

Fix American Education, Starting in Kansas



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Begin with the State Board of Education's vision: Kansas Leads the World in the Success of Each Student

The following ideas could be implemented in any state, by its board or governing structure. Any community can provide an excellent education for any student who wants it. The last three words in the previous sentence are essential: *who wants it*.

A teacher need not matriculate at a college of education in order to be an excellent teacher.

Most solutions to problems do not require additional resources, revenue, or expenditures.

We will fix high school when we fix second grade.

We need smaller classes in lower socioeconomic areas, particularly for younger students. Yesterday.

Let kids be kids. Encourage recess for early primary students without many rules. Let children play.

Stop treating teachers as clerks. Expect professionalism and pay teachers as professionals.

Welcome the public citizenry into our public schools.

Many mentally drop out of school in third or fourth grade; it is apparent after another five-to-seven years.

We imprison far too many in America and we have an educational system to blame for that.

Stop labeling children by color in school; do not label students by race, even in "groups" or "subgroups."

Decrease reliance on property taxes to fund schools; money should follow the student, and more equitably.

Math standards should be succinct and to-the-point; standards should be met before advancing.

IEPs should return to the 1 or 2-pages they used to be; Special Education is too bureaucratic too often.

Primary teachers who cannot do simple math word problems should be thanked and released.

Primary class sizes should approximate 150% of the average age, i.e., 10-year-olds: 15; 6-year-olds: 9.

Lecture halls should be implemented for technical courses in high school, apart from sections for lab work.

Eliminate the federal free-and-reduced lunch; all kids should be fed with taxes (you can still bring a lunch).

Teaching is not union work. Encourage teacher unions to morph into professional associations.

Let welders teach welding. Let attorneys teach civics and government. Let engineers teach trigonometry.

The test for professional teacher licensure should come after a teacher is on the job, not before.

There should be two licenses for educators: initial and professional.

Great teachers should be paid a high-end salary after just three or four years on the job.

Teachers should prohibit mobile phones and earbuds from classrooms; good teachers already do.

Professional development for any instructor should be the sole responsibility of the individual teacher.

Sing Christmas carols in primary school; do not discount or prohibit non-Christian religious songs or poems. Art and music, civics and history, and basic responsibilities are just as important as math and English. Spell correctly. Use good grammar. Expect correct answers beginning in primary school. Take the birthday out of the equations for math-class attendance; master basic material before advancing. People are spiritual animals; appreciate this fact. We need to believe in something bigger than ourselves. Do not plan everything from the central planning office; it leads to shortages, from bus drivers to teachers. Reduce mandated testing. Good teachers make their own quizzes and exams. Trust them. Consolidation falls on administration most, secondary some; primary schools are hurt by the "c-word." Give teachers the authority and responsibility to manage their classrooms without distractions. Let kids use knives and forks. Let chemistry class have chemicals. Let students have scalpels in biology class. Keep calculators away from early primary math students; make exceptions for exceptionalities only. Embrace technology; remember, however, that students have to do the thinking and the problem solving. Read. Read a lot. Then read some more. After that, read. In short, read and read. Then read more. Quit giving every kid a trophy just for showing up; make exceptions for our very special fellow citizens.* Listen to parents. Many without teaching licenses have much of academic value to say or share. Colleges of education should help prepare future school managers, principals, and superintendents. Choice of school must no longer be just for the affluent; poor folks need school choice, too. Many future jobs and careers for today's youngsters have yet to be invented, or even envisioned. Least-restrictive environment for a special person is not always the better environment for that person. More schools, K-12 and higher education, should employ and more often rely on American Sign Language. High schools need more flexibility in the award of credits, certificates, and other recognitions. Restorative Justice is not for everyone, but it holds a great deal of promise to help change the culture. Schooling needs many basic reforms. Elimination of traditional ordinal grades would help a lot. Education is more than process, more than knowledge. It is an amalgam of love and gumption. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children. If "A.D." bothers you, then you need to read the First Amendment, again and again, until you "get it."



Any state, any community, willing to provide an excellent education for any student who wants it shall do so. Political will is lacking in America these days, but methinks the pendulum is starting to swing. Recognize that families have an important role to play. It is not the duty of government to ensure that every child receives an education. Rather, the responsibility of government is to ensure that every child has the opportunity for a quality education. All* citizens should read well and understand numbers.

*All means 99.5% or 99.8% or more, never actually 100%. We have to realize that fact, whether we believe that life's vagaries and exigencies are produced by nature or whether they are God-given or some combination of those human perspectives.