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## The Kansas Teacher Education Advocate, where we have been and where we could go

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## The Kansas Teacher Education Advocate, where we have been and where we could go

### Abstract

Editorial. ORIGINS: The Advocate was begun in the 1970s by ATE-K Executive Director and past President Stu Ervay, who initially intended it to be similar to the *Phi Delta Kappan* in terms of format and content. The Kappan included articles that stimulated innovative thinking and possible action in America's schools. The Advocate was meant to do the same thing for Kansas' teacher education.

## EDITORIAL

### THE KANSAS TEACHER EDUCATION ADVOCATE, WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE COULD GO.

**Stu Ervay,  
Professor Emeritus  
and former ATE-K Executive Director  
Emporia State University**

#### Historical Context

- **ORIGINS:** *The Advocate* was begun in the 1970s by ATE-K Executive Director and past President Stu Ervay, who initially intended it to be similar to the *Phi Delta Kappan* in terms of format and content. *The Kappan* included articles that stimulated innovative thinking and possible action in America's schools. *The Advocate* was meant to do the same thing for Kansas' teacher education.
- **TRANSFORMATION:** Over the decades *The Advocate* has been transformed into a research journal. While there is a need for such a publication, the original goal has essentially disappeared.
- **CHANGES IN THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY SERVED BY TEACHER EDUCATORS:** Since the late 1980s America's schools have been radically transformed, mostly because of three conditions: (1) the assumption of financial support of schools by states in order to ensure court-ordered equitable funding; that transfer of financial authority allowed the states to become more dominant in the areas of school accountability and program management, (2) the emergence of academic standards originally issued by professional organizations and then adopted by state agencies, and (3) the intrusion of the federal government into school reform efforts through the issuance of NCLB requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
- **MODIFICATIONS BECAUSE OF OBAMA INITIATIVES:** Because of efforts by the Obama Administration, NCLB was transformed by the issuance of waivers and other USDE policies. Moving into that void were the Common Core State Standards issued by the National Governors' Association, which are now being diluted or even ignored by states that had originally agreed to them. Toward the end of the Obama Administration a new program under the ESEA has been started and is currently being used by some states: *Every Student Succeeds Act*. The model developed in Kansas under ESSA provisions is titled KESA (Kansas Education Systems Accreditation). KESA is essentially a systems approach to school improvement that focuses on the "Five Rs".

*Relationships, Relevance, Responsive Culture, Rigor and Results.* It aligns well with AdvancED's standards, and is a big departure from NCLB thinking.

### ***The Possible Trump Administration Pivot***

- **TRUMP ADMINISTRATION INTENTIONS:** Under new Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos there will likely be an attempt to emphasize school choice and more local control of schools. While the main talking points involve charter schools and voucher systems that could provide more support of private schools, the ultimate consequence of that movement (if it survives congressional review) will entail a much wider diversity in the way schools are funded, managed, and held accountable.
- **POSSIBLE IMPACT ON TEACHER EDUCATION:** While programmatic diversity in America's schools might sound like chaos, there are a number of overriding principles that could and probably will be applied in both school reform efforts and accountability measures. Two stable elements in this eclectic climate are norm-referenced standardized tests (ACT/SAT), and AdvancED Accreditation standards. While scholastic standards will likely survive, it's quite possible the high stakes criterion-referenced tests associated with them will become less pervasive than during the NCLB days of AYP.

### **Ways of Thinking about Preservice Teacher Education**

- **TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHER EDUCATION:** For decades teacher preparation was conducted on a few basic premises: (1) new teachers graduating with the baccalaureate degree are essentially novices capable of becoming good classroom teachers over time.....with onsite experience and ongoing professional development in school districts or university graduate programs, (2) new teachers always have adequate media resources at their disposal, and could use those media to prepare and implement effective lesson plans, (3) curriculum was actually based on the media (usually textbooks, interpretation of standards and electronic resources), which would somehow provide for scope and sequence and the gradual escalation of student skills and understandings, (4) new teachers would receive good supervision and guidance by seasoned school district personnel such as instructional coaches, principals, and others.
- **EMERGENCE OF A NEED FOR TEACHER LEADERSHIP:** There is a growing movement throughout the state and nation for both new and seasoned teachers to become important academic leaders within their schools and districts. More districts are establishing processes that allow, or even require all teachers to participate in academic program governance. They are being asked to work together in creating a carefully crafted curriculum, and to ensure that the curriculum is directly linked to the instructional program and both formative and summative assessments. Traditional teacher education often does not align well with that new movement.
- **A FOCUS ON TEACHER ENGAGEMENT:** In addition to the need and opportunity

for teacher leadership, there is a tangential need for teachers to feel more professionally engaged than they are now. There have been a number of studies of the American work force, the most prominent being by the Gallup organization, on the topic of teacher engagement. The findings are alarming, in that many teachers are disillusioned because they don't feel engaged with their work or the profession. Part of the problem can be attributed to preservice teacher education, in that students do not know how to become more engaged appropriately and positively. Combine that with the attitude of some school administrative leaders, and the situation becomes critical in terms of teacher effectiveness and retention.

### **How Can *The Kansas Teacher Education Advocate* Address New Challenges and Opportunities?**

- Create one new section of the journal that speaks directly to current and emerging trends and changes in the state's K – 12 schools. In that section provide background information similar to what is in this paper, and then offer concrete suggestions for how preservice and inservice programs might be modified to accommodate the new changes.
- One way to get into the heart of the project is to use AdvancED and KESA Standards to provide an impetus for making specific recommendations to teacher education units around the state.
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- Another possible advocacy element might be a recommendation that Teacher Leadership Academies be set up to supplement existing preparation programs. Such academies are being started in other states.