Systems approach to leadership. . . Aligning to the McREL “What Matters Most” framework, through ongoing, focused leadership development

In recent months KASB and Leadership Services has been working with Service Centers throughout the state to align supports, and provide a systemic approach to developing leadership at all levels. A systems approach to leadership is defined by a clear vision that is communicated and viable throughout all levels of the system. This means all levels of the system have established and are implementing goals that move them towards the board’s vision, and are utilizing common leadership vocabulary and processes to maximize resources and supports throughout the district. As districts continue to strive to improve student performance, alignment around a systems approach to leadership becomes even more critical. The supports that are in development will provide ongoing professional development for building-level leaders, district-level leaders, and board members, to build their capacity around the leadership practices that research has shown make a difference, or as McREL International refers to them, the “What Matters Most” framework.

Supports provided are divided into two levels, foundational learning and continuous learning. Those supports found within the foundational level are designed to provide leaders with the necessary tools and strategies to build on as they develop their capacity as a leader. The continuous learning supports take educational leaders through deeper learning experiences which will result in them becoming more effective at their given role in the district.

The building level leaders foundational learning focuses on practical tools and strategies to deal with the rigors of the building leader role. These include establishing a vision and unifying stakeholders around that vision, performing supervision and evaluation to improve student achievement and developing communication channels to ensure two-way communication is occurring. This foundational learning will provide any principal, new or experienced, a great foundation for building leadership. The continuous learning focus is the McREL Balanced Leadership Framework where building leaders will delve into the “art and science” of leadership. They will also engage in reflection around their current practices and be provided techniques that will move them from a solid building leader to an exceptional building leader. There are also opportunities within the continuous learning supports for building leaders to further develop their instructional leadership skills.

Superintendents, district leaders, and board members will have the opportunities to build their capacity related to current initiatives and challenges that school districts are facing across the state. These opportunities include topic specific professional development for superintendents and district office leaders. School board members can engage in activities designed around current issues in Kansas education, and the district level leadership practices that have shown over time to make a difference in student achievement. At the foundation of the superintendents, district leaders, and board members, is the strategic planning process and annual monitoring of goals established within the district. Through the continuous learning activities superintendents, district leaders, and board members will be able to design, implement and monitor a strategic plan that moves their district to the next level of performance.

If you have questions about the opportunities that will be offered through the systems approach opportunities, please contact any of the following individuals at KASB:

Dr. Brian Jordan, Assistant Executive Director of Leadership Services, bjordan@kasb.org, 800-432-2471.

Mr. Gary Sechrist, Leadership Services Field Specialist, gsechrist@kasb.org, 620-680-0871.

Your Service Center.
FROM THE KASB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. JOHN HEIM

It’s the “principal” of the matter

Enough time has passed that I can muster the emotional courage to write about the 2013 KC Chiefs season. In hindsight, it was a great run under General Manager John Dorsey and Head Coach Andy Reid. With only one major player change, the Chiefs went from 2-14 to 11-5 in one year. How did they do it? Observation and experience tell us that leadership matters in professional sports.

School districts can experience similar transformations. MCREL’s research on building and district leadership tells us that building principals and district leadership team’s can make a significant difference in student achievement. In the words of former Kansas Coach of the Year Doug Moeckel, the superintendent is the head coach and the principals are the coordinators. That makes the board the owner and GM. All of these people have to be working in sync for a school system to work with maximum efficacy.

Sports fans can cite many examples of when this hasn’t worked well, but to me the best example is the recent history of the Chiefs. Head Coach Haley and GM Pioli created a culture of paranoia and misplaced focus that was so bad it led to the team being the laughing stock of the NFL. There was no trust and no clear understanding on the part of coaches or management about the vision and direction of the team. In this case it was a breakdown between coach and GM. Other examples such as Washington and Dallas show a clear breakdown between ownership and coaches.

What lessons can schools learn from these examples?

1. It’s the leadership TEAM that makes the difference. No team can win without great assistant coaches. No school district can win without great principals. Head coaches and GM’s include their assistants in helping craft vision and direction. Boards and superintendents listen to their principals as they develop vision and direction for their students.

2. There is no I in Team. A platitude, but true. In Dallas it has become all about Jerry Jones. When is the last time Dallas won a championship? In Washington, it became all about the quarterback. Their season was lost. It cannot be all about the board, the superintendent, or the principals. It is about the leadership team.

3. In the words of Dr. Heim the Greater (Max) “When the losses.” Organizations, like people, have a finite amount of energy. In school districts, if that energy is spent in conflict at the leadership level the students lose. Egos, hidden agendas, and opaqueness lead to a lost vision.

4. Leadership matters! When the Chiefs went 2-14, there was no movement to cut assistant coaches to spend more money on “the players.” In the NFL, the effects of leadership on performance are well accepted. Since 2002 in Kansas we have 24 fewer superintendents and 77 fewer principals. We have 212 fewer administrative support positions. At the same time we have 12,520 more students and nearly 4,000 more teaching and instructional support positions. In many of our districts, when the principal and superintendent talk, a mirror is the other party. We have to help our public see that leadership matters!

From the KASB perspective, we know that being a board member is a thankless job. We see that being a superintendent is the most important job. We need to acknowledge that being a principal is the most difficult job. We have to recognize that all of these leadership positions, working together, will make the best team for Kansas students.

KASB, KSDE, Westar energy partner to offer STEM grants

Westar Energy, in partnership with KASB and KSDE, has announced the Westar Energy STEM Innovation Award to promote science, technology, engineering, and math education and research in Kansas public schools.

Two $3,000 awards will be given to educators in KASB member districts who best demonstrate innovation in project-based programs that increase student interest in STEM fields applied to electrical energy.

The grants can be used by individual STEM-based classroom projects or school-affiliated STEM-themed clubs or organizations in Kansas K-12 public schools.

The deadline for proposals is June 1. A selection committee, composed of personnel from Westar Energy, KASB and KSDE, will select the winning applicants. Awards will be announced June 16, for the 2014-15 school year.

For more information and to download an application form, go to www.kasb.org/WestarSTEM.
Tech careers in Kansas are expanding, students need to be prepared

By the year 2020, Kansas is slated to be fifth in the nation for jobs requiring at least some postsecondary education. A recent influx of digital entrepreneurs and the tech start-ups boom in the Midwest means Kansas students must be prepared to reap the benefits of these burgeoning opportunities.

More and more digital entrepreneurs and start-ups are emerging in communities where manufacturing and blue-collar jobs previously reigned. Kansas is among the locations where career options in the fields of technology are expanding, and investment firms willing to reward innovation and entrepreneurship are becoming more of a reality.

As more of these career options open up, the need for solid K-12 preparation, postsecondary training and advanced degrees increases.

“A resurgent U.S. technology industry, propelled by strong initial public offerings and a healthy M&A market, as well as the launch of technology infrastructure services from companies like Amazon and Microsoft, has meant that entrepreneurs across the Rust Belt and Farm Belt are starting new technology companies in addition to more traditional manufacturing,” according to a recent article in TechCrunch. (See “For Tech Investors, The Midwest Is Flyover Country No More,” March 17, 2014, for more information.)

One example is Digital Sandbox KC, supported by a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The group’s stated purpose is to “create a proof of concept center to spur development of information technology-related start-up businesses in the Kansas City region.”

What is clear is that the job market for certain low wage and service sector jobs that need little to no postsecondary education is narrowing, and the need for postsecondary training is widening. Opportunities are expanding, and a strong Kansas public school system prepares students to take advantage of those opportunities.

For additional information on data used in this report, see http://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020.

NSBA launches National Connection

In connection with KASB, the National School Board Association (NSBA) brings you National Connection- a service package of resources and tools designed to provide you with information that can become a valuable asset to your local school board. Working with school boards and state associations across the country, NSBA keeps you covered and up-to-date on the best practices for school boards through the publications we provide to our members:

- Federal Insider
- The Center for Public Education Briefing Room
- Meet the Experts
- School Board Leadership Resource Center
- Public Engagement Toolkit
- Money Saving Resources
- American School Board Journal/School Board News

For more information, visit NSBA’s website at http://www.nsba.org/services/national-connection.

NSBA promoting national campaign to support public education

In partnership with its state associations, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) has launched an all-new national campaign to highlight the success of public education. The campaign website, standup4publicschools.org, includes more details on the campaign and how individuals can get involved and take action to support public schools.

State-wide campaign building to support Kansas public education

The American Dream is under attack in Kansas. Our state is built on a tradition of strong communities and enduring values. For more than 150 years, Kansas has been a place where families grow. Where business prosper. And where public schools are the cornerstone of great communities. Learn more at defendthedreamks.org.

Board Member Social Netiquette

Webinar
April 14, 2014 ♦ 12:30 p.m.

Social media is changing the way we communicate. Poorly attended board meetings need not be a barrier for you to communicate the board’s actions or seek patron input on issues before the board when social networking keeps those information channels open. However, as a school board member, you have unique responsibilities to safeguard student and employee information while ensuring compliance with the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

Join John Rasmussen & Angie Stallbaumer, two of your KASB attorneys, in a webinar overview of legal considerations for board members in their social media use.

If you can’t watch live, check the legal section of the KASB website for a recording. This will be a great resource to share with fellow board members.
New training added on multiple measures requirements

Greenbush and KASB have developed a half-day workshop to assist districts in laying out how they will respond to the KSDE multiple measures requirements as part of the 2014-15 evaluation process. This workshop will meet the needs of districts utilizing any evaluation instrument, and we would encourage small (5-6 people) district decision-making teams to attend consisting of district administrators, building administrators, and teachers. Teams will receive a brief overview of the waiver-driven requirements regarding multiple measures, select a model of implementation, identify which measures each content area and grade-level will use, discuss related policy and procedural implications, and leave with a presentation template and other materials to be able to effectively and clearly share this important information with staff. We will offer two sessions for your convenience, one in the morning (8:30-11) and one in the afternoon (Noon-2:30). When you register, please indicate which session you will attend and indicate if your team will be staying after (or arriving early) for lunch. Brian Jordan from KASB and Michael Koonce from Greenbush will be the presenters.

- April 15, Greenbush
- April 28, Hays/Smoky Hill
- May 7, Salina/Smoky Hill
- May 16, Eudora/Greenbush
- May 5, Clearwater
- May 8, Greenbush

McREL Principal Evaluation training dates available

This training is intended for districts planning to utilize the McREL principal evaluation instrument. Principals and their superintendent should plan to attend this two-day training as a team to learn about how to properly use the principal evaluation system and develop an understanding of the Balanced Leadership framework that is the foundation for the McREL principal evaluation.

- June 9-10, Clearwater
- July 21-22, Salina/Smoky Hill
- July 31-Aug 1, Hays/Smoky Hill
- June 15-16, Eudora/Greenbush
- July 24-25, Greenbush