

# Kansas City-Area Education Research Consortium

## STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

### EXECUTIVE REPORT

#### I. INTRODUCTION

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##### A. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Cypress Research Associates, LLC conducted research with key stakeholders on behalf of The Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC). The goal of the research was determine stakeholder perceptions regarding:

- ✓ Data of interest regarding school district performance and function,
- ✓ The value of the consortium,
- ✓ Gathering input regarding the research agenda, and
- ✓ Effective methods of communication among all stakeholders and the consortium.

##### B. METHODOLOGY

A total of 18 focus groups were held at the Kauffman Foundation in September and October 2009. Recruitment was conducted by Sarah Frazelle, research analyst for KC-AERC. The recruitment list was developed based on input from the Kauffman Foundation and the KC-AERC executive committee.

Participants were asked to review and sign an informed consent form approved by the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Kansas. Upon completion of the focus group, participants were given a \$75 Visa cash card in appreciation for their time and input, or they could elect to have the cash card mailed to the non-profit organization of their choice.

#### II. RESULTS

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##### A. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

A total of 18 focus group sessions were conducted which were comprised of 100 participants. Following is a breakout of attendees by stakeholder group and state.

Stakeholder Group	# of Sessions	# of Participants	# of Participants by State	
			MO	KS
Assistant Superintendents	1	2	1	1
Board Members	2	5	4	1
School Data Analysts	2	7	4	3
Teachers	4	29	19	10
Charter/Private Schools	2	6	5	1
Parents	2	19	15	4
Community Education	3	18	N/A	N/A
Private Sector	2	14	N/A	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>		

*\*Includes 4 Charter and 2 Private*

## B. DATA ON SCHOOL DISTRICT PERFORMANCE AND FUNCTION

### B1. INFORMATION CURRENTLY GATHERED

What **information** do school districts and stakeholders regularly gather/review about school district performance and function?\*

- ✓ Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)
- ✓ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- ✓ American College Testing (ACT)
- ✓ End of Course (EOC) Exam
- ✓ Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) – *KS only*
- ✓ NW Education Assessment (NWEA) – *KS only*
- ✓ Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
- ✓ Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) – *MO only*

\*Note: Throughout the report, themes are listed in order of importance, from those with the greatest number of supporting stakeholder groups/comments to those with the least number of supporting stakeholder groups/comments.

### B2. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

What types of education data that are currently available are of **most interest** to school districts?

(asked only of school representatives)

- ✓ Federal & state academic achievement requirements
- ✓ Evaluation of the effectiveness of district programs
- ✓ Graduation rates
- ✓ Longitudinal data on student academic progress

### B3. BENCHMARKS

Does your school/district **benchmark** the data collected against other sources?

(asked only of school representatives)

- ✓ Within school/district comparison
- ✓ Comparison with other school districts
- ✓ Community college data on graduates

## C. RESEARCH NEEDS

### C1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF INTEREST

What **types of questions** would you like to be able to ask about school districts' performance and function?

- ✓ College/career outcomes based on K-12 coursework & performance
- ✓ Subgroup performance, particularly English Language Learners (ELL)
- ✓ Test best practices in instructional techniques
- ✓ Impact of home/community environment on learning
- ✓ Evaluation of the effectiveness of youth programs
- ✓ Impact of quality early childhood education on K-12 outcomes
- ✓ Impact of technology-based instruction vs. traditional techniques
- ✓ Longitudinal data on student achievement
- ✓ District-to-district comparison of performance (*parents only*)

### C2. DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING ISSUES

What issues are of most concern to school districts & stakeholders regarding data collection and reporting? (asked only of school representatives and community educators)

- ✓ Issues with student mobility, making tracking difficult
- ✓ Need for professional development for teachers on how to analyze and apply student test results
- ✓ Importance of a data warehouse system for housing student data
- ✓ Need for more research staff and/or training of existing staff
- ✓ Frustration with excessive student testing
- ✓ Frustration with inaccurate reporting of results (*MO only*)
- ✓ Difficulties with longitudinal tracking of students

## D. ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

### D1. PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS

What **additional programs or activities** do you feel would benefit **students** in the local schools?

- ✓ Career exploration/college prep
- ✓ Meet students' basic (food, health care) and emotional needs
- ✓ Importance of reading in improving academic success
- ✓ Life-skills training

### D2. PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS

What **additional programs or activities** do you feel would benefit **teachers** in the local schools?

- ✓ More collaboration among teachers/schools/districts around instructional best practices
- ✓ Hands-on, inquiry-based learning
- ✓ Integration of subjects
- ✓ Teacher training on working in urban schools
- ✓ Respond to individual differences in learning

## E. VALUE OF THE CONSORTIUM

### E1. MOST VALUABLE ASPECTS

What **aspect of the research consortium** would be of **most value** to schools and stakeholders?

- ✓ Facilitate sharing of best practices in K-12 education
- ✓ Serve as a regional data warehouse
- ✓ Offer schools/districts a menu of research studies in which they can choose to participate
- ✓ Importance of a school district-driven research agenda vs. university-driven
- ✓ Offer an objective, third-party perspective
- ✓ Effect change in K-12 education and training of educators
- ✓ Use results to inform state and local K-12 education policy

### E2. SUSTAINING THE CONSORTIUM

Assuming a well-developed research consortium exists that provides data analysis and reporting for area school districts and stakeholders, how will the **consortium be sustained**?

- ✓ Foundations and private sector partners
- ✓ School district funding/Fee for service
- ✓ Federal/state funding

## F. GATHERING INPUT REGARDING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

### F1. IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

What **stakeholder groups** should the research consortium consult to help develop consortium goals and establish its research agenda?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ Community education stakeholders             | ✓ Community colleges                       |
| ✓ Parents                                      | ✓ Teachers                                 |
| ✓ Superintendents & assistant superintendents  | ✓ Kansas City mayor's office               |
| ✓ Private sector                               | ✓ School-level management                  |
| ✓ Economic dev. community/chambers of commerce | ✓ School board members                     |
| ✓ State governments                            | ✓ Data analysts/assessment coordinators    |
| ✓ Students (including ELL students)            | ✓ Daycare providers/Head Start program     |
| ✓ Foundations                                  | ✓ Vocational training centers and programs |

## F2. MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER GROUP CHALLENGES

Do you anticipate any challenges in addressing the questions and concerns of multiple stakeholder groups?

- ✓ Balancing multiple agendas/interests
- ✓ Focused research agenda for relevance to multiple stakeholders
- ✓ Governance-related issues
- ✓ Issues with potential housing of consortium offices at UMKC

How could the consortium most effectively inform school districts and stakeholders of research findings?

- ✓ Establishing a governing board to oversee communication of findings
- ✓ Release information first to superintendents, who funnel findings to school district personnel, followed by release to broader community
- ✓ Recommended modes of communication:
  - Electronic/online formats
  - Public forums
  - Individual school district meetings/school building meetings
- ✓ Presentation of research results:
  - No direct comparison among districts
  - Communicate successes in local schools, not failures
  - Present usable results that can be implemented in schools

## III. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

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### ► KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE CONSORTIUM

- ✓ Facilitate sharing of best practices in K-12 education among schools, districts and community stakeholders
- ✓ Serve as a regional data warehouse
- ✓ Offer professional development for teachers on how to analyze and apply student test results
- ✓ Offer schools/districts a menu of research studies in which they can choose to participate
- ✓ Use results to effect change in K-12 education and training of educators
- ✓ Use results to inform state and local K-12 education policy
- ✓ Assist with longitudinal tracking of students and ways to deal with student mobility

### ► THE RESEARCH AGENDA

#### Student-Focused Topics

- ✓ College/career outcomes based on K-12 coursework & performance
- ✓ Longitudinal data on student academic progress
- ✓ Subgroup performance, particularly English Language Learners (ELL)
- ✓ Evaluation of the effectiveness of youth programs
- ✓ Impact of home/community environment on learning
- ✓ Impact of quality early childhood education on K-12 outcomes

#### Teacher-Focused Topics

- ✓ Test best practices in instructional techniques, including inquiry-based learning and integration of subjects
- ✓ Impact of technology-based instruction vs. traditional techniques

### ► COMMUNICATION OF FINDINGS

- ✓ Establish governing board to oversee communication of findings
- ✓ Establish a flowchart for release of findings, which should involve releasing information first to superintendents, who funnel findings to school district personnel
- ✓ Use multiple modes of communication of research findings appropriate to the audience, including electronic/online formats, public forums, and individual school district meetings/school building meetings
- ✓ Establish guidelines for presentation of research results, including:
  - No direct comparison among districts
  - Communicate successes in local schools, not failures
  - Present usable results that can be implemented in schools