



Moving Ideas Into Action

1998 FULL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION

**FULL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM
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AND
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"6 ESSENTIALS FOR EDUCATION"**

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1998 EDUCATION REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

At the end of the Twentieth Century the only constant is change. Worldwide communication is virtually instantaneous, and the competition for products, services, and ideas is global. In this time of change, Oklahomans must focus on how we can enhance wealth and job creation in this state, assure our future competitiveness in the marketplace, and improve the quality of life of our citizens through education. That focus must occur *now*. Given the relative health of the current national and state economies, we have a window of opportunity to make decisions that will have a dramatic impact on education. We must move beyond identifying problems, to proposing and implementing dynamic solutions to which government officials, business leaders, academic professionals, and the general public can wholeheartedly subscribe. And those solutions must be increasingly targeted to early, creative, preventive involvement of our citizens and leaders in all aspects of education, rather than reactive, patchwork mending of Oklahoma's education system.

If Oklahomans are to enjoy a greater quality of life, they must gain a diverse knowledge, practical skills necessary for self-sufficiency in a complicated and technology-oriented world, and the means to adapt to societal changes. We must provide Oklahomans not only with basic knowledge and skills, but with a full opportunity to acquire the education needed to maximize individual potential. As one member of the Task Force put it, every Oklahoman should have access to the "optimal level of education."

Learning is a lifelong process. It is not limited to the lessons learned from parents; it does not end with the passage from youth to adulthood; it is not confined to the skills and talents needed for a particular job or profession. Learning opportunities for our citizens -- from the very youngest to the most senior -- must be available to persons of all ages, interests, and skills.

Education must be accessible. Persons with particular interests and talents must be able to identify providers offering the appropriate services. The services must be affordable and reasonably convenient. Education providers must partner with each other to ensure that all needed services are provided, yet avoid unnecessary duplication or overlap.

Education must be responsive. Education must focus on the effective delivery of services to the "client" or "customer", the student at whatever age, rather than on the institutions or organizations themselves. Education providers must be able to identify the needs of students, employers, and communities and offer suitable learning opportunities that are efficient and timely. Education providers and employers must work as partners to ensure that business and industry have a skilled, well-trained workforce that is adaptable to a rapidly changing workplace.

Education must be accountable. Excellence in education must be measured by identifiable, competencies-based benchmarks. Expectations for student and teacher must be

defined; challenging goals must be set; and objective measures of success or failure must be identified. Benchmarks of excellence must be both internal and external. Providers must meet their own performance measures of efficient and effective service delivery, as well as meet the needs of Oklahoma businesses and industries in supplying a competent, skilled workforce.

Historically, the structure of governance of education institutions -- from local school boards to the regents boards that oversee colleges and universities -- has reflected the traditionalistic culture of the state. At times, the governing bodies of our educational institutions and organizations have appeared motivated more by the preservation of institutional structure and culture than by an objective assessment of the needs of Oklahoma students, employers, and communities.

In recent years, we have made great strides toward collaborative efforts among education providers at different stages of the educational process and among providers who traditionally have been viewed as "competitors." These strides have been driven mostly by technological changes and opportunities. However, a statewide system of available, responsive, and accountable education services cannot be achieved unless cooperation among education providers is maximized, using technology to the fullest. Distance between educator and learner should no longer be a reason either to fail to provide the service or to justify the unnecessary duplication of services among providers, with the attendant cost to the citizens of Oklahoma.

Tax-supported funding at all educational levels must have an increased relation to efficient and effective service delivery, even if this increased relation requires statutory or constitutional change in school governance. Education providers who efficiently and effectively deliver services to students should be recognized and rewarded. Those providers who are not efficient and effective should be given incentives to become so. And all education providers in Oklahoma should work together in comprehensive and integrated strategic planning and management, including the development of long-range plans for coordinated delivery of educational services.

These principals underlie all of the recommendations of the Oklahoma Academy in this report. This report, however, cannot address all of the issues that face education in Oklahoma as we enter the twenty-first century. This report is but a continuation of the process which has involved the Oklahoma Academy's earlier conferences on educational issues, Task Force 2000, the Citizens' Commission on the Future of Higher Education, and other groups formed by various organizations or institutions that have studied and recommended reform for the delivery of educational services. The process does not end here. Education must be the continued focus of government, education, and business leaders. The Oklahoma Academy recommends the following actions to make Oklahoma a place where education is the door, not the wall, to improved quality of life for all of the state's citizens.

1998 Education Report and Recommendations

(1) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that state funding for effective early-childhood programs be increased to the greatest extent possible. The Oklahoma Academy recommends that policy makers commit to the principle that state budget dollars devoted to children's issues should be reallocated at the earliest opportunity from reactive intervention efforts to proactive prevention programs. The Academy asks that the legislature pass a Joint Resolution committing to reallocate state budget dollars from intervention efforts to prevention programs as early as possible.

COMMENT: It is critical to the effective use of limited funds to ensure that successful early-childhood programs, such as Head Start and Oklahoma Parents as Teachers Program, are identified and supported. Accordingly, all state agencies responsible for supervising, monitoring, or regulating early-childhood programs in Oklahoma should collaborate with competent program providers to establish guidelines for identifying effective programs that deserve taxpayer support. These guidelines should use proven predictors of quality early-childhood development, i.e., programs that encourage children's social, emotional, and educational development in a safe environment.

The State of Oklahoma must realize the important connection between healthy children and families and a productive, globally competitive workforce. The National Conference of State legislatures (NCSL) reports that "an increasing amount of research links quality early-childhood experiences to later school achievement, adult productivity and the foundations of a sound economy." The Academy's 1997 "Building Safer Communities Report" states, "Every expert panelist in the prevention session of the conference, *without exception*, stated that the only long-term solution to crime was to address the issues of early-childhood development." Recent studies have shown that increased investment in our state's youngest citizens leads to a higher per capita income because of the ability and willingness to learn in educational institutions beyond the secondary level. NCSL research has shown that every \$1 spent on a child for a quality early-childhood experience yields a savings of \$7.16 in public funds spent on corrections, welfare, educational remediation, and the effects of teen pregnancies.

(2) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the State develop and adopt creative incentives for employers to provide innovative, quality child-care programs for employees.

COMMENT: Eighteen states have implemented varying forms of corporate tax credit or deduction to encourage employers to expand child-care options for employees. Incentives should be aimed at both initial start-up costs as well as ongoing operational expenses. Government leaders also should explore non-financial incentives with employers.

(3) The Oklahoma Academy recommends enhancement of tiered funding differential rate guidelines of reimbursement to child-care facilities. These facilities should (a) establish measures to provide a healthy, secure, and safe environment where children can learn and develop; (b) establish quality training and professional development programs for child-care staff; and (c) earn national accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

COMMENT: The lack of affordable, quality child-care is at crisis levels in Oklahoma. Child-care problems that parents face, are two-fold. First, today's parents find it extremely difficult to locate *affordable* child-care. And second, it is equally difficult to find *quality* child-care. For most parents, finding *some* type of child-care is simply not enough. Parents want a safe, healthy, exciting environment for children to develop and learn. According to "Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers," 80-86 % of children are in developmentally harmful and unsafe or developmentally neutral situations.

The legislature and the Department of Human Services have reconfigured the child-care co-payment schedule lowering child-care payments and expanding the schedule to include many previously overlooked, lower income families. **The Academy recommends further expansion of the co-pay schedule to further narrow the gap between the market value of quality child-care and set levels of child-care assistance.**

Currently, the Department of Human Services offers higher reimbursement rates for child-care centers that are a) licensed by the state, b) employ qualified staff, and c) provide staff development opportunities. The Academy recommends continual enhancement of these reimbursement guidelines to include national accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, written curriculum plans and lower staff/child ratios.

The Academy commends the Oklahoma Department of Human Services for developing *stringent* policies on safety and health standards at day-care facilities. In conjunction with the Oklahoma Department of Health, the Department of Human Services should aggressively pursue higher standards of *enforcement* of health and safety policies in child-care centers.

(4) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the state fund health insurance for needy families whose income is equal to or less than 250% of poverty level and explore providing health-care insurance for all children under the age of 18.

COMMENT: Oklahoma now funds some health insurance for families whose income is up to 185% of poverty level. Nevertheless, Oklahoma has the nation's third highest rate of children without health insurance. One in five Oklahoma children is not covered, according to the "Kids Count Data Book 1997". Children without health insurance are less likely to be immunized or receive appropriate screenings for physical and developmental problems. They are

less likely to receive routine preventative treatment. They are more likely to seek expensive care in hospital emergency rooms. When children do not receive appropriate and necessary health care, physical, nutritional, and emotional problems are more likely to develop. These problems adversely effect their academic achievement as well as parent's job performance.

Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Florida, and Massachusetts, among others, have state insurance programs that provide health insurance for all children. Oklahoma should explore these and other models of broad health insurance coverage to determine whether the benefit of reduced health expenditures and the reduction of collateral costs to the state for the ill health of children outweigh the cost of the insurance. The state may well be able to negotiate favorable terms with insurers that could provide insurance, or at least cover any gap created by underinsurance, for all of Oklahoma's children.

(5) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that legislation be passed to allow alternative forms of public education such as charter schools, enterprise schools, magnet schools and others to receive federal funding.

COMMENT: Charter schools, magnet schools, open enrollment options, alternative schools and choice among existing schools are all devices cited by the National Governor's Association and Council on Educational Development as ways to increase *consumer sovereignty* in education. Oklahoma must take positive steps to make this a reality.

The Academy continues to recognize the need for non-traditional educational delivery to students of all ages. Therefore, we must expand the definition of alternative education to include other non-traditional and charter school initiatives for all school populations and provide the means to establish those entities. Oklahoma should create state incentives for the creation of non-traditional school organizations that meet the needs of the community.

(6) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the initiatives identified in the 1996 Five-Point Education Plan be pursued aggressively.

COMMENT: In 1996, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of Vocational and Technical Education, and the Chancellor of Higher Education approved a Five-Point Plan to create a new level of cooperative leadership and undertake joint initiatives focused on (a) student success, (b) accountability, (c) economic development, (d) technology, and (e) education partnerships. Many of these initiatives have already been implemented. For example, 11 school-to-work regions have been identified, core curriculum requirements for K-12 have been increased, programs have been developed to provide instruction to teachers and faculty in the use of new technology. These positive developments should be applauded. The additional initiatives identified in the plan or formulated through cooperative leadership should be undertaken as soon as possible.

(7) The Oklahoma Academy recommends the following minimum initiatives maximizing the use of technology and technology education in common, vocational and technical, and higher education:

(a) Establish incentives and programs to provide reasonable access to computers for all students of all ages.

(b) Develop plans to implement technology systems incrementally on a site-by-site basis within each school district, with the overall goal of systemwide implementation and facilitation by 2002.

(c) Provide adequate state and private funding for upgraded software and hardware as needed.

(d) Engage paid or volunteer technology resource persons in school districts and at each institution to advise administrators and teachers on the use of current and emerging technologies in the classroom.

(e) Require that technology (the Internet, software related to specific subject matter, and so on) be integrated in the curriculum. It should be a tool that teachers use to present subject matter and students use to learn curriculum material.

(f) Encourage ongoing technology training as essential professional development for educators..

COMMENT: In 1987 the Academy observed, "Oklahoma must use modern education technology as a cost-effective instrument for raising educational standards and as a base for the . . . potential educational technology industry." It recommended that Oklahoma resolve to become a national leader in application of educational technology in public education. Oklahoma's schools are certainly more "wired" than they were 11 years ago, and, generally, students are more technologically astute. However, access to computers remains limited. In some schools with computers, there is little or no current software, or there is no connection to the Internet. Research capabilities of the computer are often limited to the school's available software.

Educator's express genuine concern about the difficulty of assigning computer-based work when many students do not have access to computers in their homes. The choice must rest ultimately with the parents, rather than the schools, with regard to computer accessibility outside the classroom. The state cannot mandate that parents provide their children with computers, any more than it can mandate that parents provide their children with encyclopedias. However, by establishing creative programs that increase student access to computers, families also benefit.

Access to computers, even for families that cannot afford one individually, can be achieved in a number of ways. These include state tax credits for some or all of the expense incurred by families with children in public, private, or home-schooled environments who purchase a computer system; shared time on a computer at the local library; donations of

computers from businesses to schools; computer lease programs through a collaboration of businesses and school systems; and the organization of after-school groups and summer camps using the educational institution's computers "after hours" and "off-season." One task force member commented, "We don't care how you get one, just get one!"

(8) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the legislature re-examine the mission and objectives of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth and that it give the commission the authority and hold it accountable to:

(a) Establish a viable, statewide central information source for available programs for children and youth.

(b) Set criteria for developing of quality standards for such programs and require that those standards be met.

(c) Identify successful models.

COMMENT: The Academy recognizes that the mission of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth is laudable, and that the Commission makes every effort to fulfill its mission of coordinating services for children and youth and providing oversight for those services. It should already have the information base to function effectively as the central source or clearinghouse for information about children and youth programs. The problem, as the Academy understands it, is that the Commission does not have any authority or power to effectuate change, and there is nothing to ensure its effectiveness.

(9) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that common education, vocational and technical education, and higher education providers develop standardized formats for reporting consumer-based, performance-related information and that the proposed formats be reviewed and approved by a panel of citizens, including business leaders, educators, parents, and students.

COMMENT: Common, vocational-technical, and higher education providers currently supply extensive data to the Office of Accountability, which, in turn, provides information to the public about the performance of our educational institutions. All education providers should be requested to do so, and state-supported providers should be required to do so. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, and the State Department of Education should develop a standardized, consumer-based set of quality indicators of institutional performance to help students, parents, and government and industry leaders to make decisions about educational choices. Input from students and their parents, as well as business and community leaders, will help ensure that the information presented is understandable, fair, and useful to consumers of education services.

Accurate and meaningful performance data also should be used as the basis for incentive and performance-based budgeting. Fiscal advantages and disadvantages tied

directly to performance indicators and reports will enhance the efficiency of Oklahoma's entire state system of education. When used for this purpose, the format of consumer-oriented information must be adapted to fit the information needs of educational administrators in the various components of the system. In some instances, such as at-risk schools, budget incentives must be supplemented with other measures.

(10) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that by July 1, 1999, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, in collaboration with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the State Chamber of Commerce, and employers and local economic development organizations:

(a) Develop and maintain a website that provides current information on (1) job and career options, including geographic distribution of availability of jobs; (2) specific skill, certification, or degree requirements for each option; and (3) the identity of (or, if available, a hyperlink to) the person(s) to contact for more information about the job or career option and the location and cost of programs or institutions providing the required skill, certification, or degree, including non-traditional educational-service providers (such as technology training/retraining services, adult literacy providers, and support or mentoring services); and (4) resumes or other information regarding the qualifications of persons seeking employment in Oklahoma.

(b) Create a comprehensive marketing campaign promoting the value of and opportunities in Oklahoma for "lifelong learning," including creation and periodic revision of public service announcements; commercial print, broadcast, and cable television advertisements; and direct mail and other forms of communication. The campaign should include information about the website and invite citizens to visit the site.

COMMENT: If education is to be accessible and responsive in today's environment, providers of educational services, employers, and customers (students) must be able to engage in a relatively unimpeded exchange of information. For example, students or prospective students must be able to identify where they can obtain the instruction they need; education providers must be able to identify whether the courses they offer have effectively educated or trained their clients, the student; and businesses must be able to identify the sources of employees who possess the skills needed in the modern workplace.

Efforts in this regard are already under way. For example, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education have established a website called "The Oklahoma Marketplace." Information on this website includes a list of degree programs and names of the offering institutions that will prepare graduates for certain occupational fields. The Oklahoma Electronic Campus, also a project of the State Regents, provides information on more than 600 courses offered electronically by Oklahoma's colleges and universities. The State Occupational

Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC), located at the Department of Vocational and Technical Education in Stillwater, is part of a network of a national and state organizations. It provides high quality occupational and career information to assist Oklahomans in making informed career and labor market decisions. Such sites, as well as all others containing information about educational services and job opportunities, should be linked to the website developed by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and its collaborators.

Beyond providing immediate information through a website about users and providers of services, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, in partnership with other public agencies and private organizations, should raise the knowledge and expectations of Oklahomans about the opportunities in this state for "lifelong learning." Oklahoma engages in extensive marketing designed to attract new businesses and tourists. The Department of Commerce should be equally devoted to attracting new students among our citizens, even those who may believe they have already finished their formal education. This marketing campaign should inform Oklahomans that opportunities to improve or broaden one's knowledge, skills, and aptitudes are readily available and affordable, and it should create a perception among citizens that continuing education is a worthy goal.

(11) The Oklahoma Academy recommends substantial expansion of business involvement with education providers.

COMMENT: Students will readily use academic concepts if the concepts are perceived as relevant. The Academy challenges local Chambers of Commerce and local businesses to motivate members and employees to become involved with community educational institutions. Time and manpower are the only costs for implementing these recommendations, and the Academy sincerely believes the benefits for students far outweigh the costs.

Hundreds of partnership organizations exist throughout Oklahoma, covering every county. If a business-education partnership program has not been established in a given community, then businesses and schools are challenged to begin such a program. Many of these partnerships have significantly impacted community schools.

Meaningful involvement of business leaders in education advances the knowledge and interest of all participants. Activities include acting as consultants to student-operated businesses, participation in career days or fairs, workplace and industry tours, career talks in the classroom, job shadowing, internships, cooperative education, apprenticeships, tutoring, and mentoring. Business leaders could participate in teacher in-service experiences to share expectations of business and industry, and they could supply examples of real problems faced by companies to help teachers develop problem-solving exercises for students.

Students are not the only beneficiaries of business involvement in the school systems.

The Academy believes that increased understanding of workplace culture by both students and faculty as well can be achieved through establishing cooperative programs with businesses for teachers, administrators, and counselors.

The Academy also encourages the business community to adopt practices and policies that support and provide adequate time for employee involvement in education and local school improvement, including service on boards of education, participation in parent-teacher-student associations, and service on school committees; time off to attend parent-teacher conferences; and benefit packages that include days off to volunteer in schools or to tutor or mentor students or counsel teachers or administrators.

(12) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the Oklahoma Workforce Development Board, created by Executive Order 98-09 on March 24, 1998, aggressively pursue its mission to oversee a coordinated workforce development system in Oklahoma, including the adoption by December 31, 1998, of a comprehensive strategic plan that identifies specific workforce development goals and establishes a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan.

(13) The Oklahoma Academy recommends the adoption of regional workforce development compacts and the creation of local and regional Human Resource Investment Councils to create a coherent, comprehensive, and integrated workforce development system throughout Oklahoma.

COMMENT: Leaders of many state agencies have already recognized that the delivery of services needed to develop Oklahoma's workforce is extremely fragmented. In 1996, in an effort to create a coherent, comprehensive, and integrated workforce development system that would meet the education, training, and employment needs of Oklahoma's business, the Chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the Secretary of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Secretary of Human Resources, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Director of the Department of Human Services, the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the Secretary of Commerce, the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, and the President of the State Chamber of Commerce signed the Oklahoma Workforce Development Compact.

The purpose of the Compact is to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the resources committed to developing Oklahoma's workforce. The Compact partners pledged to create a customer-focused, flexible, locally-driven workforce development system that promotes public-private collaboration in education, human services, training, economic development, and employment programs. The partners intended to achieve the long-term results of a) increased

educational attainment and b) improved basic and technical skill levels for Oklahoma's workforce.

Derivative results were expected: increased per capita income, increased employment and employment opportunities, decreased welfare dependency and prison population, and decreased state and local bureaucracy. **The Academy encourages the partners in the Oklahoma Workforce Development Board to use the experiences and achievements of the Compact as a springboard to identify the issues to be addressed and to develop a plan to meet the objectives of the Compact at the earliest possible date.**

(14) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that competencies measures be significantly increased to gauge student academic performance and to define needed skills. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education should aggressively collaborate to increase the expected levels of student performance at all education levels.

(a) The Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) curricula should be broadened and deepened to create rigorous, relevant courses of study for today's students.

(b) All students should be required to exhibit competency in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the fine arts, health and physical fitness and foreign languages prior to promotion to the next level of study.

(c) All students should be required to exhibit competency in the application of basic computer skills before entry into high school, and all students should begin to develop computer skills no later than elementary school.

COMMENT: The Academy has continually and steadfastly recommended that school curriculum ensure that students learn to read and comprehend, to write, to compute, and to develop and use critical thinking skills. However, minimal levels of achievement in core skills are no longer adequate if Oklahoma is going to enhance wealth and job creation, be competitive in the global marketplace, and improve the quality of life of its citizens. The curriculum in Oklahoma schools must become more rigorous, and higher expectations must be set to prepare students for the next millennium. Proficient use and understanding of language and mathematics, "skillful oral and written communications", understanding of the sciences and basic computer technology, "historical, social, and cultural awareness", and an appreciation of the fine arts are required for success in the workplace and advancement in society. It is critical to the improved quality of life in this state that all of these areas receive additional emphasis in the curriculum.

Higher expectations for students must be matched with expanded curriculum depth and breadth. More than minimal curriculum offerings is essential to improved educational performance by students at all levels. Data from the Office of Accountability demonstrate that

student performance correlates directly to the number of course offerings available to the student.

The Academy reported following its 1988 conference on elementary and secondary education: *"Despite the variety of criticisms of competency testing it is undeniable that there is no intuitive way to determine whether a child has developed the requisite knowledge and skills without some form of testing. The issue, therefore, is not whether students should be tested but rather how we adequately prepare our children, fairly test them, and [encourage] rather than condemn them if they do not meet established standards."* At present, the state already performs some competency testing at various intervals of a student's educational process. See Comment to Recommendation No. 17. However, common education students must demonstrate competencies not only in the third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades but must also demonstrate a sufficient level of achievement and understanding of course work, especially in core curricula, before advancing to the next level of study. "Social promotion" can no longer be the norm. Promotion should be based on performance, but the curriculum must be broad and deep enough to meet each student's individual needs and talents. See Recommendation No. 8.

The Academy recommends not only that the expectations of students be raised but also the expectations of teachers. At the secondary level, the teacher must exhibit a level of competency in his or her subject matter. The Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation was established to develop a new "results-oriented" teacher preparation system in Oklahoma, which would include a more rigorous system of training Oklahoma teachers. New graduating teachers are required to major in the subject area they will be teaching. However, the Academy encourages those *already* in the teaching field to meet professional development credits in those subjects related to the classes they are currently teaching. The Academy supports the Professional Development Institutes developed by the Commission and many other programs, such as the Great Expectations teacher and administrator professional development institutes, and encourages teachers to meet their professional development credits through these quality programs.

(15) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the legislature reassess how higher education tuition rates are established.

COMMENT: Tuition should cover a large share of the actual cost of providing post-secondary educational services. However, Oklahoma taxpayers currently invest \$2.50 in higher education for every \$1.00 that the student pays in tuition. Because efforts to set fair tuition rates continue to flounder in the political process, the determination of fair tuition rates should be removed from politics. This could be accomplished either by the establishment of an independent Tuition Commission, which could serve a role similar to the Legislative Compensation Commission, or by the enactment of legislation vesting in the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education the authority to set tuition rates within defined limits, including the maximum annual percentage increase in tuition. In either circumstance, the goal should be

that tuition cover at least one-third of the cost of a student's higher education.

(16) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the State Chamber of Commerce, and other state and local agencies develop a plan for collaboration, coordination, and mergers of functions among educational institutions and state agencies through such mechanisms as alliances with lead institutions, contracting for private services, and systematic centralization of services.

COMMENT: Administration and management of Oklahoma's educational institutions is a complex subject that does not lend itself to simple recommendations.

The state system of higher education consists of 25 institutions, several of which have branch campuses, and there are 39 sites in Oklahoma with campuses or buildings devoted to delivering higher education services. These institutions are governed by the constitutionally created Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, with 15 other boards of regents overseeing the administration of one or more institutions. Oklahoma's system of vocational and technical education offers programs and services in 29 area vo-tech districts operating on 54 campuses and in 399 comprehensive districts, 15 inmate training centers, and two juvenile facilities. All but one of the vo-tech districts is administered by its own board of education. In common education, Oklahoma has 549 individual school districts and 1,800 conventional school sites: 1,027 elementary schools, 192 middle schools, 117 junior high schools, and 464 senior high schools. Ten school districts have an Average Daily Membership (ADM equals the average number of students enrolled at a school or district on any given day during the year) of 10,000 or more. A third of all K-12 students in Oklahoma attend school in these 10 districts. However, Oklahoma has 324 school districts that each have an ADM of less than 500. Less than 15% of all K-12 students attend school in these districts.

(17) The Oklahoma Academy recommends that leaders in government and education develop meaningful strategies to improve student performance and attain higher levels of student achievement.

COMMENT: The "Profiles 1997 State Report" paints an improving but nevertheless disappointing picture of student success based on Oklahoma's own internal measures. The percentage of students scoring "satisfactory" on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test ranged from 71% in U.S. history and government to 94% in writing for the fifth grade. It ranged from 57% in U.S. history and government to 89% in writing for the eighth grade and ranged from 58% in math to 94% in writing for the eleventh grade.

The same report reflects that less than half of the school sites having a Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) for the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades had more than 70% of its students score a "satisfactory" on all five of the core curriculum tests. The State Department of Education did not release the data required to calculate the percentage of students tested for the 1996-97 testing cycle. However, among the 878 school sites testing fifth graders, only 379 (43%) had 70% or more of its students with a "satisfactory" test score in all five subject areas (reading, math, science, writing, and U.S. history, government, and constitution). Three school sites did not have 70% or more of its students attain a "satisfactory" score on *any* of the five subject areas. Student performance dropped substantially among older students. In the 567 school sites testing eighth graders, only 85 (15%) had 70% or more of its students with a "satisfactory" test score in all five subject areas. In the 449 school sites testing eleventh graders, only 53 (12%) had 70% or more of its students with a "satisfactory" test score in all five subject areas. Seven school sites testing eighth graders and 12 sites testing eleventh graders did not have 70% or more of its students attain a "satisfactory" score on *any* of the five subject areas.

However, under achievement is not confined to common education. To enhance wealth and job creation in Oklahoma, this state needs not only a better educated but a more highly educated populace. Nearly 55% of all Oklahomans age 25 and over have no more than a high school diploma, and roughly a quarter of our citizens have less education. Oklahoma ranks only 39th in the nation in the number of adults who hold at least a bachelor's degree. In 1996, only about one in five Oklahomans over the age of 25 had such a degree. From 1990 to 1996, Oklahoma's proportion of degree holders increased 2.3%, above the regional increase of 1.9% but below the national increase of 3.4%. We *must* devise strategies to encourage more Oklahomans of all ages to pursue educational opportunities through vocational-technical training and/or higher education.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, and the State Department of Education must meet the challenge to develop innovative strategies to improve performance in common education, to make it possible for all students to achieve the optimal level of continuing education of which they are capable, and to ensure that the overall educational level of our citizens is raised sufficiently for Oklahoma to be competitive in the global marketplace.

(18) The Education Task Force recommends establishment of an Academy Standing Education Committee whose purpose is to review educational reform and efforts at least twice a year.

COMMENT: The purpose of the Standing Education Committee will be to research, consider and make recommendations on critical issues regarding the future of education in Oklahoma. Named by the Oklahoma Academy, this committee will include an appropriate representative

from higher education, vocational education and common education, as well as appropriate representatives from the private sector. The committee will review and provide a "report card" on any major system-wide school reform that has been undertaken, which will be published and distributed to the citizens of Oklahoma. The committee will also make recommendations on such areas as length of the school day/year, incentive/performance pay for teachers and administrators, tenure, equalization, barriers created by the millage cap, the role of counselors in the school setting and other timely issues.

HB1017 reforming and financing the state's elementary and secondary education system was passed in 1990 and later reaffirmed by a vote of the people. The Academy may wish to play a leadership role in an assessment of the effects of this landmark measure, with emphasis on sharing the findings with the public no later than the tenth anniversary of the legislation.

Governance Structure for Education

Historically, Oklahomans have not been fully satisfied with the structure of governance for education. With respect to higher education, at least once each decade since statehood, and usually more often, there has been a call for an overhaul of governance structure. However, major structural reform has been politically difficult if not impossible to achieve, even if some of the underlying factors that helped create the present system are of diminished importance or even no longer exist. The Citizens' Commission on the Future of Higher Education declined last year to address specifically the issue whether there are too many institutions or governing boards in Oklahoma's higher education system.

The governing structure of vocational and technical education has also undergone transformation throughout the years. The first five area vo-tech schools, located in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Duncan, Enid, and Ardmore, were originally created and operated under the public school Board of Education in those cities. Mid-Del Vo-Tech School still operates under the auspices of the Midwest City Board of Education. In the early 1970s, the legislature authorized the creation of separate vocational-technical school districts. Governance in the vocational-technical arena has generated less controversy than in common and higher education, but issues of efficiency and effectiveness, especially those driven by changing technology, remain to be resolved.

In common education, there has always been an almost insoluble conflict between local governance and achieving efficiencies in providing elementary and secondary education to Oklahoma's children. On the one hand, there is the long-held and deeply felt commitment of Oklahomans to having neighborhood, or at least nearby schools, that are governed by local school boards with a strong sense of the needs of the community, school patrons, and the students. On the other, limited budgets (and funding bases having widely disparate values from district to district) are perennially stretched to satisfy an ever-increasing demand for

comprehensive curricula, new courses, and higher professional salaries. Faced with changing demographics of students and patrons, coupled with problems of aging facilities and equipment, local school districts have often struggled to provide the quality educational services they need and would like to supply to their students.

The Oklahoma Academy believes that any attempt to address structural reform in common or post-secondary education as a "numbers game" is both misguided and unlikely to achieve meaningful reform. Instead, governance and other structural issues should resolve themselves in the "marketplace" of education. Technological forces are eroding traditional barriers to change at all levels of service delivery. All agencies involved in school governance should engage in aggressive collaborative efforts to attack inefficiencies in the systems they administer. This would eliminate unnecessary duplication of services, reduce administrative costs, and improve the quality of services to the student.

Collaborative efforts certainly are not without precedent in Oklahoma. For example, the Broken Arrow Public schools, Union Public Schools, and the City of Broken Arrow have developed a partnership to do all printing through the City of Broken Arrow print shop. Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech Center and Oklahoma City Community College work together to offer college-level classes on the Francis Tuttle campus. Indeed, 253 cooperative agreements between vo-tech districts and two-year post-secondary institutions across Oklahoma allow high school students and adults to earn college credit for programs completed at the area vo-tech school. Tulsa Community College and the Tulsa Technology Center have jointly purchased an office building to house administrative offices and some classrooms. The building also houses a professional development center that helps teachers from both public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the greater Tulsa area learn how to use technology in the classroom. There are a multitude of examples of local school districts across the state partnering with community businesses to provide non-traditional forums to study business and entrepreneurship, to afford mentoring opportunities, and to give business and civic leaders a "hands-on" role in educating students.

Such collaborative efforts are critical to sustaining effective, efficient delivery of services in all sectors of education in Oklahoma. Collaboration and cooperation will not, in and of themselves, eliminate all problems of governance structure in education and will undoubtedly create some new problems of logistics and finance. However if we hold to a traditional view of education as provided by separate, autonomous units of teachers and students that are unaccountable to their "marketplace" for the effectiveness, education in Oklahoma will be doomed.

The creation of a "marketplace" of education must involve processes and policies that will allow communities to access multiple education providers at points that are "institution-neutral." A recently completed statewide needs assessment concluded that public institutions are

easily accessible (within 30 miles) by virtually all population centers in Oklahoma. While readily accessible in that sense, these sites are usually controlled by single institutions, often without a range of services matching the needs of the users of education services in the range of accessibility. The idea of institution-neutral access points is very different from the state's historical practice of establishing branches or centers under the "ownership" of specific education providers and of creating geographic service boundaries that limit access by other state institutions. Existing institutions must move increasingly to become facilitators for the supply of educational services from other institutions. Moreover, as new technologies play an increasing role in service delivery, the state's education system must become dramatically more consumer oriented. It will no longer be desirable or possible to maintain a regulatory framework protecting institutions from competition by other institutions.

Over time, only those institutions and their governing instrumentalities that can demonstrate objectively that they are achieving efficient and effective service delivery will thrive. Those that fail to do so will not, and, ultimately, they will face reduced taxpayer funding or find it eliminated altogether



1998 CORPORATE INVESTORS

American Central Gas Companies, Inc.

American Fidelity Group

Autry Technology Center

BancFirst

Bank of Oklahoma, NA

Betty E. & George B. Kaiser Foundation

CITGO

City of Enid

Conoco, Inc.

Enron Corporation

Fleming Companies, Inc.

Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech

General Motors Corporation

Gerald Gamble Co.

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Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech

Oklahoma Natural Gas Company

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For Additional Information Contact:



Moving Ideas Into Action

120 East Sheridan
Suite 200
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-2427
Office Number: 405/232-5828
or 1/888/OK GOALS (1/888/654-6257)
Fax Number: 405/236-5268
Web site: www.okacademy.org
E-mail Address: julie@okacademy.org
beverly@okacademy.org
eren@okacademy.org

STAFF

Julie J. Knutson
Executive Director

Beverly K. Herring
Executive Assistant

Eren D. Hays
Administrative Assistant