oklahoma engages public and private sector leaders across the state to participate in developing solutions for Oklahoma’s key workforce and economic development challenges.

- The Partnership Recognition Program is designed to highlight successful partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses and to further cultivate the higher learning environment through State Regents’ Economic Development Grants.

- The Shared Values of the State System Our efforts to achieve our six key objectives are strengthened by the shared values of our state system that emphasize accountability, responsiveness, collaboration and innovation.

✓ Objective
Efficiency and innovation

Declines in state revenue and spending, combined with the need to keep tuition and fees low, has created a renewed emphasis on efficiencies and innovation.

In 1994, the State Regents developed a process for reporting administrative costs in relation to institutional budgets. The underlying premise is that administrative costs should be held to a minimum and that a maximum amount of resources be directed to the primary academic and main educational mission and functions of a campus. Our institutions have historically been well below the accepted limits. In addition, the State Regents have implemented systemwide efficiencies and cost-saving initiatives that have produced a total annual savings of $46.2 million. These initiatives include energy-saving programs through retrofit projects, increased use of distance-learning technologies and alternative energy sources.
RESPONSIVENESS
The State Regents continue to provide a wide range of programs and services in response to the changing needs of the citizens, businesses and industries of Oklahoma.

- Through the **Minority Teacher Recruitment Center** created in 1990, the State Regents recruit, retain and place minority teachers in the public schools of Oklahoma. MTRC also administers the Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program (TSEIP), which reimburses eligible student loan expenses to individuals who graduate from an Oklahoma accredited teacher education program, receive a teaching certification in math or science, and agree to teach in an Oklahoma public secondary school for at least five years.

- The **Campus Life and Safety and Security (CLASS)** Task Force was created in 2007 by Gov. Brad Henry following the deadly shootings at Virginia Tech. On Feb. 12, 2008, at the request of the task force, Henry extended the activities of the task force for the purpose of implementing the recommendations of its final report and continuing to review and evaluate safety and security at higher education and career technology campuses and make recommendations for modifications as needed.

- In 2006, the **Nursing and Health Care Initiative** was developed to address the dramatic health care worker shortage. This initiative is expected to annually produce an additional 300 registered nurses and 130 allied health professionals in the fields of radiology technology, respiratory care technology and pharmacology. Additionally, 15 master’s-level nursing faculty members will be added.

COLLABORATION
Partnering with numerous organizations, Oklahoma’s public colleges and universities are increasingly connecting with their communities, impacting young people, adults and community leaders to develop a more successful future for our state.

- **Oklahoma Campus Compact** provides leadership, networking and technical assistance to campuses and communities to increase the number of college faculty, staff and students involved in the community. OkCC, the only Campus Compact program operated by a state system, represents 33 public and private institutions in Oklahoma.

- **Scholars for Excellence in Child Care** is a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services to increase the quality of child care by enhancing the knowledge and professionalism of the individuals who work in child care.

- **Career Readiness Certificates** are being promoted in conjunction with the Department of Commerce. ACT WorkKeys assessments are directly matched to the level of skills needed to perform specific jobs. WorkKeys are being used by community colleges in partnership with Tinker Air Force Base to match graduates with employment opportunities at Tinker.

ACCOUNTABILITY
Our state system takes the responsibility and initiative to explain costs, student outcomes, and our institutions’ impact on the state and its citizens.

- **Key Indicators of Accountability (KIA)** is the State Regents’ biennial report card that tracks the progress of Oklahoma higher education in several key areas, including preparation of high school students, college attendance, benefits of higher education, affordability, degree completion and economic development.

- The **State Regents’ Web site**, okhighered.org, provides potential students, parents, the public and policymakers with accessible, transparent information about Oklahoma higher education. Information about costs and student outcomes, data and reports collected and produced by the state system, and agendas and minutes from public meetings can be found on the site.

- The **State Regents Annual Report** contains information about the State Regents’ strategic direction, academics, financial aid and student preparation programs.
EDUCATION
REMEDIATION
Little Change in Oklahoma

Overall
Of the fall 2005 first-time freshmen (18,108), 36.7 percent (6,646) enrolled in one or more remedial courses in science, English, mathematics, or reading. As reported in the Annual Student Remediation Report (February, 2007), 37.8 percent of all first-time freshmen enrolled in remediation includes the Oklahoma high school graduates. The unduplicated remediation total during the last ten years (below) has changed little since first being reported for fall 1996 first-time freshman. Fall 2005 unduplicated remediation is up of six tenths of a percentage point from the previous year. This marks the second consecutive year rates have increased.

Mathematics
Mathematics remediation continues to remain the highest rate of all subject areas with 31.8 percent of all first-time freshmen in the fall of 2005 taking a remedial mathematics course. Although rates have been consistent, the level of mathematics remediation is a concern.

English
The next highest remediation rate was 17.2 percent in English. This is the fifth consecutive year English remediation has increased. English remediation is up nine tenths of a point from the previous year and 4.7 percent higher than the 12.5 percent reported in 2000. This in part may be explained by the increased number of minorities enrolled in higher education. Another factor to consider might be the increase in the number of students from a lower socioeconomic status.

Other
Remediation rates for the remaining subject areas are 4.1 percent for reading, down from the previous year of 5.2 percent and 1.5 percent for science, also down from 2.1 percent the previous year. It is important to note that these figures will not sum to the state total remediation rate because some students may have taken more than one remedial course, but are counted only once in the state total.

Source: Remediation Rates for 2005 Oklahoma High School Graduates as Fall 2005 Freshmen In Oklahoma Public Higher Education by County
## State of Oklahoma College Remediation Rates, by County

**Remediation Rates for 2005 Oklahoma High School Graduates as Fall 2005 Freshmen In Oklahoma Public Higher Education by County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
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Exposing the Math Myth

A common argument against raising math course taking requirements for all students is that it will cause more students to drop out of high school. This argument fails to take into account the fact that most students who drop out for academic reasons do so not because they are being “too challenged,” but rather because they are not being challenged enough. It is important to raise the rigor and relevance of mathematics courses to keep students engaged and on track to graduation and postsecondary success.

Students do not feel motivated, particularly when enrolled in low-level courses

In a survey of high school dropouts, 69 percent say they were not motivated or inspired to work hard and two-thirds report that they would have worked harder if more was demanded of them (such as higher academic standards or more studying and homework). In total, 70% were confident they could have graduated if they had tried. ¹

More dropouts report leaving high school because their classes weren’t interesting than because they were actually failing those classes. In fact, 90% said they had passing grades when they dropped out. ²

One-fifth of high school seniors explicitly say they wish their schools had done a better job preparing them in mathematics. ³

Students are willing to work harder – but only if they are challenged.

Nine out of ten high school students say that if their high schools set higher academic standards and raised expectations, they would work harder. This is critical considering only 31% of students say that the expectations are “high” and that they are “significantly challenged.” ⁴

When asked about what would improve their schools, 91% of high school students reported that providing opportunities to take more challenging courses would be an improvement. Another 75% said requiring four years of math, including Algebra II, and courses in biology, chemistry and physics would also lead to improvement. ⁵

Students enrolled in a college-prep curriculum demonstrate higher achievement gains than those enrolled in low-level courses—including students in the lowest performance quartiles. Students who scored in the lowest quartile in 8th grade math and took a college-prep curriculum demonstrated gains of 28 points through 12th grade, compared to students in a general track, who only showed gains of 21 points from 8th to 12th grade on average. ⁶

More rigorous graduation requirements - including more higher-level math courses – are not tied to higher drop out rates

Rather than low-level math helping to raise graduation rates, for every two additional math courses offered at their high schools below the level of algebra, students experienced more than a 28% increase in their odds of dropping out, while students who attended high schools that offered calculus exhibited a 56 decrease in their odds of dropping out. According to the studies’ authors, “This finding flies in the face of those who say that high schools must offer a large number of undemanding courses to keep uncommitted students in school.” ⁷
A study examining state graduation requirement policies to determine whether states that require students to complete more academic courses have higher dropout rates found that tougher graduation requirements have no statistically significant impact overall, and a slight negative impact for high-poverty students—meaning that more rigorous course requirements actually lowered the drop out rate for disadvantaged students by about 2%.  

As states and districts raise the rigor of their high school graduation requirements, they must also ensure students receive the necessary preparation and support well before they enter high school. 45% of dropouts say they started high school poorly prepared by their earlier schooling. Many of these students likely fell behind in elementary and middle school and had difficulty making up the necessary ground.  

ENDNOTES


2 ibid


4 ibid

5 ibid


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Mathematics

College Remediation Rates

Counties listed are more than one standard deviation from state average: plus Tulsa and Oklahoma counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Remediation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequoyah</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latimer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskogee</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nowata</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okmulgee</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okfuskee</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillman</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overall College Remediation Rates

Counties listed are more than one standard deviation from state average: plus Tulsa and Oklahoma counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimarron</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Mills</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodward</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woods</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequoyah</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atoka</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latimer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskogee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okmulgee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowata</td>
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<td>Tillman</td>
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<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
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### Science College Remediation Rates

Counties listed are more than one standard deviation from state average: plus Tulsa and Oklahoma counties

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<tr>
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<th>Rate</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottawatomie</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leflore</td>
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</tr>
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<td>McClain</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskogee</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingfisher</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodward</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okfuskee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choctaw</td>
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<td>Delaware</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atoka</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
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</table>

No data received from 31 counties

---

### English College Remediation Rates

Counties listed are more than one standard deviation from state average: plus Tulsa and Oklahoma counties

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontotoc</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ellis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Okfuskee</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequoyah</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillman</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Remediation Rates for 2005 Oklahoma High School Graduates as Fall 2005 Freshmen in Oklahoma Public Higher Education by County. Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education February 2007*

### Reading College Remediation Rates

Counties listed are more than one standard deviation from state average: plus Tulsa and Oklahoma counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Remediation Rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Pittsburg</td>
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<td>Ottawa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leflore</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adair</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClain</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woods</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garfield</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontotoc</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Mills</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custer</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiowa</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowata</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillman</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmon</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Remediation Rates for 2005 Oklahoma High School Graduates as Fall 2005 Freshmen in Oklahoma Public Higher Education by County. Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education February 2007*
EDUCATION
AND LITERACY
How About 100%
Literacy in Oklahoma & the Nation
Martha Gregory, Research Wizard, Tulsa City-County Library System, Tulsa

The most recent national literacy assessment by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was completed in 2003. Oklahoma was fortunate to be included among a handful of states in a part of this study that looked at literacy levels compared against those of the nation. Highlights from this State Assessment of Adult Literacy (SAAL) show that Oklahoma is not significantly different from the nation with a few exceptions which are worth noting.

What the Assessment Measures
The assessment defines types of literacy and measures proficiency levels within them. There are three types of literacy:

- **prose (text)**
- **document (forms)**
- **quantitative (calculations).**

Prose covers general text; document includes forms, such as employment applications; and quantitative refers to calculations, such as might be found in a bill. The context for all three reflects what could be experienced in general living.

There are four levels of proficiency:
- **Below Basic**
- **Basic**
- **Intermediate**
- **Proficient**

Below Basic may be thought of as at a reading level of 3rd grade and below, with Basic as between 4th - 7th grade reading level.

The assessment study reports literacy scores and percentages of the population that fall within each of the four levels of proficiency, by type of literacy. This study is particularly useful because it relies upon skills assessment through the completion of tasks as opposed to self-reporting.

Oklahoma closely mirrors the nation for the percentage of its population in the Basic and Below Basic levels across all three types of literacy. Twelve percent of Oklahoma’s population falls within Basic, and 31% is in the Basic group, for a total of 43% at approximately 7th grade or lower reading level.

Oklahoma has a significantly lower percentage of its population at the Proficient level for both prose and quantitative literacy, compared to the nation. The state keeps pace with the nation in every category except that of the highest level of proficiency, where it falls behind.

Literacy & Education
More than 60% of both Oklahoma’s and the nation’s population that did not graduate from high school are at the Below Basic literacy level in the quantitative category.

Approximately 40% of Oklahoma’s population that did not graduate from high school are at Below Basic literacy in the prose category. This was significantly better than the nation, which had over 50% of its population in that same grouping. Oklahomans without a complete high school education are doing better than the nation in prose literacy.

Oklahomans with a college degree or a graduate degree are significantly behind the nation in their representation at the Proficient level for both prose and quantitative proficiency. Again, Oklahoma lags in the excellence category.

Literacy and Employment
It is not surprising that literacy and employment track each other. However, it may be unexpected that Oklahoma mirrors the nation so closely in this relationship.

Oklahomans and those in the nation who are employed, either full or part-time, have significantly higher literacy scores than those not in the labor force.

More than half of those in Oklahoma and in the nation with Below Basic proficiency were not in the labor force.
Most Oklahomans and people nationwide who were at the Proficient level were employed full time.

**What Do The Numbers Mean?**
The Oklahoma State Assessment of Adult Literacy tells us that we are not lagging behind the rest of the nation. On the other hand, the record for the nation is abysmal and we are for the most part in step. The numbers point to plenty of room for improvement.

**HEADLINES**

- Average Literacy of Whites in Oklahoma **Lower** Than Literacy of Whites in the Nation

- Adult Literacy in Oklahoma **Similar** to Adult Literacy in the Nation

- Average Prose and Document Literacy of Men and Women in Oklahoma **Similar** to the Nation

- Average Prose and Document Literacy **Lowest** in Oklahoma and the Nation for the Oldest Adults

- Average Literacy of Adults Who Spoke Only English Before Starting School **Lower** in Oklahoma Than in the Nation

- Average Literacy by Educational Attainment **Similar** in Oklahoma and the Nation

- Average Literacy in Oklahoma **Highest** for Adults Employed Full or Part Time

*Source, including figures and tables below:*  
THE BOOK STORE

Four reviews of three books
“The Global Achievement Gap”
by Tony Wagner and reviewed by Jennifer Hays-Grudo, PhD, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa

Editor Introduction:
This book was one of three selected by the Research Committee for review. Subsequently, the book/author has been referenced by several contributors to this book (Warner, Garrett, and Cate et al and Hollar). Citation is a compliment!

Meet Dr. Jennifer Hays-Grudo
Jennifer Hays-Grudo, Ph.D. is the Kaiser Chair in Community Medicine at the University of Oklahoma’s School of Community Medicine in Tulsa. Jennifer joined OU-Tulsa in 2008 to conduct research on community-based health promotion and disease prevention. From 2005 to 2008, she was a professor of Internal Medicine at Texas A&M College of Medicine at Scott & White Health Care System, where she retains an adjunct appointment and an active research project. From 1985 to 2005, she was on the faculty at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where she was also the Director of the Center for Women’s Health, and the Senior Director of Health Promotion.

While at Baylor, she led a number of NIH-funded studies on individual and community-based health-related behavior change. She was a Principal Investigator of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI), which involved more than 160,000 women and has had a major impact on clinical practice and our knowledge of healthy aging in women.

The Book
Education expert Tony Wagner has conducted scores of interviews with business leaders and observed hundreds of classes in some of the nation’s most highly regarded public schools. He discovered a profound disconnect between what potential employers are looking for in young people today (critical thinking skills, creativity, and effective communication) and what our schools are providing (passive learning environments and uninspired lesson plans that focus on test preparation and reward memorization).

Review
In “The Global Achievement Gap” author and educator Tony Wagner lays out a simple and compelling case for the wholesale restructuring of secondary education in America. He argues that our current educational system is obsolete and inadequate to prepare students for the global information-based economy.

Based on the results of his own interviews with business global leaders throughout the world, by observations in countless classrooms, and by the test results of U.S. students and their European and Asian counterparts, he paints a dismal picture of America’s ability to compete in the current and future global economy.

Just at the point when the reader is ready to give up all hope and begin looking for work in Singapore (whose educational reform movement’s motto is “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation”), Wagner provides three compelling examples of how some of our educators are getting it right, producing high school graduates with the thinking habits and performance skills needed for success as college students, as 21st century workers, and as citizens.

Wagner begins the book by noting three fundamental transformations that have profound implications for the way we teach, test, and motivate students: 1) the shift from an industrial economy to a “knowledge economy;” 2) the shift from information limited in amount and availability to information characterized by flux and glut; and 3) the increasing impact of media and technology on how young people interact with the world and each other.

Put simply, Wagner asserts that “the future of our economy, the strength of our democracy, and perhaps even the health of the plant’s ecosystems depend on educating future generations” (p. xxviii) in ways that reflect these realities and differ dramatically from current schooling methods.
Three sources of data inform his conclusions.

First are the interviews Wagner conducted with business leaders in the U.S. and elsewhere, undertaken to identify the skills most necessary, and often most lacking, in the current crop of high school and college graduates when they enter the workforce.

Second are the startling results of observations made during “learning walks” in high school classrooms throughout the U.S.

Finally, he presents global data from both “standardized” (multiple choice) tests evaluating content material and from “performance assessments” of reasoning, problem-solving and communication skills. From his interviews, Wagner posits seven “survival skills” that all high school graduates should possess:

1) Critical thinking and problem-solving (creating and analytic reasoning)
2) Collaboration across networks and leading by influence (interpersonal skills)
3) Ability and adaptability (reflecting the rapid changes in science and technology)
4) Initiative and entrepreneurialism (to be globally competitive)
5) Effective oral and written communication (using a variety of technologies)
6) Accessing and analyzing information
7) Curiosity and imagination (incorporating motivation for ongoing learning).

Unfortunately, few classrooms either directly or indirectly accomplish the development of these skills. Observations made from more than 100 learning walks in dozens of classrooms across the U.S., primarily in schools that are ranked among the best in their states, reveal an increased emphasis on “teaching to the tests” since passage of No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002.

In classroom after classroom, the purpose of nearly every lesson was to memorize factual content. Students are not being taught how to think. These data are supplemented with published studies of observations from elementary schools documenting a similar pattern.

“Increasingly, there is only one curriculum in American public schools today: test-prep.” (p. 71).

The thoughtful reader might wonder what is wrong with a curriculum designed to teach what will be tested. The problem obviously lies in the content of the test. This is where Wagner makes his most convincing point. Since 2000, students in Europe and Asia are not only assessed on their reading, mathematical and scientific literacy (on which they routinely outperform American students), but are also being evaluated on “cross-curricular competencies,” that is, real-world problems that evaluate the first five of the seven so-called survival skills.

How do U.S. students compare with other developed countries on this test? Badly: Americans ranked 28th, just after the Russian Federation. As Wagner notes, there are a number of trouble consequences of teaching students to memorize and regurgitate facts rather than to think and learn. First is the economic issue. If you were the owner of a multinational corporation needing to hire a workforce that is creative, innovative and capable problem-solving, you will consider many other locations before the U.S.

Here is an even more chilling scenario: imagine you are on trial for a crime you didn’t commit. How confident are you that today’s high school graduate can evaluate evidence, analyze an argument, work with others to distinguish fact from opinion, recognize bias, and articulate their thoughts?

“He (Wagner) discovered a profound disconnect between what potential employers are looking for in young people today (critical thinking skills, creativity, and effective communication) and what our schools are providing”.

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Getting Ready for Work: Education & Workforce - 127
Just as one is beginning to despair about the current state of education and the difficulties involved in making over a system characterized by entrenched traditions, established interests and inadequate funding, Wagner describes three extraordinary schools (several of which serve primarily poor and minority students) that have reinvented education and are yielding impressive student outcomes. The characteristics that appear to be the source of their remarkable results include:

- Curricula focused on the development of core competencies (for example, the ability to reason and demonstrate mastery through both oral and written presentation) rather than the memorization of factual content
- High levels of student motivation, fueled by mentoring relationships with adults in and out of school, and by opportunities for student-initiated and hands-on projects.
- School and teacher accountability based on the quality of students’ work in school and in the real world (through internships and college) rather than on standardized test performance.
- Teacher development with teachers working in interdisciplinary teams, seeking and providing feedback to each other, and having more planning and professional development time built into their schedules.

Troubling national educational statistics and economic indicators make it difficult to dispute the urgent and serious need to transform American classrooms.

Oklahoma’s educational statistics provide even more cause for concern. Wagner’s prescription for school reform is simple but not easy: provide students the opportunities to learn the thinking and performance skills required to be productive and responsible citizens and workers in a complex, competitive world; provide teachers the ongoing training and mentoring to be their guides; and create the political will to support these transformations in the face of inevitable opposition.

“The Global Achievement Gap” is an excellent starting point for the serious conversations at our Town Hall. Such conversations must precede thoughtful, constructive school reform.
Meet Craig Knutson
Craig Knutson is a senior Academy Board member and a long time policy researcher for the Academy’s conferences and Town Halls. He currently serves as the Chief of Staff at the Oklahoma Insurance Department.

Craig graduated from the University of Oklahoma with degrees in political science and regional planning. He has worked as an economist in several organizations over the past two decades.

He serves on the Board of Governors of the Communities Foundation of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Council of Economic Education, the Norman Area Land Conservancy, and the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals. He is a graduate of Leadership OKC, Oklahoma League and the Philip Crosby Quality College.

Craig received the Oklahoma Academy’s Key Contributor Award for 2006. He currently serves as the volunteer research co-coordinator for the Oklahoma Academy’s Town Hall research efforts.

The Book
Who is smarter, Asians or Westerners? Are there genetic explanations for group differences in test scores? How can parents work to improve their child’s intelligence? Can schools eliminate the social class and racial gaps in academic achievement?

The book argues that intellect is not primarily genetically determined but is principally influenced by societal factors.

There is a need to revamp our entire approach to education, because malleable, controllable factors like schools and social environment, and not hard-wired genetic codes, hold the keys to the future of intellectual advancement.

Let Me Begin ...
Let me begin this review by saying I have never read a book – even through six years of college – that has its first appendix titled “Informal Definitions of Statistical Terms.” In addition to the weighty statistical notations throughout the book, the footnotes, that ran form p. 237 through 283, ensure the reader that the content and findings have been well-researched and documented. This gave at least me a great deal of confidence that the assertions made were empirically-based.

There are a number of citations I could start with but the following best summarizes the dilemma we face in the pre-K through 12 educational system:

“Intellectual capital is the result of stimulation and support for exploration and achievement in the home, the neighborhood, and the schools. To think that this can be changed by mandate – operating only through the schools – is preposterous.”

Intellectual stimulation and high expectations must “surround” the student as often as possible, reinforcing the hypothesis that intelligence is less a function of heritability than ones surrounding environment.

Nisbett spends a great deal of time looking at whether schools can provide new procedures and approve their ability to make kids smarter and more academically accomplished. To summarize the relatively exhaustive statistical findings: “money per se does not make as great deal of difference; vouchers and charter schools have not produced substantially better academic achievement than regular public schools.”

However, on the topic of charter schools, he does praise the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) as having achieved significant educational gains: “After just
one year at a KIPP school, disadvantaged and largely minority students were scoring closer to or above the national average on standardized tests.” The test results for 5th graders in California showed startling improvements in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. The model is both effective and proven to improve academic achievement, and the post secondary successes (graduation rates and the quality of colleges attended) that KIPP graduates achieve are remarkable.

Do Teachers Matter?
On the topic of do “Teachers Matter,” the answers are “yes” and “no.”

Yes: On the “yes” side: He found that teacher “experience matters,” and the “quality of the first grade experience” on subsequent academic achievement is also significant. He also found that “teacher quality matters a lot,” unfortunately, “our current systems are not good at rewarding the best teachers and weeding out the worst ones.” Other findings included:

Salary incentives (1-3% of base salary) were positively associated with reduced drop out rates and improved student scores; smaller class sizes are important only at the lower levels and the results were bigger for poorer and minority students than for middle class and white children; “extremely promising evidence shows computerized instruction to be very effective, especially for mathematics and science training;” and finally the research clearly showed that cooperative learning, where students work together toward common educational goals, is positively correlated to improved achievement.

No: On the “no” side, Nisbett found that there was little evidence that certification and higher degrees are associated with better teaching, and “beyond the first year or so of teaching, neither is seniority.” Finally, practical training (internships, being mentored) trumps additional classes in educational theory.

How About Race? Cultures?
The book tackles the issue of race (black vs. white achievement) as well as cultures that clearly set the academic achievement bar (Asians and Jews) for all of us. Both cultures have a strong family structure, emphasis on educational achievement and a hard work ethic to thank for their lofty educational attainment levels. The research shows, especially among the Asian culture, that “achievement for the family seems to be a greater goal to success than achievement for the self.” Among the Asian culture, two things really struck me: “persistence in the face of failure is very much a part of the Asian tradition of self-improvement” and “the emphasis on academic achievement has been present for more than two thousand years.” European Americans can either learn from these traits or the achievement advantage for Asians will continue to grow.

Early Childhood
I completed this book just prior to attending the Oklahoma Economic Summit on Early Childhood Investment, held in Oklahoma City July 27th. All three of the keynote speakers at that event, including Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr. James Heckman, touted the effectiveness of the Perry Preschool Program, the Abecedarian Program, and Educare. Ironically, of the seven Educare facilities in the US, two are in Oklahoma. I have written an article, summarizing the conference, elsewhere in this document.

Nisbett spent a significant amount of space describing the research results of these long running early childhood programs. In terms of special education classes avoided, crime and welfare costs avoided, and higher incomes for its participants, the payback is about 8:1, or a return of 17% PER YEAR. It should be noted that these programs realize these high returns where lower socio-economic status (SES) students dominate the enrollment. In a state like Oklahoma, where free and reduced lunch numbers are high, especially in our two major metropolitan areas (80% and higher), special emphasis ought to (and is beginning to) be placed on these kinds of curriculum.

What Is “Fading”?
The one concern about these highly successful programs is captured in the term he called “fading.” Nisbett cited rigorous studies where the IQs of low IQ children, born into lower SES households, can be greatly increased (up to 18 percentage points), if their
environment becomes sufficiently rich cognitively. Unfortunately, the studies also reveal that those gains can be lost, sometimes completely, if high quality environments are not maintained. He uses the analogy of human/children’s brains as a muscle, not clay. “Only if children’s brains are like clay would we expect them to remain in good shape years after they were formed.” The research/data suggests that the brain is like a muscle, and must be exposed to stimulating environments and activities to maintain good, consistent performance.

Family/Parents
Given the importance that family/parents can (and should play) in improving academic achievement, Nisbett shares some proven activities parents should do with their children that will improve their intelligence (improving the ability to problem solve and reason).

Try: talking with your child, using high level vocabulary; including your child in adult conversations; reading to your child; minimizing reprimands and maximizing comments that will encourage your child to explore their surrounding environment; minimizing stressful situations; praising children for their hard work, not for being intelligent; teaching them how to categorize and compare/contrast; and provide your child with intellectually stimulating after-school and summertime activities, especially the latter. All are suggested in large doses!!

In Closing ...
Nisbett closes with a reminder that there is much that we can do to increase the intelligence and academic achievement of ourselves and our children. As a society, intensive early childhood education for the poor and home visitation to teach parents to encourage intellectual development, produce huge immediate gains in IQ.

As parents, he cites specific biological (e.g., breastfeeding for newborns) and didactic (e.g., proven tutoring principles) actions that are evidence-based and effective. He concludes that “we can now shake off the yoke of hereditarianism in all of our thinking about intelligence. Believing that our intelligence is substantially under our control won’t make us smart by itself. But it’s a good start.”
“Intelligence And How To Get It”  
by Richard Nisbett and reviewed by Whitney Howland, Washington University (St. Louis)

Meet Whitney Howland  
Ms. Howland is a senior student at Washington University in St. Louis. She is a Tulsa native and a graduate of both Monte Cassino and Holland Hall schools in Tulsa; and studied at Mount Holyoke College in her freshman year of college. At Mount Holyoke, Whitney was named an Academic All-American in field hockey.

Richard Nisbett demonstrates, in his “Intelligence and How to Get It”, that the ideas found in hereditarianism do not hold. Environment, he argues, determines not only the intelligence of an individual but also that individual’s willingness to learn. Aside from the fact that hereditarianism seems to close for comfort to elitism, which goes completely against the grain of the American dream of social upward mobility, Nisbett shows that effective education facilitates increased IQ scores.

He explains that different components of culture from different social groupings such as socio-economic status and race/ethnicity plays a significant role in the intelligence of a child and the high education obtained.

In effect, he tells the reader that the best way to help a student is by forming their environment into one in which learning is encouraged. However, he does not pretend to say that all of our educational woes can and will be fixed.

He bluntly states that, unlike the education gap between Caucasians/Hispanics and Caucasians/African-Americans, the education gap between the upper classes of society and the lower classes will always exist because those in higher socio-economic classes will always have the means to ensure a good education for their children, and be able to provide better neighborhoods for their families.

What he explains and shows through statistical analyses and examples taken from economics and history is very logical. It just makes sense. One of his main arguments against hereditarianism is that children adopted, at a very young age, into middle class families from lower class families find their IQ scores go up accordingly. It makes sense because their environment is different and more conducive to learning so they do better in school and are encouraged to go as far as possible in school. Thinking of anything as being completely engrained in one’s genes is disheartening. It does not allow for someone to work for change or to hope for the better.

Not only does an “environment view” of intelligence help people to fix the educational problems arising because of different cultural habits but it also allows people to not take a defeatist attitude about their future. We as a society must try to create environments suitable for encouraging children to learn and discovering their possibilities through education. We must especially consider children in the lower-economic strata in this movement.

Although not a complete eye opener “Intelligence and How to Get It” helps to define the discussion for the next generations of people who care about education and the advancement of the intelligence of our workforce.
An Excerpt: “A Whole New Mind”  
by Daniel Pink with permission


The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind—computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. The people—artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers—will now reap society’s richest rewards and share its greatest joys.

This book describes a seismic—though as yet undetected—shift now under way in much of the advanced world. We are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear, computerlike capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities of what’s rising in its place, the Conceptual Age.

A Whole New Mind is for anyone who wants to survive and thrive in this emerging world—people uneasy in their careers of dissatisfied with their lives, entrepreneurs and business leaders eager to stay ahead of the next wave, parents who want to equip their children for the future, and the legions of emotionally astute and creatively adroit people whose distinctive abilities the Information Age has often overlooked and undervalued.

A change of such magnitude is complex. But the argument at the heart of this book is simple. For nearly a century, Western society in general, and American society in particular, has been dominated by a form of thinking and an approach to life that is narrowly reductive and deeply analytical. Ours has been the age of the “knowledge worker”, the well-educated manipulator of information and deployer of expertise. But that is changing. Thanks to an array of forces—material abundance that is deepening our nonmaterial yearnings, globalization that is shipping white-collar work overseas, and powerful technologies that are eliminating certain kinds of work altogether—we are entering a new age. It is an age animated by a—different form of thinking and a new approach to life—one that prizes aptitudes that I call “high concept” and“high touch.” High concept involves the capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, to create artistic and emotional beauty, to craft a satisfying narrative, and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into something new. High touch involves the ability to empathize with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one’s self and to elicit it in others, and to stretch beyond the quotidian in pursuit of purpose and meaning.

As it happens, there’s something that encapsulates the change I’m describing—and it’s right inside your head. Our brains are divided into two hemispheres. The left hemisphere is sequential, logical, and analytical. The right hemisphere is nonlinear, intuitive, and holistic. These distinctions have often been caricatured.

And of course, we enlist both halves of our brains for even the simplest tasks. But the well-established differences between the two hemispheres of the brain yield a powerful metaphor for interpreting our present and guiding our future. Today, the defining skills of the previous era—the “left brain” capabilities that powered the Information Age—are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous—the “right-brain” qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning—increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders.

For individuals, families, and organizations, professional success and personal fulfillment now require a whole new mind.
A Review: “A Whole New Mind”
by Daniel Pink and reviewed by Mickey Hepner, PhD, University of Central Oklahoma

Meet Mickey Hepner
Dr. Mickey Hepner is long time member of the Oklahoma Academy and is a member of the Town Hall Research Committee.

Mickey is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Central Oklahoma and serves as the Director of the UCO Public Policy Institute. He has authored several reports for national organizations such as the Urban Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, as well as authoring several reports for the UCO Public Policy Institute. He serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for the Oklahoma Academy, a nonpartisan Oklahoma policy organization and is active in his church – Crossings Community Church of Oklahoma City. Dr. Hepner writes a weekly column on public policy issues for the Edmond Sun, and maintains a policy blog – Mickey’s Musings. Dr. Hepner has received several awards for his teaching and scholarly activities and was recently named the 2007 Oklahoma Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

A Whole New Mind or Just A Whole Mind?
As an educator, perhaps the most important question I ask myself before teaching any course is “what do my students need to know?” As participants in this conference discussing education policy, we should be asking a similar question. What knowledge do our students need to possess? What skills do they need to acquire? In other words, what do we need to teach our children to enable them to succeed in a 21st century world? Daniel Pink, the author of the New York Times’ Bestseller A Whole New Mind believes the answers to those questions are vastly different than just a few decades ago.

A Whole New Mind is a mostly insightful book with important implications for education and economic policy, even if Mr. Pink does oversell his case at times. The crux of his argument is that the skills we have tended to value the highest—the skills of the knowledge worker—are going to be valued less in the future. Recent advances in technology coupled with the forces of globalization mean that many of the tasks performed by knowledge workers can be outsourced. For example, we can now read patient X-rays, prepare simple tax returns, craft standard contracts, and write computer code easily (and less costly) in other countries. Consequently, these knowledge-based jobs of the future are quickly becoming the knowledge-based jobs of the past.

In their place according to Mr. Pink, will be a greater demand for workers who can find creative solutions, communicate well, look at the big picture, show compassion, have fun, and help others find meaning in life. These types of tasks, by their very nature, are difficult to produce elsewhere. After all, while one can read X-rays on the other side of the world, displaying a bedside manner requires someone actually to be bedside. Interestingly, these skills are generally considered to be right-brain activities as opposed to the more rational, logical, and analytical duties typically performed by the left hemisphere of our brains. Consequently, Pink argues that since the right-brained people are going to dominate the labor market in the future, our schools should focus more on cultivating these skills in our children.

Clearly, Mr. Pink is on to something. The changing economy will certainly make the more social, emotional, artistic, and empathic skills more valuable in the future. Consider for example, the case of Nike running shoes. The most valuable parts of Nike running shoes are not the materials used to make the shoes nor the labor used to assemble the shoes. No, the most valuable parts of a Nike running shoe involve the design and marketing of that shoe. The materials and labor used to physically manufacture the shoe are relatively inexpensive (which explains why there are so many less expensive shoes than Nike). It is the design and marketing of the shoe though that makes some runners willing to pay more than $100 to enjoy the
product. Notice this means that design—both for artistic and functional purposes—is more important than the materials. This means that marketing—creating an emotional connection between runners and their shoe—is more important than the labor assembling the shoe. This is the process to which Pink is referring when he argues that the right-brain (creative, artistic, empathic) workers will—dominate in the coming years.

While this is all true, *A Whole New Mind* mischaracterizes the changes workers are facing. Pink suggests that we are in the midst of a sweeping, sudden change (a revolution of sorts) that simultaneously will diminish the value of left-brain thinkers and enhance the value of right-brain thinkers. Instead, the growing importance of design, creativity, and emotion—all right-brain processes—is not a recent phenomenon.

Take for example, the automobile industry. In *A Whole New Mind* Pink writes with some professed astonishment that auto executives now consider themselves to be in the design business. However, anyone who is even vaguely familiar with pop culture recognizes that for decades automobile design has been important. Furthermore, Americans' emotional connection to their automobiles—another right-brain process—is legendary. And automobiles are not the only example. When it comes to clothing, people’s preferences for design, creativity, emotion, and artistry go back thousands of years.

In other words, right-brain processes have always been important and those workers who can excel at both right-brain and left-brain thinking have always been rewarded for their abilities. It is true that for economists who crunch numbers, accountants who file tax reforms, lawyers who draft contracts, programmers who write computer code, it has been possible in the past to succeed relying predominantly on their left-brain capabilities. And it is true, as Mr. Pink suggests, that this is no longer enough.

However, it is not true that right-brain thinking will suddenly become more important than left brain thinking. Remember, using half of one’s brain will always be inferior to using ‘all of one’s brain. Thus, Mr. Pink at times overstates the magnitude of the change we face (perhaps for artistic reasons). He argues that in the future empathy will be more important than analysis, that creativity will outshine logic, and that the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) will become the new MBA (Master of Business Administration)—that the right-brain thinkers will dominate the new economy. Instead, it will not be the right-brain thinkers or the left-brain thinkers who will dominate…it will be the whole-brain thinkers.

After all, it takes both empathy and analysis to be able to solve problems. It takes both creativity and logic to find new solutions, it takes both an appreciation of design and an understanding of business for a firm to thrive.

This has important implications for education policy as our educational system should be cultivating the skills that today’s students will need when they become tomorrow’s workers. Thus, it is clear that it is no longer good enough to make students proficient in the “Three R’s”, students now must also be proficient in the “Three C’s”—creativity, compassion, and communication. It is the students who master this complete set of skills that will be best positioned to succeed in a 21st century economy. It is certainly true that globalization and technology are changing our economy, changing our world, and changing our workplace. The economies and workers who succeed the most in the 21st century will not be the ones that make the best things…but the ones that make the best ideas. To generate those best ideas requires workers skilled at using both hemispheres of their brain—not really a whole new mind, but their whole mind.

A perfect exampleThe economies that most succeed in the 21st century will not be the ones that make the best things, but the economies that make the best ideas.
BIG THOUGHTS
Ideas - Essays - Original Thinking
High Poverty, High Success (90-90-90) Schools
Craig Knutson, Norman

Town Hall Theme: No Excuses
There is no question that economic deprivation clearly has an adverse impact on student achievement. There is also no question that schools/students can achieve at high levels despite being surrounded by poverty, poor housing and inadequate medical care. Research has been on-going since the early 80s as to how schools in high poverty, high minority areas can produce student achievement scores well above district and/or state averages. What’s the secret? The research says there really isn’t any secret formula.\(^1\) The common characteristics of these schools are not found in any proprietary, for-profit programs. The research is titled of 90-90-90 Schools, or schools where 90% of the student body is high poverty (qualify for free and reduced lunch), 90% are from ethnic minorities, and 90% met or exceeded standards on state tests.

The following characteristics can be adopted by ANY school, high or low in poverty and minority composition, that struggles with low levels of achievement. Essentially, it comes down to site-based leadership and teacher effectiveness to reverse achievement trends. There are four characteristics:

1. Focus on academic achievement: The principals and academic advisors made it a point to display various awards and test score improvements made by the student body. These schools “made it clear to the most casual observer that academic performance was highly prized.”

2. Frequent assessment of student progress with multiple opportunities for improvement: This approach is essential for those students that are performing well below grade level as they enter school. These schools refuse to “promote” students to the next grade despite poor academic achievement. Instead,\(^1\) weekly assessments are developed and those assessments are done by classroom teachers, often collaboratively for students in middle and high school settings. Those assessments continue until downward trends are reversed.

3. Written responses in performance assessments: Highly effective schools discovered that requiring written responses from students (as opposed to oral) helps teachers “obtain better diagnostic information about their struggling students.” It forces the students to demonstrate the thinking employed in their responses. This “write to think” process has proven to be a very effective method of effective assessment and ultimately reversing low achievement scores.

4. External scoring - Instead of relying on the judgment of only one teacher, these schools developed common assessment practices and exchanged students’ papers among multiple teachers. This greatly reduced the potential for bias based on non-academic factors. By establishing uniformity, the students’ assessment is more accurate and remedies more effective. Plus it engages the entire faculty in the improvement of student achievement. This collaborative approach is more time consuming, but if the student is really the “customer”, this is a superior approach.

Summary - 90-90-90 schools focus “on student achievement and a commitment to success that extends far beyond demographic determinism that characterizes so many schools (Reeves).” They demonstrate strong assessment and accountability. They are data - and analysis-driven. They are “inflexible on expectations and unremitting requirements for success of the children.” While poverty was never eliminated in these schools, the prevailing hypothesis that poverty and ethnic minority status are invariably linked to low student achievement “does not conform to the data.” These practices are replicable, eliminating for the most part the excuse that “We can’t afford the program being offered.” There is no program to purchase, but effective practices that need to be implemented. This research supports the findings of Samuel Casey Carter’s book entitled No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools.

I’d strongly encourage parents, educational leadership and school boards across Oklahoma to familiarize themselves with these practices.

\(^1\) Douglas B Reeves, Founder of The Leadership and Learning Center and President of the Center for Performance Assessment
The Value of Teacher Salaries
Source: teacherportal.com

“The TeacherPortal Salary Comfort Score is a proprietary way to tell how far a teacher’s salary will go in each state. We look at cost-of-living, average salaries, starting salaries, and more. Then we rank the states - the lower the number, the more “comfortable” your teacher’s salary will be. “ (teacherportal.com) Oklahoma has one of the lowest salaries (47th) - but when that salary is converted to “value” - Oklahoma is 18th best.

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I have been asked to write an article discussing what I believe, or know to be, the critical changes that must be made to allow my school district to provide students with the educational opportunities they need to develop the skills and knowledge needed to live and work in the rest of the 21st century.

As most of you are well aware, we have been discussing educational reform in this state and nation for over 20 years, and despite millions of dollars, countless studies, reforms and initiatives, the only real change is an increase in the level of frustration that many of us feel inside and outside of our schools. While the sources of this frustration are varied, they revolve around a perception that our schools and the students in them are not performing as well as they have in the past or as well as students throughout the world.

The reason for the differences in student performance (if they exist at all) has been debated ad nauseam; the truth is that we are probably lucky that we aren’t approaching the end of the first decade of the 21st century completely satisfied with our schools. Because if we were satisfied, it would be even harder to make the changes necessary to develop an educational system that will allow our students to lead in the development of innovations that will drive economic growth in the rest of this century.

Listening to Ed Morrison
Recently I had the opportunity to hear Mr. Ed Morrison, who is an Economic Policy Advisor for the Purdue Center for Economic Development. In his presentation, Mr. Morrison argued that the next wave of economic growth belongs to those communities and states that made the transition from their grandparents’ to their grandchildren’s economy.

In this same presentation, Mr. Morrison said the communities and states and regions that would lead in this new economy were those areas that make the quickest transition from their grandparents’ to their grandchildren’s educational system. I would submit that this Town Hall has the opportunity to start our state down this path of change, and if we can make this transition we will position Oklahoma to be a leader in this new economy.

How do we make the transition to our grandchildren’s schools? There are five things that I believe we have to do to make this transition:

1. Stop the blame game...
   We don’t have the time or energy to affix blame, and the truth is that our current situation is not anyone’s fault. We do not find ourselves in this situation because the legislature did not provide...
enough funding, or because too many children come from homes without sufficient parent involvement or supervision, or because our state tests aren’t hard enough.

We are in this situation because our world has changed; an education model that was developed in the early twentieth century to prepare citizens for a world dominated by large factories and large corporate offices is not appropriate for the children of this century.

As I said earlier, it is probably a blessing. If all students were doing well, if the business community and all of the various political constituencies in our state were satisfied with our current educational system, we would not have an urgency to change.

2. Make a commitment ...
Make a commitment to have every student Ready by 21. Ready by 21 is a national initiative that advocates that states and communities make a commitment to provide the educational and community supports necessary for all children to be Productive (attending college or working steadily), Healthy (good health, positive health habits, healthy relationships) and Connected (volunteer, politically active, active in religious institutions, active in community), by the time they reach their 21st birthday.

3. Refocus our educational system ...
Restructure our educational system to focus on preparing students to be Productive, Healthy, and Connected. Our schools must become places where students are self-directed, globally-connected learners.

Schools must become places where the teacher, as the source of all information, is replaced by teachers who guide and direct student learning.

We can do this if we focus our curriculum on technology literacy, written communication, oral communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, citizenship and ethics, and career preparation.

4. Replace state assessment system ...
Replace our current state student assessment system. For grades 3-8, we should move to a growth model (Measure of Academic Progress is a great example of this type of model and has recently been adopted by the state of Rhode Island as its state assessment).

Our high school students should be able to select from one of three types of assessments to demonstrate academic skills, college entrance exams (ACT, SAT) workplace skills (WorkKeys), or a portfolio that would contain work samples in the eight curriculum areas listed in item 3.

5. Expand to K-14 ...
Create the infrastructure (facilities, staff) necessary to provide two years of free post secondary education (college and or career tech) to every young person in our state.

Our Special System
In our drive to improve our schools we forget sometimes how special the educational system of the Untied States is. We are the only nation in the world that has as its mission to provide a free public education for all of its children regardless of race, gender, national origin, or intellectual ability. We are the only nation in the world that allows students multiple entry points and unlimited opportunities to take advantage of a free education through high school. We are one of the few nations in the world that does not use testing to limit educational opportunities for students.

However, we sometimes forget or don’t want to acknowledge, that not all students are the same; that students have different abilities and interest. In our nation, students (and their parents) have the right to choose whether or not to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered. In our nation, the primary focus of our educational system is the individual, not the state and not the business community. While this type of system may not be the most efficient, it is the key to insuring the most basic right that we enjoy as citizens of this great country, the right of self-determination.
High Schools That Work is the largest and oldest of the Southern Regional Education Board’s school improvement initiatives for high school and middle grades leaders and teachers. More than 1,200 HSTW sites in 31 states are using the framework of HSTW Goals and Key Practices to raise student achievement. The other SREB school improvement initiatives are

- High Schools That Work / Comprehensive School Reform Project
- High Schools That Work / Urban Initiative
- Making Middle Grades Work
- Technology Centers That Work
- Project Lead The Way
- Learning-Centered Leadership Program

All of these initiatives are joined in their goal to prepare students for careers and further education by improving curriculum and instruction in high schools and middle grades. SREB and an initial group of state partners launched High Schools That Work in 1987. Through the years, the work has taken on new dimensions as needs have arisen in the areas of middle grades education, transition from middle grades to high school, raising performance in low-performing and urban high schools, and raising standards in career/technical education. Recently, SREB received funding to work with states and institutions of higher education to improve the preparation of new and emerging school leaders.
A 529 Plan is an education savings plan operated by a state or educational institution designed to help families set aside funds for future college costs. It is named after Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code which created these types of savings plans.

Meet the Authors

Matt Guillory, Executive Director
Matt is a native of New Orleans, LA, received his undergraduate degree in Political Science from Louisiana State University, before attending LSU’s Paul M. Hebert Law Center. Initially Matt was licensed to practice law in Louisiana and Illinois. After Hurricane Katrina, Matt moved to Oklahoma City to serve as a director at the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma. He now calls Oklahoma City home.

David Blatt, Director of Policy
David’s work involves conducting research, writing papers, and giving public presentations on state budget and tax policy, poverty, asset development, and various other subjects. He is a founder and Chair of the Alliance for Oklahoma’s Future, a broad-based coalition geared at promoting fair and adequate budget and tax policy. He has a Ph.D. in political science from Cornell University and a B.A. from the University of Alberta.

Paul Shinn, Consultant
Prior to joining the OPI, Paul served in a number of public service positions, including Fiscal Director for the Oklahoma House of Representatives, Budget Director for the City of Oklahoma City, and Manager for the Government Finance Officers Association. Paul also has held full- and part-time teaching positions at California State University, Stanislaus, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Central Oklahoma, and the American University in Washington, D.C. He holds a B.S. in Public Affairs from the University of Oregon, an M.S. in History from the University of Maryland College Park, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Oklahoma.

Like all states, Oklahoma faces the challenge of remaking its workforce for an economy in which agriculture and manufacturing are no longer the main economic activities. Improving the quality of our education system and expanding educational attainment are key elements of a new workforce strategy. A more workforce-ready Oklahoma depends on better education at all levels.

Oklahoma has much to gain from higher educational attainment. For individuals, post-secondary education makes a dramatic difference in earnings. At the last census, Oklahomans between ages 21 and 64 who had college degrees earned, on average, $11,500 per year more than those with only a high school education.¹ The state as a whole benefits from higher educational attainment as well. In 2004, Oklahoma ranked 41st among the states in percentage of adults with a college degree (22.2%). We ranked 46th in gross state product per person. Low education levels blunt Oklahoma’s competitive edge.²

Students must be academically challenged and prepared at all levels if they are to be ready and able to progress toward higher education and be workforce-ready. Post-secondary education requires not only academic readiness, but also financial readiness. Expanding participation in 529 college savings plans should be one component of a comprehensive workforce strategy.

529 plans, named after the section of federal income tax law that creates them, give families tax preferences for college savings. Families pay no federal tax on earnings from their 529 plans, provided funds are used for qualified education expenses. In Oklahoma, families may deduct up to $10,000 ($20,000 if married filing jointly) of the amount they deposit in Oklahoma’s 529 plan from their state income (but no deduction for contributions to plans of other states). Earnings on money put into plans of other states). Earnings on money put into other states’ 529 plans are exempt from state income (but no deduction for contributions to plans of other states). Earnings on money put into other states’ 529 plans are exempt from state income taxes. Oklahoma and its citizens would benefit from new policies that make 529 plans more widely accessible.

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bigger ways. Savings can help replace the cycle of dependency that faces so many low-income families with a cycle of opportunity. Even middle-class families have trouble saving for long-term goals like college. When families save for college, children learn financial concepts and responsibility. They also learn it is possible to attend and complete post-secondary education. They start down a path toward better education and job skills, better jobs and economic self-sufficiency, building wealth like homes and businesses, and achieving better health and happiness.3

When government uses policy and funding to encourage savings, it engages families as partners in creating circles of opportunity. Experience shows that low- and middle-income families can save for college with the right support and incentives. There is a clear tie between savings and achievement as well. Children with as little savings as $3,000 have a better chance of graduating from high school.4 529 plans allow more Oklahomans to attend college and other post-secondary institutions, help Oklahoma’s economy grow, and can provide a path to prosperity.

Unfortunately, their use is limited to a relatively small proportion of Oklahoma families. The families that do use 529s have comparatively high incomes. In 2002, two-thirds of contributions were from families making $70,000 or more. Oklahoma’s middle and lower income households, making less than $50,000 annually, make up 76 percent of all households. However, they are only 15 percent of those who contribute to 529s and make just 10 percent of all contributions.3

Most Oklahomans are missing out on the opportunity to save for post-secondary education and ensure their children will be ready for the workforce of the future. Most families face many barriers to achieving a post-secondary education. Cost, of course, is the greatest. Federal programs like Pell Grants and state programs like OHLAP can reduce barriers. For most students, though, aid programs will fall short of the full cost of college or technical education. For some moderate income students, their families may earn too much to qualify for a grant but not enough to absorb the rising cost of college. We must encourage savings as a way to put college within the financial reach of more students. 529 plans do that, but they are not yet a viable option for most low- and middle-income families. For many, the barriers of opening an account, accumulating the amount needed to meet the minimum deposit, and making regular deposits work to prevent or minimize savings. Federal and state tax incentives are of limited value to these families since their income tax payments are fairly low.

Oklahoma should take steps to reduce barriers to saving for college. The options below should be seriously considered.

• Increase the number of accounts by creating them automatically at birth or at first-time school enrollment, encouraging non-profit organizations and foundations to create and fund accounts, and eliminating barriers that keep families from participating. Experience shows that people are more likely to participate when the steps they must take to open and contribute to accounts are minimal.

• Expand participation and support account growth by allowing smaller minimum amounts both for opening (currently $100) and adding to an account (currently $25) and through better education and outreach. Small, regular contributions help an account build over time; we should not discourage even small contributions.

• Encourage contributions across all income levels by creating a limited, refundable tax credit for contributions, automatic deposit of tax refunds into 529 accounts, and/or state-funded matching contributions for low-income families. The current deduction mainly benefits Oklahomans with high incomes and the ability to contribute large amounts. Tax credits, refund direction, and matched accounts are targeted more toward lower- and middle-income families.

Oklahoma has made important steps in preparing students and their families for college and building a workforce that will help our state prosper. We can take another important step by creating college savings for all Oklahoma children.
Administered by the Oklahoma State Treasurer, the Oklahoma College Savings Plan (OCSP) gives you a way to start saving today to prepare for a child's tomorrow.

Earnings Grow Federal and Oklahoma Income Tax-deferred
When you contribute to OCSP, your account earnings have the opportunity to grow federal and Oklahoma income tax-deferred until withdrawn.

Earnings Used to Pay for Qualified Higher Education Expenses Are Federal & Oklahoma Income Tax Free
The earnings portion of any distributions used to pay for qualified higher education expenses will be free from federal and Oklahoma income tax. This federal income tax-free treatment of qualified withdrawals and other federal tax benefits are now permanently in place for 529 plans through the passage of the Pension Protection Act of 2006.

Oklahoma Income Tax Deduction
The amount you contribute to OCSP can be deducted from your Oklahoma taxable income up to a maximum of $10,000 per year ($20,000 for couples filing jointly). Any amount of a contribution made after 2004 that is not deducted by the taxpayer may be carried forward as a deduction from income for the succeeding five (5) years, subject to the annual maximum deduction on contributions. Amounts transferred from another 529 college savings plan are eligible for the Oklahoma income tax deduction. Amounts deducted may be subject to recapture if a non-qualified withdrawal or rollover distribution is taken (depending on the timing of these transactions), with different adverse Oklahoma income tax treatment of non-qualified withdrawals versus rollover distributions. Read the Disclosure Booklet carefully.

Extended Tax Deduction Filing Deadline
For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2005, the state income tax deduction filing deadline for the Oklahoma College Savings Plan contributions has changed from December 31 to April 15 of the following year or the due date of the taxpayer's state income tax return, excluding extensions.

Federal Estate and Gift Tax Benefits
Contributions to OCSP may reduce the taxable value of your estate. Contributions to OCSP, together with all other gifts from the account owner to the beneficiary, may qualify for an annual federal gift tax exclusion of $13,000 per donor, per beneficiary for 2009. If an account owner's contribution to an OCSP account for a beneficiary in a single year exceeds $13,000, the account owner may elect to treat up to $65,000 of the contributions, or $130,000 for joint filers, as having been made over a period of up to five years for federal gift tax exclusion.

ENDNOTES

3 Reisdorph, “Building a Virtuous Circle,” 2.
5 Oklahoma Tax Commission, 2002 Tax Returns.
EDMOND - When it comes to passing a budget, the Oklahoma Legislature faces a tough task this year. With the current economic slowdown leading to less tax revenue flowing into state coffers, undoubtedly some important needs will go unfunded. Yet it is at times such as these that the Legislature must be extremely vigilant in ensuring that government runs as efficiently as possible. One area where improvements can be made is in the area of higher education.

There is little doubt that higher education plays an important role in Oklahoma’s educational system in helping prepare students to succeed in a 21st century economy. After all, the economies that succeed in the 21st century will not be the economies that produce the best things, but the economies that produce the best ideas. Our colleges and universities are the places where those ideas often are born. Because this is a tight budget year, though, the question facing the Legislature is not whether funding higher education is important, but rather can we use our current funding more efficiently? In my opinion, the answer to that question is a clear yes.

The problem is that while the State Regents for Higher Education have a goal of increasing the number of college graduates in Oklahoma, the way we fund our institutions works counter to that goal. This is because the formula used to determine funding for the various public colleges and universities in Oklahoma does not adjust funding adequately in response to enrollment changes.

For example, if a university has a decline in enrollment, there is no decline in funding. Consequently, the per-student funding at that university increases. Conversely, though, if a university has a rapid enrollment increase, the state funding does not adjust enough to keep per-student funding from falling. This is why in recent years per-student funding for some of the smaller regional universities was 50 percent higher than funding at the larger regional universities!

Furthermore, the current system creates a disincentive for institutions to recruit and retain Oklahoma students. This is because Oklahoma residents pay far lower tuition than out-of-state or out-of-nation residents. It turns out that if a university has room for just 100 more students, the university would be better off financially if those students were not from Oklahoma.

Essentially, the way we fund higher education in Oklahoma punishes our colleges and universities for educating more Oklahoma students. But it does not have to be this way.

Instead, suppose we took a different approach. Suppose instead of giving money directly to the institutions we gave it directly to the students in the form of higher education vouchers. These vouchers would promise to pay a certain percentage of the tuition for any Oklahoma college or university. Notice that under such a system the more students a university is able to attract and retain, the more revenue it will receive. Just as importantly, the fewer students a university attracts and retains, the less revenue it receives. Essentially, the money will follow the students.

Under such a system Oklahoma universities would have a strong incentive to recruit and retain Oklahoma students, which is exactly the outcome we want.

Changing The Way We Fund Higher Education
Mickey Hepner, PhD published in the Edmond Sun (February 16, 2008)
This is not a radical idea. It turns out we do this with higher education already, albeit on a smaller scale. Oklahoma’s Promise, formerly known as OHLAP, promises to pay 100 percent of tuition costs for students who qualify. The Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant and the Federal Pell Grant programs give low-income students a grant to offset some of their tuition. Each of these programs is essentially a higher education voucher that allows the student recipient to determine where the money will go — the money follows the student.

If we truly want to encourage Oklahoma’s colleges and universities to recruit and retain Oklahoma students, then we should use a voucher system modeled after Oklahoma’s Promise for all of the state funding going to Oklahoma’s colleges and universities.

I must admit that some of my higher education superiors do not like this idea.

They do not like the idea that we should give the money to students instead of the State Regents because some institutions — those that have seen declining enrollments — will be harmed by this proposal. But as unpopular as this statement may make me among my higher education colleagues, we must remember that our objective should not be to preserve university budgets, but to efficiently help students learn so they can compete in a 21st century economy.

It is clear that compared to the current system, a system of higher education vouchers more efficiently satisfies this policy objective.

Mickey Hepner is an associate professor of economics for University of Central Oklahoma.
Teaching “Soft Skills” at Great Expectations
Charles Hollar, Founder and CEO of Great Expectations and Founder of Educators Leadership Academy (ELA), Ponca City

Editor Comment
Unrelated to this article, Charlie Hollar has high praise for the book “The Global Achievement Gap” by Tony Wagner. He was pleased to see that we chose that book for review in this research - and that three other authors [including Dr. Sharon Wilbur of K20, OU Norman] have referenced its importance. He thinks it is must reading for everyone interested in preparing educated and productive individuals.

Meet Charlie Hollar
Charlie Hollar is a long-time member of the Oklahoma Academy. He is a retired businessman who entered the world of education in 1990. At that time he founded Great Expectations (GE), which is a year-long training experience for teachers around the state. To date, thousands of teachers have been exposed to the positive philosophy of Great Expectations, which begins with the premise that education is a two-way street with respect and optimism as the centerpiece. Mr. Hollar is one of seven individuals in the United States selected to receive the prestigious George Washington Honor Medal Award. It is the highest award given by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge National Awards Program.

Lisa Moore says ...
“When a patron walks in the door at our school, it is our intent that they feel a “difference” here. We endeavor to create a school experience of a higher quality than any other school that they have ever seen. Our patrons are greeted at the front door with a smile, a kind word, and a handshake, hug, or touch of some sort.

The teachers are at their classroom door welcoming students in with a smile, an encouraging word, and kind touches. They set the tone for the day with their students from their first encounter in the morning. Many problems from home are altered at this very moment. Teachers are actively engaging their students in high level learning focused on enhancing critical-thinking skills. An enriched vocabulary is heard in discussions. Each child is taught to his/her maximum level. Teachers and students respect one another. The classrooms are inviting and full of learning.

Each classroom has its own class creed. Teachers are actively modeling the desired skills, behavior, and character traits that we desire for the children to emulate…”

Lisa Moore, Principal, Pleasantview Elementary

Building A School
The journey for this school began seven years ago and was culminated in a perfect API score of 1,500 last year. The trip was not easy. In some cases teachers on staff realized this was not the direction they wanted to go and they selected other schools.

The initial training was conducted at a Great Expectations Summer Institute which are held at twelve locations in Oklahoma and other states. The pattern normally was that a few came with the principal the first year and then the majority of the staff returned the second year. There was intense followup by the principal, staff, and mentor visits throughout the school year.

To reach the pinnacle of success, like Lisa Moore’s school, students, parents, teachers, principal and staff work diligently to create a school where all are welcome. Observers witness daily interactive learning at a high level within an environment of mutual respect.
The Basic Tenets of Great Expectations are:

- All Children Can Learn (William Glasser)
- Climate of Mutual Respect (Rensis Likert)
- Building Self-Esteem (Harris Clemes, Reynold Bean, Aminah Clark)
- Teacher Attitude and Responsibility (Haim Ginott, John and Eunice Gilmore)
- High Expectations (Robert Rosenthal, Lemore Johnson)
- Teacher Knowledge and Skill (Benjamin Bloom)

Here are the students’ Eight Expectations:

- We will value one another as unique and special individuals.
- We will not laugh at or make fun of a person’s mistakes nor use sarcasm or putdowns.
- We will use good manners: “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me,” and allow other to go first.
- We will cheer each other to success.
- We will help one another whenever possible.
- We will recognize every effort and applaud it.
- We will encourage each other to do our best.
- We will practice virtuous living, using the Life Principles.

The initial Summer Institute was held at Northeastern State University, with 175 in attendance. The chart shows the growth since that time.

The methodology is offered to schools preK through high school. Implementing the methodology are 10 full-time mentors, former master classroom teachers. They work at the Summer Institute and mentor schools throughout the school year. There is an executive director and support staff.

The standards are high for Great Expectations teachers. When observed, the mentor looks at the 17 practices being implemented. Here are a few.

- Students and teachers speak in complete sentences and address one another by name.
- Lessons are integrated, related to the real world, reviewed consistently, and connected to subsequent curricula.
- Critical thinking skills are taught.
- The teacher teaches on his/her feet, engages students personally, holds high expectations of students, and does not limit hem to grade level or perceived ability.
- Enriched vocabulary is evident and drawn directly from challenging writings and/or wisdom literature. Sources should include classic literature, myths, fables, poetry, proverbs, quotes, and other genres.

One piece of data tells the story of success in a Great Expectations school - office referrals. Students are excited about learning and respectful of others, and the teachers accept ownership for what transpires. At Roblyer Middle School (El Reno) in the first quarter before Great Expectations there were 330 referrals to the principal’s office. The same time the following year after Great Expectations, there were 32.

The complete implementation of the Great Expectations methodology is rigorous, but well worth it for students, educators and parents. The opportunity to be educated in an environment of critical thinking, creativity, mutual respect and celebrations of success go a long way in preparing the students for success after their school years.
What is Great Expectations?
This letter captures the essence.

“Great Expectations provided the perfect building blocks for teaching students that there is more to the world than just their own little “bubble.” I have watched many fourth graders discover that they have a future beyond their little desk in our classroom. They realized, though the Life Principles and the Eight Expectations for Living, that the way they see themselves and how they interact with others plays a very important role in how they will turn their dreams into realities.

The quotes we studied not only provided a wonderful opportunity for analyzing meaning, but I began to see the students discover that these were things said by real people, just like them, and that their words can inspire others. Many students today have a limited view of what they can make of their lives.

They are flooded with images in society that twist reality. Many have few experiences to show them what is beyond their everyday routine. Great Expectations not only gives them the tools they need to achieve beyond the limits of their lives at this moment, it also expands their horizons; for some, it literally creates them.

I truly feel that with the help of GE I am raising generations of civic-minded students who have very bright future, and for that I’m forever grateful.

Jennifer Millinton
Hirsch Elementary School
Spring, TX Independent School District

Leadership Is Critical

“A good leader needs to have a compass in his head and a bar of steel in his heart.”
Robert Greenleaf

During the early years of Great Expectations, it became apparent that the success of the school depended primarily on leadership. Subsequent interviews with principals revealed that they did not feel they were adequately prepared in their college training and few were receiving opportunities to grow through staff development.

This information led to the creation of the first Oklahoma Principals Academy in 1994. Dr. Leo Presley developed and facilitated the initial training which was similar in design to those offered to middle and upper-level management in the corporate world. This year classes 27 and 28 are in the early stage of their year-long training.

Virginia Holmes (Principal, Pryor) told us: “I attended Principals Academy the summer after my first year as a principal. That experience has shaped everything else I have done as a school leader the past eight years. Principals Academy was not merely a curriculum that I learned or a method to which I was exposed; it developed in me a leadership capacity that is far deeper than cognitive issues. For example, Charlie Hollar kept stressing a Principal as Servant mindset. I believe that the only plumb line need for decisions at my school is ‘what is best for the students?’

I truly believe that if I take good care of my teachers they will take good care of our students. In combination with the Great Expectations program that is being integrated into many Oklahoma schools at the present time, we have a formula for success that makes the future an exciting place to be. I am glad that I am a part of that future.” (continued at right)
Inquiries from higher education and superintendents in 1998 led to the creation of academies for leadership in higher education, superintendents and direct reports, and CareerTech leadership. These academies were created by Dr. Leo Presley, a Stillwater-based and internationally recognized facilitator. They have had an enormous and positive impact on Oklahoma.

The following year an academy for outstanding professors was introduced and subsequently, one for outstanding public school teachers. Class sizes for each are 20-25.

Academy subjects range from leadership to international affairs, spirituality and ethics, conflict resolution and personal reflection. Facilitators are educators like Dr. Tom Boyd, former outstanding professor of the year at University of Oklahoma; Dr. Kent Lashley, former endowed chair at Northeastern State University; Dr. Leo Presley and Dr. Don Betz, president of Northeastern State University.

Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier - Participants experience personal as well as professional growth. Kelvin Droegemeier, Regents Professor of Meteorology, Director, Center for Analysis and Prediction of Storms, University of Oklahoma said:

“I give leadership talks all over the country based upon my experiences in the ELA and some of the materials made available during the sessions. Also, through these talks I’ve been able to highlight leadership as a key issue organizationally.

“Of course, ELA has helped enormously in my own personal and professional life.

Developing leadership presentations based upon this all came about because of the Educator’s Leadership Academy.” Upon completion of the year-long training, participants graduate into the alumni organization.

Presenters - Several presenters for this organization are nationally known. Three are from Harvard: Dr. Ron Heifetz, author of “Leadership Without Easy Answers”; Dr. Dean Williams, author of “Real Leadership”, who consults with heads of states around the world; and Dr. Linda Kaboolian a national lecturer.

Books - One of the discoveries of working with these leaders is that many do not find the time to read books. Here are a few of the books provided to the participants: “Teacher As Servant” by Robert Greenleaf, “Leadership Without Easy Answers” by Ron Heifetz, “Courage to Teach” by Parker Palmer, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey and “The World Is Flat” by Thomas Friedman.

Dr. Dee Fink - “During the ELA program last year I became president elect of the largest faculty development organization for higher education in the country. During my year in this role, I have experienced both the thrill and challenge of engaging in organizational leadership. Without question the readings and discussions in ELA equipped me with much more sophisticated ideas about leadership and what it takes to generate more effective organizations than I would have had otherwise.” Dee Fink, Director, Instructional Development Program, University of Oklahoma.

Today - In 2005 ELA was changed from a 501(C)(3) organization to become part of the University of Central Oklahoma’s leadership program.
Imagine what the world would be like without alternatives. For example, whenever we purchased a new book suppose there was only one book available to read. Whenever we wanted to purchase a car there was only one make and model (in only one color) to buy. Or whenever we wanted to dine out there was only one restaurant and it cooked only one dish. Clearly a world without alternatives would be a dismal place.

Whether we consider trivial items (think socks) or more important ones (think doctors), we like to have different options...we like to have the freedom to choose. After all, it is when we have different alternatives from which to choose that we are most likely to satisfy our individual preferences, most likely to fulfill our individual needs, and therefore most likely to generate the most individual happiness. In other words, having multiple alternatives from which to choose makes us happier.

Yet when it comes to one of the most important services any person will ever consume—education—we purposefully limit the choices we make available to our families under the guise that having fewer choices is somehow best. In fact, many Oklahoma families effectively are limited to only one choice for their children’s education, their local public school. Of course, parents at least nominally have the ability to enroll their children in private schools. However, the additional tuition cost that comes with a private school education makes this option prohibitively expensive for many Oklahoma families.

Consequently, when it comes to education many Oklahoma families do not have any choice at all.

The Benefits Of Educational Choice
Mainstream economists have long supported the idea that promoting access to more educational choices would improve educational outcomes and parental satisfaction. This is mainly due to economists’ general belief in the positive power of competition. After all, in the business world it is the unrelenting pressure of competition—the fear of losing business to a competitor—that spurs innovation, efficiency, and progress. Where such competitive pressures do not exist, economists routinely find that firms operate less efficiently.²

While some might object to incorporating such a business perspective when considering education policy, there is no reason to think that the benefits of competition would be less valuable in the education industry than in any other industry. After all, the incentives of a school concerned about losing
students and funding to a competing school are identical to the incentives of a business concerned about losing customers to a competing business. In both cases, the organizations have a strong incentive to find efficiencies and better satisfy their students’/customers’ needs. Consequently, enhanced competition among schools would force those schools to focus more intently on efficiently satisfying all of the needs of students.

This is not intended to imply that our current public schools, which face limited competition, are bad. In fact, for the most part our public schools have done a stellar job of fulfilling the nearly-impossible mission of trying to educate every student who walks through their doors regardless of the level of parental support or student interest.

The point though, is that it is simply not feasible for the local public school to be able to best satisfy the diverse needs of every student in its district. As evidence of this claim one need look no further than the 30,000 Oklahoma school children currently enrolled in private schools and the thousands more who are home-schooled. For each of these students, the parents (or guardians) have decided that their local public school was not the best option for their families.

There are many reasons why some families prefer private schools (or even home-schooling) to their local public schools. In some cases these alternatives to the public schools offer a more rigorous curriculum, or sometimes they just offer a different curriculum (e.g. a classical education, greater focus on the arts or religion).

Finally, some parents might prefer a private/home school because they believe such a school offers a more appropriate social setting for their children (i.e. smaller class size, smaller school, familial atmosphere). These are all valid reasons why parents might prefer one school over another. Since in a world of enhanced educational choice parents would choose the school they believe would best satisfy their children’s needs, when Oklahoma’s educational policies limit the educational choices available, it must also keep some parents from choosing the school they believe would provide the best education for their children.

For this reason there have been several programs instituted around the country in recent years designed to give parents more alternatives for their children’s education. Most noteworthy (and most studied) among these are the educational choice programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Washington, D.C. and the State of Florida. While the specifics of each program vary, each of these programs provided governmental funding to eligible parents to offset at least some of the cost of attending private schools. Ever since these programs began, researchers have been actively studying their impact.

Generally, the studies find that the school choice programs:

- Improved student scores on standardized tests, although the effect was relatively small (in some cases insignificant), and
- Dramatically increased parental satisfaction in their children’s schools.

While critics of school choice programs might point to the relatively small increases in student test scores as evidence that school choice programs do not work as economic theorists expected, the relatively small impact on test scores is not all that surprising or troubling. Remember that when choosing a school, academic rigor is only one of several factors parents consider. Consequently, test scores should not be the only criteria one should use to evaluate educational policy.

The most important and most relevant finding from these studies is that parental satisfaction (which includes academic rigor but not exclusively so) in
their children’s schools consistently and significantly increases when more educational alternatives are available.

In other words, parents are participating in these programs and enrolling their children in private schools because they believe those schools are better for their children. In other words, these programs are helping parents act in ways the parents believe are best for their children.

An Idea For School Choice in Oklahoma
There are a number of ways that the State of Oklahoma can make more educational choices more affordable for more Oklahoma families.

To work effectively the ideal solution must not only make a private school education more affordable, the proposal must not impair the ability of Oklahoma’s public schools to educate their students either. While the exact dollar amounts could differ, an ideal solution would look something like this:

1. The State of Oklahoma would offer a $3,000 scholarship to every K-12 student who enrolls in an accredited private school. These scholarships would clearly reduce the cost of attending a private school, thereby making a private school education more affordable and more accessible. Additionally, the requirement that students attend an accredited school in order to receive the scholarship is an important tool to ensure educational quality.

2. The state would also need to increase overall education funding by at least $100 million to fund scholarships for students currently enrolled in private schools. If overall funding does not increase then the scholarships for current private school students would have to come from the current education budget, leaving public schools with less money to educate the same number of students. Thus, this provision ensures that the public schools are able to continue providing the same services to their current students.

3. For every new student who transitions from a public to a private school though, the public school’s funding would decrease by the cost of the $3,000 scholarship. In addition to providing a mechanism to fund some of these scholarships, this provision is also sound budget policy. As public schools begin to serve fewer students they need fewer dollars to provide the same educational services to the remaining students. Interestingly, the $3,000 scholarship proposed in this essay is significantly less than the current per-pupil expenditures in Oklahoma public schools. This means that while overall public school funding would decrease under this proposal, funding per-pupil would actually increase.

Together these three provisions would make more educational choices more affordable for more Oklahoma families. Consequently, more Oklahoma families would be able to choose the school that they believe would best serve their children. In conclusion, this proposal would give Oklahoma’s parents more power. It would give Oklahoma’s parents more flexibility. It would give Oklahoma’s parents more happiness, all because it gives Oklahoma’s parents…the freedom to choose.

End Notes

2 Economists refer to this inefficiency that results from a lack of competition as “X-inefficiency”.

3 The author of this essay is himself the son of two former Oklahoma public school teachers and attended Oklahoma public schools from first grade to Ph.D.

4 For a recent review of the academic literature studying these programs see “School Vouchers: Recent Findings and Unanswered Questions”, by Lisa Barrow and Cecilia Elena Rouse, Economic Perspectives, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 3Q 2008, pp. 2-16.
Brandon Dutcher is vice president for policy at the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA), a free-market think tank.

You may recall news accounts of a 2007 report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce which gave Oklahoma’s public school system an “F.” The report said “student performance in Oklahoma is very poor - the state ranks among the lowest in the nation.” And this in a nation whose schools are among the worst in the industrialized world.

“If this report is not a wake-up call,” then-OSU regent Burns Hargis said at the time, “I don’t know what is.”

I have argued for 15 years that in order to improve student performance in Oklahoma, we must not rely solely on an antiquated, heavily unionized, government-owned-and-operated monopoly to deliver education.

Dr. Rod Paige, the son of public-school educators and the first African-American to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education, said in a 2003 speech at Harvard: “Americans will not allow themselves to be boxed in by a monopoly. In the 21st century, choice is not the exception - it’s the rule. Only in education would choice and competition be viewed as ‘innovative’ or ‘radical’ or ‘risky.’ Our education system must change to reflect these times - for all parents and all children from all income levels.”

Fortunately, we are seeing some movement in that direction. As Oklahoma begins its second century - with its citizens freely choosing everything from grocery stores to news channels to cell-phone providers - we are fortunate to have more choices in education too. There are charter schools, magnet and specialty schools, virtual schools, privately funded K-12 scholarships, a thriving homeschool sector, and more.

And of course, let’s not forget the most common form of school choice: real-estate-based school choice. Ironically, Oklahoma’s low-income parents are actually subsidizing the school choices of the more affluent. As you know, middle- and upper-income parents tend to itemize on their federal tax returns so they can get those juicy deductions for property taxes and mortgage interest. Many would have a hard time affording those homes in the Edmond School District or the Jenks School District if the federal income tax system didn’t favor them over their lower-income, non-itemizing brethren. School-choice litigator Clint Bolick calls this “the largest school choice program in the United States.”

In any case, there’s good reason to believe this trend toward greater consumer choice will continue. And in a way, it’s back to the future. After all, the American tradition of educational freedom and consumer choice predates and lasted longer than our current practice of delivering education through a monopoly.

There are now 25 school choice programs - mostly vouchers and tax credits - in 15 states plus the District of Columbia. As more and more states embrace school choice, it’s reasonable to believe Oklahoma will too.

“School choice continues to spread, unstoppable now, despite the best efforts of its foes to contain it,” education scholar Chester Finn recently said.

Even our state school superintendent has said that more school choice is likely in Oklahoma. “School choice is a reality, and we should just get used to it,” Sandy Garrett said in 2001. “We have a lot of choice already in Oklahoma, but I think we’ll have some sort of a tax credit or something to let children go wherever their parents want.”

In 2008 the Oklahoma Senate, by a vote of 30 to 18 (six Democrats voting with all 24 Republicans in
favor), passed a modest tax credit for Oklahomans who contribute to philanthropic organizations providing scholarships for low-income children in failing schools. The measure died in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

More school-choice tax credit legislation - for special-needs children, for example, or for early childhood education— is sure to be introduced in 2010 and beyond. Vouchers, however, are a nonstarter in Oklahoma because of some embarrassing anti-Catholic bigotry enshrined in our state constitution (“Blaine Amendment” language).

But ultimately, targeted tax credits aren’t the answer. “School choice that serves all students, not just some, is where the movement is headed,” education scholar Greg Forster explains, “precisely because it’s the only model where the political math adds up.”

All parents and children, not just some, should have the freedom and the ability to choose from charter schools that emphasize core knowledge, specialty schools that focus on the arts, magnet schools that specialize in science and engineering, and dozens more.

They should be free to choose Christian schools which equip children to love the Lord their God with all their minds. Or Jewish day schools which provide a rigorous, faith-based education and help preserve Jewish continuity. Or Catholic schools which provide a safe, nurturing environment and a strenuous curriculum.

How many wake-up calls is it going to take? Dr. Forster puts it bluntly: “Our national future - in the form of our children’s education - is being demolished by a government monopoly that exists to serve the interests of a union gravy train. School choice has consistently worked, both to serve participants better and to improve all schools through competition.

“The bottom line comes down to only two questions. Is our national future worth fighting for? And is there any other movement - is there anything else at all - that has shown a sign of producing the kind of positive educational results necessary to save it?”
Who is REALLY Getting Left Behind?
Debra F. Hull, PhD, Coordinator for Gifted and Talented, Tulsa Public Schools

Statistics provided by Lumina and the Oklahoma Academy illustrate that Oklahoma is far behind the national average in associate, bachelors, and graduate degrees. This is indeed a problem for our state. Although high school graduation rates are adequate when compared to other states, there is a secret: Many of those who do drop out are some of our most capable students. It is estimated that 20% of the dropout rate are students classified as gifted and talented. "No Child Left Behind has left our most promising students behind!"

The drop out rate is especially high for Native Americans (31%), Blacks (18%), and Hispanics students (18%) with high academic talent (Rimm, 1995). Could this be related to why we are behind other states in graduating students with higher degrees? No Child Left Behind has left our most promising students behind. While working so hard to help those scoring in the lowest ranges, educational institutions often forget about students exhibiting high ability. These students often score high on the Oklahoma Criterion Test, giving educators a false sense of security. Another secret is that this test has a very low ceiling; it is not an adequate test for highly capable students. Such students easily score high without having to work at their studies.

This is problematic. When students are not required to work hard, they don’t acquire a work ethic when it comes to learning. Students think learning comes easily and often shut down when presented with difficult work. They become bored; often engendering behavior problems in the classroom. If and when these students do get to college, many drop out because they have not learned to operate in a challenging setting.

The good news is that Oklahoma does a great job of funding gifted and talented education. The problem is that we do not require teachers to have a certification in this area. Special Education has benefited from strong advocacy and teachers must have a degree and certification. Gifted and Talented teachers need certification and training to adequately support G/T students. There is a misconception that bright children make it on their own; it is frequently believed that G/T students don’t need the same level of support as other students. This is patently false. All children need support.

Gifted and talented children face the same problems, the same insecurities, and have the same needs. Oklahoma must recognize who we are leaving behind and work to support all students (Coleman & Cross, 2001). Research shows that the most important element of a GT student’s educational experience is the teacher. The Association for the Gifted, the National Association of Gifted Children, and universities with programs in G/T education have conducted and published research on this population of students, demonstrating needs and best educational practices. This is why teachers of the gifted need specialized training (Borland, 2003) and state certification.

All public schools receive funding for Gifted/Talented in the state of Oklahoma. There are many issues involved with the manner in which these funds are used. There are problems associated with requiring a certification in GT for rural districts. All these issues must be put on the table with an understanding that if educators, citizens, and politicians work together, a solution to meeting the needs of our most capable students can be found.

Our state and nation will depend upon it if we are to be competitive on a global scale. India’s highly capable children number more than the US population and in 2013 China will become the largest English speaking country in the world.

Can we afford to leave our most promising and motivated students behind? Of course not.
K20 Center
The K20 Center is an educational research facility designed to prepare students with 21st Century through school-wide systemic change. K20 Center research and experiences show that although there are individual and school success stories, change is difficult. Through bringing together authentic learning with technology in a context of active democracy, schools are transformed to produce students prepared for the 21st Century.

“We envision interactive learning communities where citizens identify, analyze, and help solve problems in their local and global communities. Through cutting-edge research and development, local and international networking, school-university-industry partnerships, and interdisciplinary degree programs, we envision empowered citizens working for the creation of a global society rid of poverty, crime, racism, and other forms of inequality.”

Transforming K20 Education
Currently, 75% of the workforce is comprised of service or creative professions (Florida, 2002). Creative class jobs require a unique skill set. These 21st Century skills include critical thinking, effective speaking, problem solving, creativity, collaboration, curiosity and synthesis.

The K20 Center is an educational research facility designed to address the needs of the 21st Century learner and worker through school-wide systemic change. Utilizing a four phase program, the Center provides professional development for (1) leader learning, (2) entire school faculty learning, (3) teacher content-specific learning, and (4) authentic learning for student engagement. The work of the K20 Center is built upon a framework of inquiry & discourse, equity, authenticity, leadership and service (IDEALS). Authentic learning and teaching create a climate that nurtures the 21st Century skills needed for today’s workforce. By embedding innovative technology into authentic learning and teaching, the K20 Center supports school transformation and renewal. K20 technology-grant schools show a greater increase in the State of Oklahoma’s Academic Performance Index (API) than the state’s average API increase (Williams, Atkinson, Cate, & O’Hair, 2008). Data for the last school year show that K20 partner schools who have participated in our Digital Game Based Learning initiative have a 51% greater increase in API scores than the state’s average API increase. Also, schools in this initiative which participated in two years of lesson study show a 48% greater increase in API than the state’s average API increase (Wilson & Whisenhunt, 2008).

The K20 Center model encourages whole school change and impacts Oklahoma educators across the state. One such educator, Tiffany Neill, participated in several K20 programs at varying levels and attributes her classroom successes to the professional development and support she continues to receive from the K20 Center. Tiffany taught students who had seen little success with traditional schooling in an alternative school in northeastern Oklahoma. Her principal attended the K20 Center’s leadership program and their school was awarded an Oklahoma Educational Technology Trust Grant which provided technology equipment and professional development. Tiffany was a Science Research Fellow through the K20 Center and came to the University of Oklahoma for five weeks to study learn science-specific pedagogy and work with a research scientist. Prior to this, she had little understanding of educational best practices. Tiffany reflects,

“I gained valuable experience in the day-to-day practices of a scientist and quickly understood how providing that experience to students would be...
valuable. The revelation came at the end of the five week experience...I could no longer explain science, students had to do science to learn science! This began my introduction to authentic instruction and discourse. Although I did not have a sound understanding of their true meaning, I knew I wanted to replicate the educational process I experienced that summer.”

Upon returning to her classroom inspired and motivated, she began to implement authentic learning and inquiry science. She had an administrator who supported authenticity and had access to technology to implement change by designing forensic science labs and conducting them with students. She shares, “I quickly found a great deal of student motivation associated with them. Students who were not even enrolled in any form of a science class were eagerly waiting to participate. Throughout the year I stayed connected with the K20 Center staff who provided me with the support and resources to overcome any obstacles that may have otherwise caused me to revert back to a more traditional form of instruction.”

After seeing a tremendous amount of success with authentic instruction in alternative education, Tiffany wanted to see how authenticity would translate to a traditional high school. What she found is that these students responded very positively to the opportunities afforded through the authentic instruction and discourse. When asked what they liked most about the authentic teaching experiences, students replied, “All labs were good because you can experience how life works.” Another said he liked the lab because “it dealt with what is happening today.” Tiffany lists these following successes during this year of teaching high school biology:

- Student motivation for learning science increased as reported through student feedback,
- Retention of science material increased as indicated by a 25% increase in the pass rate for the End of Instruction Biology test,
- Special education students were more successful through providing of individualized support and resources associated with the authentic science lessons their peers were experiencing.
- Teacher and community interest increased in lessons being conducted in the classroom.

Tiffany further shares that through continued support of the K20 Center she developed lessons that directly connected to the research she had conducted with the research scientist, giving students the opportunity to experience life as an environmental engineer. She is a member of a network and stays connected virtually and as a member of a community of learning. When asked by an engineer, “what is it that made the difference for you to be able to incorporate my research into your classroom?” Tiffany responds, “The support of the K20 Center programs. In order for students to have the opportunities that my students have had, I feel it is essential that teachers experience authentic instruction and then receive the continued support to implement it in their classrooms. The K20 Center has given me that and so much more through my experiences with their four phase model. I have a new outlook on education now. I began with a desire to help students, but I didn’t have the educational tools to do so. I now feel equipped and ready to teach a population of learners who will be able to compete in a global society, because of the 21st Century skills they have
experienced through authentic instruction and discourse. I am now working towards my masters in science education.”

K20 Center research and experiences show that although there are many success stories like Tiffany’s; change is difficult from within. When new innovative ideas and technologies are introduced into a traditional system, stakeholders find it overwhelming to have to operate both the old and the new at the same time (Christensen, 2008). While previous studies have reported increased efficacy and enthusiasm for inquiry teaching, they also have reported challenges in transferring the professional development experiences into classroom instruction (Slater & Cate, 2004).

This creates “pockets of excellence” within traditional schools, but no real school reform. Teacher immersion into authentic learning experiences relieves that stress between teacher beliefs and actual classroom practice (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Alleviating such stress requires the kind of ongoing support and the philosophical framework provided by organizations such as the K20 Center.

In addition, Wagner (2008) suggests, we have gained little if we solve the problem of workforce preparedness and neglect the development of active citizenry. The K20 philosophical framework addresses technology and is steeped in the theories of democracy (Williams, Cate, & O’Hair, 2009).

Through bringing together authentic learning supported by technology in a context of active democracy, schools can be transformed to produce students prepared for the 21st Century.

REFERENCES


Better Schools Through Better Accounting? Yes!
Tom Daxon and Brandon Dutcher, Oklahoma Council for Public Affairs, Oklahoma City

Meet Tom Daxon
Tom Daxon is a Certified Public Accountant who holds both an undergraduate and a master’s degree from Oklahoma State University. In 1978, he was elected State Auditor and Inspector for Oklahoma.

Following his tenure as Oklahoma’s Auditor and Inspector, Daxon became a principal with Arthur Andersen and advised government clients across the country. In 1995, Daxon returned to Oklahoma where he served as Secretary of Finance and Revenue for Gov. Frank Keating.

He currently practices as a CPA in Oklahoma City and was recently appointed to a task force of the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board.

Meet Brandon Dutcher
Brandon Dutcher is vice president for policy at the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA), a free-market think tank. A Bartlesville native, Dutcher received his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Oklahoma.

He received a master’s degree in journalism and a master’s degree in public policy from Regent University. He is the editor of Oklahoma Policy Blueprint, a book which was praised by Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman as “thorough, well-informed, and highly sophisticated.”

Dutcher has received eight writing awards from the Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists, and his articles have appeared in Investor’s Business Daily, the Sacramento Bee, the Tulsa World, The Oklahoman, the Cincinnati Enquirer, World magazine, and more than 190 newspapers throughout Oklahoma and the U.S. He is listed in the Heritage Foundation Guide to Public Policy Experts.

Getting real value for money is always a laudable goal, but even more so in today’s tough economic environment. This is especially critical in education, the linchpin of our state’s prospects for future growth. The Oklahoma economy is making strides but we still struggle to fund government services while maintaining a competitive environment. It is especially vital for the state to get value for the money it spends on education.

In 2005, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) research fellow Steve Anderson, a Certified Public Accountant and a former state-certified teacher with 17 teaching certifications, set out to determine just how much Oklahomans really pay for their schools.

Using generally accepted accounting principles for government, Mr. Anderson compiled the federal, state, and local expenditures for Oklahoma’s K-12 public schools. He discovered that Oklahoma’s per-pupil expenditure in 2003—the latest year for which data were available—was not $6,429, the oft-cited “official” number. Rather, it was $11,250.

If the CEO or chief financial officer of any public company disseminated misleading financial data to the same extent as Oklahoma’s education officials, they would be subject to criminal and civil prosecution. Indeed, according to Frederick Hess, a former public high school teacher and current director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, “school accounting guidelines would bring smiles to an Enron auditor.”

How, you may ask, can the “official” reports be so far off the mark?

It’s really quite simple. When computing expenditures, the government’s school accounting systems simply exclude many significant costs.
A few examples:

depreciation of buildings and other capital assets; spending via “dedicated revenues” which are funneled directly to schools without going through the appropriations process; retirement benefits as a cost in the year incurred; and interest of unfunded pension obligations resulting from our repeated failure to fund benefits as they are earned.

Disturbingly, there are even more costs which could have been included but were not. For example, there are many K-12 costs that are carried on the budgets of other government agencies, such as the cost of remedial instruction borne by the higher education system and school-employee costs borne by Medicaid. In addition, the amounts calculated by Mr. Anderson do not include the overhead and administrative amounts related to collecting taxes and exercising general oversight and regulation. In the private sector, these costs are counted against profits, but in government, we treat them separately.

The late Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman called the OCPA study “splendid.” He said it represented “a real public service.” By contrast, the president of the state’s most powerful labor union, the Oklahoma Education Association, called the study “highly suspect.” OCPA has challenged the union to a public debate on the matter, but to no avail.

In February 2009, Mr. Anderson updated the numbers. As was the case in his earlier study, he looked at every function that a private school would have to perform in a fiscal year, and then looked for the equivalent function in Oklahoma state government. Once the function was identified in a state agency, he traced how much of the agency’s cost was related to public K-12 education and included those costs in his financial statement.

The result? Oklahoma’s per-pupil expenditure in 2007 was $10,942. (You’ll note this was actually down slightly from the 2003 per-pupil expenditure, primarily because the increase in the pension liability in 2007 was less than it had been in 2003.)

But there is more to education than spending. What value do we get for what we spend? The reality of scarce resources demands that we prioritize wisely. For instance, Oklahoma has traditionally used its resources to keep its class sizes small. Some would argue that we would get better results with better-paid teachers even if we had one or two more pupils per class. The point is that we face options in how to spend any level of appropriation. We should systematically measure our performance against our costs and emphasize those strategies that get the best results. We should consistently ask how we are doing. For example:

What is our yearly retention rate? What percentage of each class graduates from high school in four years? What percentage of high school graduates go on to college? How many of those who start college are able to do so without remediation? How well do our students perform on standardized tests?

The approach of measuring performance, measuring cost, and comparing performance to cost is one we should follow throughout government. Given the important role education plays for our state, it is especially important that we get it right. Bringing transparency to the process and holding our officials accountable are indispensable.

We must strive for high levels of performance in every school. Most families are trapped: if the local public school fails to do its job as most parents have few viable options. And the failure to educate has terrible consequences. In addition, with schools the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Potential employers find a well-educated labor pool highly desirable. The availability of good schools is also an important factor in recruiting and retaining key employees.

Every school district should report its schools’ performance. Every district should report the real cost of achieving that performance. The report should be audited. We should encourage our major media outlets to cover these reports, comparing the progress and efficiency of different school districts.

Oklahomans already do much for public education. As our state seeks to build on the economic progress it is making, we should consider what we can do to provide our children the nation’s finest schools—and do it. Every dollar we spend, we must spend wisely.
New Directions for Oklahoma Urban School Improvement
Larkin Warner, PhD, Regents Professor Emeritus, Oklahoma State University

Meet Larkin Warner
Dr. Larkin Warner has been a loyal member of the Oklahoma Academy since its rebirth in 1985. Larkin received the Academy’s “Key Contributor” award in 2003. He is also a recipient of OSU’s Leadership Legacy Award. Larkin’s leadership in economic forecasting has chronicled areas ranging from the state’s educational future to its water resources, from health and human services to revisions of the Constitution, from Native American economic issues to the history and future of Oklahoma’s economy.

Dr. Warner, a Phi Beta Kappa, began a nearly forty year association with OSU as an Assistant Professor for the Department of Economics. His distinguished professional career included a research position with the Kerr Foundation and induction into the prestigious Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame.

Oklahoma’s two large and remarkably similar “urban” school districts in Tulsa and Oklahoma City are jointly adopting a comprehensive approach to improving performance at the middle and high school levels. The “Rigor and Readiness” program is being provided by two major national commercial educational consulting firms, ACT, Inc., (American College Testing) and America’s Choice. The federal stimulus program has provided a fortuitous source of funding for the firms’ services.

The following remarks include (1) an examination of some of the fundamental characteristics of urban schools with emphasis on the structure and performance of the Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) and the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) and (2) a brief introduction to the philosophy and educational delivery system embodied by “Rigor and Readiness.”

Throughout the nation, “urban” schools have several common characteristics. They are located in urban rather than rural, small town, or suburban settings. They are typically large districts located within the central core of metropolitan areas. A large proportion of students are from families with relatively high rates of poverty. Student bodies typically consist of large shares of ethnic and racial minorities. For many urban districts, relatively large shares of students are classed as being Limited English Proficient.

As shown in Table 1, TPS and OKCPS fit well into the urban school district category. However, with enrollments in the neighborhood of 40,000 each, they are relatively small in comparison with the nation’s biggest districts. When the nation’s districts are arrayed from high to low in terms of enrollment, the two districts do not even count among the largest 100 (both ranked in the 120s in 2005-06).

This means that the two districts are arguably more manageable than, say, a district such as The City of Chicago District 299 with 420,000 students in 2005-06.1

Urban School Challenges: What the Numbers Show

Table 1 contains data on the structure and performance of TPS and OKCPS, with the two districts compared to data for the entire state and to the next two largest school districts in Tulsa County (Broken Arrow, Union) and Oklahoma County (Edmond, Putnam City).

The Edmond, Broken Arrow, and Union school districts are typical suburban districts. Putnam City was, at one time, a typical suburban district; because of demographic changes in the western third of the City of Oklahoma City, this district appears to be transforming into an urban district.
Most of the data in Table 1 are derived from state government’s Office of Accountability Oklahoma Educational Indicators Program as reported in Profiles 2008 District Report.

Declining shares of the metropolitan public school “market” typify urban districts. There were significant declines in enrollment in the two urban districts between 1971-72 and 1997-98, with TPS losing 28,527 students and OKCPS losing 25,714 students (measured on the basis of average daily attendance, ADA). During this period, the two big districts’ combined share of total state ADA dropped from 22.4 percent to 12.5 percent. Major factors leading to this declining share included “white flight” following desegregation, and the overall population growth of the two metropolitan areas which was naturally sprawling outward from the two city’s central cores.

In 2007-08, minorities dominated the student bodies of both districts, with the Caucasian (non-Hispanic) shares at 34 percent in TPS and 23 percent in OKCPS. The expanded Hispanic share is particularly notable in OKCPS—with the entire district having 38 percent Hispanic enrollment (average daily membership, ADM). This, of course, indicates a relatively large share of students classed as Limited English Proficient.

The OKCPS—2007-08 Statistical Profile reports that there were 9,600 English language learners in the district.

Students attending the two urban districts are mainly from relatively poor families. Eighty-four percent of the students in each of the two districts are from families whose incomes are so low that the students are eligible for the federally funded free or reduced cost lunch program. Eligibility requires that the family’s income be 185 percent or less than the federally determined poverty line. While poverty is certainly not absent from the suburban districts, it is not nearly as concentrated as is the case for TPS and OKCPS.

There is a gap between the two urban districts and the other districts and the entire state with respect to the percent of students classed as satisfactory on state-mandated core curriculum tests for the fifth and eighth grades. This gap appears to be greater at the middle school level than for grade school.

Students in the urban schools are more likely to be absent, and are more likely to drop out of school. The four-year dropout rate for TPS is 25.1 percent and 21.2 percent for OKCPS. Only 3.1 percent drop out from the relatively high income Edmond district.

The students taking the ACT college entrance exam perform relatively poorly in comparison with the state and the suburban districts. Graduates from the urban districts are somewhat less likely to go on to college, though the difference between the state and the suburban districts is not particularly great. However, once the urban students get to college within the state’s higher education system, they are much more likely than the rest to need to take one or more remedial courses. The students are also much less likely to complete college—receiving an associate’s degree within three years or a bachelor’s degree within six.

Given the data on the dropout rate, the college going rate, and the college graduation rate, it is relatively easy to start with 100 students at the ninth grade level, and estimate how many will succeed in college. (Since no data are available for the graduation rates of students attending college out of state, it is assumed that the in-state graduation rate applies to all.) For the OKCPS, 21.2 percent drop out of high school, 32.5 percent do not go on to college, and 72.3 percent of those who go to college do not graduate. This means that of the original 100 students, only 15 will succeed in college. The TPS performance is a bit worse with 12 out of 100 graduating college. The same procedure applied to the relatively high-performing Edmond district implies that 36 out of 100 ninth graders will succeed in college—not a particularly impressive performance.

Finally, the data suggest that there are critical stages in the educational process at which inadequacies are particularly evident. For example, the high frequency of taking remedial courses indicates a failure of the urban school students to be adequately prepared for college work. There is increasing
Table 1
Comparative Data for Major Urban School Districts in Oklahoma


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASURE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>TUL</th>
<th>OKC</th>
<th>EDM</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVG DAILY MEMBERSHIP-ADM (enrolled)</td>
<td>634,251</td>
<td>40,773</td>
<td>39,915</td>
<td>19,704</td>
<td>18,367</td>
<td>15,919</td>
<td>14,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACIAL/ETHNIC (%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FINANCIAL INDICATORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students eligible for free/reduced lunch (%)</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students in special education (%)</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures per ADM ($)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction expense</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>4,391</td>
<td>4,276</td>
<td>3,774</td>
<td>4,141</td>
<td>3,671</td>
<td>3,568</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total expense</td>
<td>7,605</td>
<td>8,283</td>
<td>7,950</td>
<td>6,761</td>
<td>7,317</td>
<td>6,720</td>
<td>6,770</td>
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<td>STUDENT PERFORMANCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th grade core curriculum test (% sat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th grade core curriculum test (% sat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of days absent per student</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year dropout rate (%, Class of 2008)</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average ACT score</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-state college going rate</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK college going rate (3 yr. % av.)</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students taking remedial courses in OK (%)</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK college completion rate (%)</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-1972</td>
<td>566,857</td>
<td>66,503</td>
<td>60,442</td>
<td>4,780</td>
<td>18,820</td>
<td>4,556</td>
<td>1,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>582,459</td>
<td>37,976</td>
<td>34,728</td>
<td>15,680</td>
<td>17,920</td>
<td>13,770</td>
<td>11,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>580,796</td>
<td>38,930</td>
<td>35,934</td>
<td>16,632</td>
<td>17,879</td>
<td>13,906</td>
<td>12,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>596,450</td>
<td>37,694</td>
<td>36,787</td>
<td>18,697</td>
<td>17,102</td>
<td>14,969</td>
<td>13,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
concern in Oklahoma and elsewhere about readiness for kindergarten and the primary grades—hence the emerging emphasis on early childhood education. Readiness for high school work also appears to be a special challenge.

Note the following enrollment pattern for students in OKCPS for grades 6-12 in 2007-2008 as reported in the district’s 1997-98 Statistical Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>3,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>3,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>3,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>3,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>2,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>1,972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The large accumulation of enrollment in the 9th grade, and to a lesser extent the 10th grade, suggests that students’ progress is halted in those grades. The rapid drop in enrollment in the 11th and 12th grades may be indicating a critically high rate of dropping out.

The old accumulation of enrollment in the 9th grade, and to a lesser extent the 10th grade, suggests that students’ progress is halted in those grades. The rapid drop in enrollment in the 11th and 12th grades may be indicating a critically high rate of dropping out.

“Rigor and Readiness”
New Paradigm for State’s Big Urban Districts

A 46-page prospectus entitled “Rigor and Readiness, preparing all students for college and careers” contains an extensive overview of the program. The prospectus was prepared jointly by ACT, Inc. and America’s Choice. In the remarks that follow, emphasis is on the overarching goal and philosophy of the system, the significance of this program as a joint effort of the two big urban school districts, and the structure or means by which improved educational outcomes are expected to be achieved.

Goal and Philosophy
The goal of the system is stated succinctly in the subtitle of the prospectus: preparing all students for college and careers. It soon becomes evident that preparation for college is a prerequisite for effective access to careers, so the essence of the program is preparing all students for college work. Given the data presented above, this appears to be a very lofty goal for the two big urban districts. In the old industrial model of urban education, some students were on track for jobs not requiring the educational background required of those going on to college. Students were to be prepared for the workplace by learning how to come to the same place every day, stay there for a prescribed number of hours, and follow the teacher’s (boss’s) instructions. However, this old paradigm cannot apply to the global economy into which high school graduates are entering.

The seriousness of the need to adopt very different approaches to middle and high school education is emphasized in a recent book by Harvard education professor Tony Wagner entitled The Global Achievement Gap. Wagner argues that even the best high schools in the United States “don’t teach the new survival skills our children need.” Wagner has consulted with the two urban districts relative to their goals and the Rigor and Readiness initiative.

The Joint Effort: A First
New superintendents in both districts have had long experience working within the framework of Oklahoma’s public school system. As Table 1 indicates, the two big urban districts are remarkably similar with respect to both structure and performance.

As the expert consultants from ACT and America’s choice come to Oklahoma to train teachers and administrators, it is efficient to implement some of this training in joint meetings of district personnel held in Tulsa or Oklahoma City.

With 80,000 students in the two districts, and with much subpar performance typical of big city urban districts, TPS and OKCPS present an opportunity to have a significant quantitative and qualitative impact on public education in Oklahoma. Moreover, their success in this initiative should serve as an example to a good many other districts which, to one degree or another, are exhibiting features similar to the typical urban districts, e.g. Putnam City in Oklahoma City.
An Introduction to “Rigor and Readiness”
The central organizing principle for this program is in the concept of “Response to Intervention.” This is described in the glossary of the ACT/America’s Choice prospectus.

**Response to Intervention** - widely used framework for defining interventions using a tiered approach with Tier One including strategies for on-grade students, Tier Two for students who need supplemental support, and Tier Three for students who are struggling and are well-below grade level.

The three tier student classification system consists of two components at each tier level—“academic intervention” and “psychosocial supports.”

Academic interventions are designed with Tier One improving the regular academic program, Tier Two providing support for students who are struggling to stay on grade level, and Tier Three providing intensive acceleration for students who have fallen significantly below grade level. The strategy is to assist students in Tier Two and Tier Three to attain the Tier One classification. Within the parlance of the current federal education policy, this is an orderly and explicit approach to assuring that no student is left behind.

Psychosocial supports recognize the importance of students’ personal and emotional development. These supports are aimed at motivation, engagement, and self-regulatory behavior. For Tier One students, emphasis is on effective counseling and building strong teacher-student relationships. Tier Two students are assigned mentors and a planned process for overcoming barriers to their engagement in school. Tier Three interventions apply to students with multiple risk factors for dropping out of school. Getting these students back on track may also involve community agencies as well as the resources of the school district.

The program is to be implemented in stages, with initial heavy emphasis the first year on building up performance in grades 6, 7, 8, and 9. This reflects awareness of the frequency that students do not appear to be prepared for high school work. Then the program will be expanded one year at a time through grades 10-12.

The two consulting firms bring various specialties to the Rigor and Readiness initiative. As early as 1993, ACT’s Educational Planning and Assessment (EPAS) program has been used in Oklahoma’s middle and high schools. Included in EPAS is the taking of tests at two levels which will indicate student progress toward being able to effectively handle the ACT college entrance test. America’s Choice has a stable of programs to build up student capacity in literacy, mathematics, writing, and science.

In addition to the extensive testing provide by ACT, the extent of success for the Rigor and Readiness program can be identified by looking at a few key variables. What, for example, happens at the critical 9th grade level? Are more students able to get through the 9th grade successfully? What is the evidence that the program is successful in bringing Tier Two and Tier Three students up to Tier One? What about dropout rates? When students from the two districts go to college, is there a big drop in the need for remedial courses? What happens to college graduation rates?

Rigor and Readiness is an exciting and ambitious school improvement initiative. Citizens in the two big urban districts have a big stake in the outcomes. And, because of the sheer numbers involved, Oklahomans everywhere will watch this program.

ENDNOTES


