

Spring is a time for...

Surprising Conclusions



We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

- Marian Wright Edelman



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Calendar Countdown

NSDC Summer Conference

Designed for school-based
staff developers
July 16-19, 2006
Washington, DC

2006 Fall Institute

**Engaging Diverse
Students and Parents
in the Educational Process**

George McKenna
October 18-19, 2006
Wichita Airport Hilton
Wichita, KS

**presented in partnership
with KASCD and the
Midwest Equity Center**

NSDC Annual Conference

December 2-6, 2006
Oprayland Hotel
Nashville, TN

KSDC Spring Conference

January 31-February 2, 2007
Wichita Airport Hilton
Wichita, KS

KSDC Board Meetings

Board Advance

June 7-8, 2006
The Barn
Valley Falls, KS

Website Connections

KSDC
www.ksdc.us
KLFA
www.kansaslearningfirst.org

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An affiliate
of the
National Staff
Development
Council



President's Column

In Search Of... *A Personal Definition Of 'Quality' Professional Learning*

By Lisa Brookover
KSDC President
and Jill Smith
KSDC President-Elect

Kansas Staff Development Council's Summer Advance will be June 7 and 8, starting at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 2:00 p.m., respectively. This is our opportunity to plan for the next year. The Barn Bed and Breakfast in Valley Falls is a wonderful location for reflecting on the past year's achievements and for beginning anew with next year's plans. We encourage any and all that would like to be a part of the planning process for the organization to attend. This is your opportunity to meet new people or past friends and get in on the groundwork for planning and stretching our organization.

The theme for the 2006 Advance is

"What 'Quality' is Your Professional Learning?" The topic grew out of a 2005 summer affiliate meeting where Dennis Sparks asked each individual to define what "quality professional learning" looks like, sounds like, and feels like. During part of our summer advance, we will be discussing each of our personal definitions and creating a laser talk to convey to stakeholders. We hope to convey a united message about what quality professional learning is in order to increase stakeholder knowledge, understanding, and support.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Sandee Crowther at scrowthe@usd497.org no later than May 22. This is not only a work time, but a time of celebration, collaboration, and collegiality! We'd love to have you come and see what it is all about! ■

KSDC Publications Survey

KSDC would like your input.

We have developed a quick 10-item survey
to gather information and ideas
concerning KSDC's website
and the *Direct Connection* newsletter.

You can complete this survey online. Just go to the KSDC website, www.ksdc.us. The homepage has a link to an online version of the survey. We appreciate your help in guiding us to make KSDC's publications even better!



Looking for a gift for an education graduate?



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KSDC/KASCD Fall Institute

Conference To Focus On Engaging Diverse Students and Parents

‘Excellence has nothing to fear from observation.’

Dr. George McKenna

By Patti Bishop
Fall Institute Chair

The 2006 Fall Institute will focus on “Engaging Diverse Students and Parents.” The institute, hosted jointly by KSDC and KASCD, will be held October 18-19 at the Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center in Wichita, KS.

Day One

Lessons from McKenna

Dr. George McKenna made history as principal of George Washington Preparatory High School in 1970. At the time, this high school was one of the most notorious and violent in Los Angeles, replete with gangs, drug dealing and gunfights. McKenna and his reform tactics turned George Washington Preparatory High School around, transforming it from a failing institution to one where nearly 80 percent of its graduates go on to college.

McKenna’s programs have been modeled throughout the nation. He



*All school districts will need to engage students
with diverse backgrounds
in order to achieve higher standards*

has served as a consultant to numerous school districts and law enforcement agencies. He is also the author of several articles that have appeared in local and national newspapers and educational journals. McKenna has received more than 400 citations and awards from civic, legislative and professional organizations. His work led to his being the subject of the award-winning HBO movie, *The George McKenna Story*, starring Denzel Washington.

Day Two

Successes from Kansas

Day two will be filled with breakout sessions during which practicing educators will share their successes. Each session will consist of interactive activities and ideas for practicing

teachers, support staff, and administrators to take back to their district for implementation.

Registration Coming Soon

Registration will be online at www.ksdc.us, or via hard copy.

Continental breakfast will be served each day from 8:00-8:30 a.m. Learning begins at 8:30 a.m. Session

will end at 4:00 p.m. on day one and at 2:30 p.m. on day two.

Lodging

Call the Hilton Airport hotel directly to make lodging arrangements (316-945-5272). A special rate of \$86. + tax per night can be received by mentioning KSDC. In order to obtain this rate, hotel reservations need to be made by October 1, 2006. ■

Looking for 24/7 staff development?

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Shining the Spotlight on...KSDC Award Winners Blue Valley High School: *A Transformational Journey*

By Scott Bacon
Blue Valley High School Principal

In February, 2006, Blue Valley High School was one of two schools recognized at the Kansas Staff Development Council Spring Conference with the 2006 Professional Learning Community Award. As a staff, we celebrated this “big deal” with big Dilly Bars from Dairy Queen and a customized plaque for each and every staff member. For the faculty and staff at Blue Valley High School, this was an exciting honor and further affirmation of a tremendous journey that has transpired over the past eight years and continues on into the future.

As I recall, the journey began one afternoon in 1999 at a faculty meeting. There, before us, for all to see, was the public exhibition of data: Iowa Test of Educational Development scores, state assessment scores, AP test scores, and D and F data. Few in the crowd had experienced such a public unveiling of such sensitive data. As our staff studied the data in stunned silence, there was a cautious sense of pride in what we saw. Blue Valley High School was a relatively high performing school and most schools would gladly accept our data. However, our new principal at the time, Dr. Dennis

King challenged our sense of pride by asking if we were satisfied. Was what we saw as good as it gets? Was this the best we and our students could do? Could we be more than what we saw,
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Staff members from Blue Valley High School in USD 229 accept the Professional Learning Community Award for their school. Scott Bacon is the school's principal.

and if so, what would that be? As an assistant principal at the time, I detected within me and those around me, a healthy dissatisfaction with what we saw.

This particular faculty meeting would be described by many as the catalyst for what became an exciting journey. It also set the stage for confronting a most strategic question, once again, presented by Dr. King, “What is the business of our business?”

As a staff, we wrestled with the answer to this question. For many of us, the immediate response was “teaching.” However, over the course of several months through much dialogue and reflection, there was a steady transformation in our response.

Slowly, the response to that question evolved into “student learning.” As this response grew in acceptance, it was accompanied by a realization that if student learning was the business of our

business, we were going to need to change how we did business. We would need to critically analyze our purpose, our mission. We would need to re-establish our target, our vision of what we wanted to become. Behaviors would need to be identified that would align with becoming our vision. Data, not opinion or perception, would need to become our driving force. Time would be needed to process, analyze, and most importantly collaborate about the data. Interventions would need to be developed to assist those who weren't learning. A broader leadership capacity would need to be developed to help guide this transformation. Thus, a transformational journey was born.

Over the course of the next year, a teacher leadership team was developed that studied and found energy and excitement in the work and experiences of Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker as published in their book *Professional Learning Communities At Work* (1998). As we read, we became envious of the accomplishments of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, IL. Our principal, Dennis King, carefully and masterfully nurtured this curiosity and envy by sending our leadership team to a professional learning communities conference in August, 2000 at Adlai Stevenson High School. This excursion

May 2006

became a defining moment for our school and staff. Upon returning from this conference, the energy and motivation among our teacher leadership team towards making this transformation was unlike anything I had seen during my educational career. It was as if our leadership team had been to the mountain top and seen what was on the other side. They returned energized and armed with ideas, structures, and processes needed to effectively institute cultural change. These teacher leaders became key members in inciting the transformation of Blue Valley High School towards a professional learning community.

Over the course of the next several years, a culture shift occurred at Blue Valley High School. As shared in his article "Creating the Culture for School Improvement," published in the Kansas Association of School Boards Journal (2005), Dr. Dennis King identified many of the components that were a part of this culture shift.

1. Establishment of a teacher leadership team
2. Revision of the school's mission
3. Development of vision statements
4. Creation of collaboration time each week for teacher collaboration
5. Establishment of team norms for each grade level or department team
6. Development of agendas with an assigned time allotment for each topic
7. Recording of minutes from each meeting
8. Creation of a departmental or grade level vision
9. Establishment of departmental or grade level SMART Goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented, Time-bound)
10. A focus of collaborative time on four questions
 - a. What is it we want students to learn?
 - b. How do we know they have learned?
 - c. What will we do if they haven't learned?
 - d. What will we do if they have learned?
11. Review of student performance data on a frequent basis.

May 2006

12. Development of departmental interventions to support students who are not learning.

As the years have passed, our transformation into a professional learning community has brought improved student performance in every academic category we track. In addition, valuable lessons have been learned along the way. We have learned that creating and sustaining a professional learning community is hard, but valuable work. We have learned that the professional learning community model is an effective and efficient way of doing business. We have also learned

that the business of business, student learning, is never done.

Look for more award winner stories in the September issue of Direct Connection. KSDC offers several avenues for award recognition: The Systemic Learning Award, the Professional Learning Community Award, the Impact Award, and new in 2007, the Staff Developer of the Year Award. Application information will be made available on the KSDC website beginning in July. The application process includes rubrics to determine the level of implementation and impact. ■

Basehor-Linwood School District: *Hard Work Pays Off*

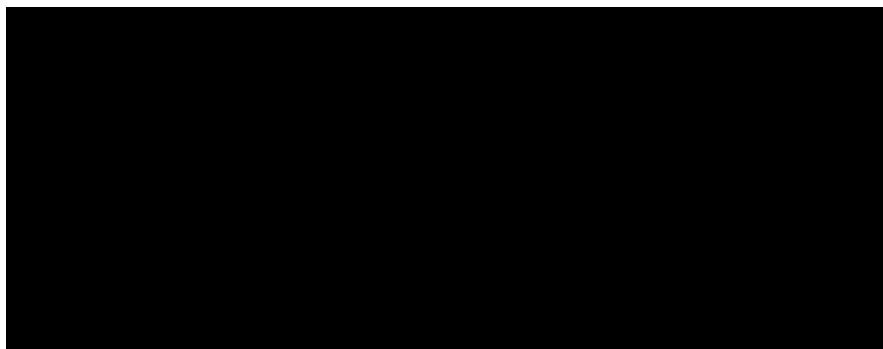
Hard work pays off. That's the feeling at Basehor-Linwood school district, the 2006 recipient of the KSDC Systemic Learning Award. Staff development is an area the district focuses on through the Professional Development Council (PDC). This eight-member group is made up of administrators and teachers who meet monthly to plan district inservices and other professional growth opportunities for teachers.

"We are doing great things for our students and staff in the area of professional development to improve instruction and student achievement," said Basehor-Linwood Superintendent Jill Hackett. "Receiving recognition at the state level is nice verification of this fact."

Over the past several years the district has made tremendous strides in

staff development. The administrative team and Board of Education have supported a new mentoring program for first-year teachers, technology integration efforts, collaborative planning, research-based inservice presenters and 16 professional development days.

"It is very exciting to have the district's hard work in staff development be recognized as the best in the state. ...There have been many positive changes in the way we conduct the business of professional development," said Sandy Guidry, Assistant Principal at Basehor-Linwood High School and PDC member. "While working on the application and its supporting documentation, it became apparent that the changes are truly a team effort of all professionals in our district." ■



Representatives from Basehor-Linwood USD 458 accept the Systemic Learning Award for their district. Jill Hackett is the district's superintendent.



'Summertime and the living is easy...'

Ready For A Good Book?

Are you looking forward to summer? Perhaps you're dreaming of a week on the beach, in the mountains or simply relaxing in nearest reclining chair? Wherever you're headed, one thing is certain: It's always nice to have a good book on hand. A few KSDC Past Presidents have put together a list of their four top choices for summertime reading. Those choices are listed below. Hope you enjoy your summer and happy reading!

School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results

by Marzano, Waters and McNulty

What specific leadership practices can make a difference in school improvement? How can school leaders blend these practices into their day-to-day management of schools? Marzano, Waters, and McNulty looked for answers to these questions. Building upon research and surveys, the authors developed a list of 21 leadership responsibilities that have a significant impact on student achievement.

Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design **by Tomlinson and McTighe**

Quality instruction in today's schools means building a dynamic model. Teachers need a model that acknowledges a focus on standards, yet ensures that students understand content and can apply it in everyday situations. At the same time, teachers need a model that can effectively embrace the diversity of the learners they serve in their classrooms. The authors of this book show how to use the principles of backward design and differentiation together to craft dynamic lessons that will speak to the needs of all learners.

From the Inside Out: Learning from the Positive Deviance in Your Organization **by Joan Richardson**

This book by Joan Richardson, NSDC's Publications Director, shares
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case studies of six schools and districts that are "positive deviants," organizations that are achieving above-average results with students even though they have the same access to resources as other schools and districts in their areas. In doing so, the book identifies good practices that enable all teachers to perform at higher levels. The book speaks to all schools, but especially shines by offering an overall perspective of possibilities for schools with low-income students.

KSDC Elects New Board Members

As a part of the annual meeting KSDC members voted to elect new board members. Those winning seats for the 2006-2007 term are:

- **Deb Perbeck**, President Elect. Perbeck is the Superintendent of Schools for USD 503 Parsons.
- **Marty Christie**, Service Center Representative. Christie is Staff Development Coordinator for Smoky Hill Education Service Center.
- **Janice Craft**, KSDE Representative. Craft is KSDE Consultant in Teacher Education and Licensure and HR Consultant for Staff Development.
- **Kelly Gillespie**, Representative B West of 281. Gillespie is Executive Director of Southwest Plains Regional

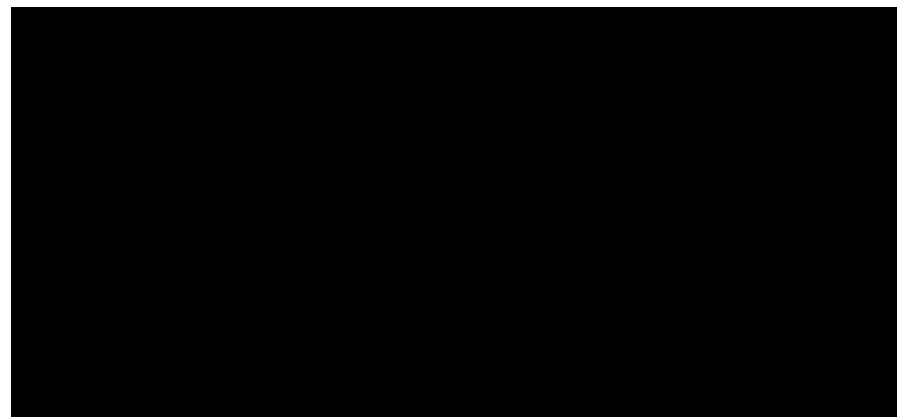
Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time **by Susan Scott**

Relationships, both personal and professional, hinge on how conversations go. This book shares ways to transform everyday conversations with effective ways to get your message across - and get what you want. Scott relates anecdotes from her experience and provides exercises to help in building skills in this area. ■

Service Center.

- **Jan Neufeld**, Representative B East of 281. Neufeld is Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instructional Services for USD 373 Newton.
- **Marty Anderson**, Principal Representative. Anderson is principal of Parsons High School.
- **Robin Dixon** and **Kim Thomas**, Teacher Representative B. Dixon is a sixth grade teacher at Jay Shideler Elementary in Topeka, KS. Thomas is a fifth grade teacher at McLean Science/Technology Elementary Magnet school in USD 259 Wichita.

The 06-07 term of office begins with the board advance in June. ■



Newly elected KSDC Board Members: Janice Craft, KSDE Representative; Kim Thomas, Teacher B Representative; Deb Perbeck, President-Elect; Jan Neufeld, Representative B East of 281; and -Robin Dixon, Teacher B Representative.

2004-2005 Board of Directors

President

Lisa Brookover
USD 445
615 Ellis
Coffeyville, KS 67337
Phone 620-252-6400
brookoverl@civilleschools.com

President-Elect

Jill Smith
USD 497
15502 254th St.
Lawrence, KS 66044
Phone 785-832-5870
JSmith@usd497.org

Past President

Terry Eis
KSDE
School Improvement
& Accreditation
120 SE 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612
Phone 785-296-8019
teis@ksde.org

Secretary (2007)

Sherry Reed
USD 437
3577 Arkansas Rd.
Pomona, KS 66076
Phone 785-339-4044
reedshl@usd437.net

Board Of Directors

Teacher A (2007)

Adrian Walker
5114 Vista Acres
Manhattan, KS 66503
Phone 785-587-2150 x309
adrianw@manhattan.k12.ks.us

Teacher B (2006)

Mary Thoman
Concordia Elementary
1500 East 9th
Concordia, KS 66901
Phone 675-243-8853
mthoman@usd333.com

Principal (2006)

Dan McAdam
Catholic Diocese
1521 Lookout Drive
Wichita, KS 67230
Phone 316-261-5861
dmcadam@stjosephwichita.com

Classified Rep. (2007)

OPEN

Higher Education Rep. (2007)

Teresa Miller
KSU
1511 Deep Creek Lane
Manhattan, KS 66502
Phone 785-532-5609
tmiller@ksu.edu

Rep A East of Hwy 281 (2007)

Vicki Bechard
USD 342 McLouth
20064 K92 Hwy
McLouth, KS 66054
Phone 913-796-6122
bechardv@mcloth.org

Rep A West of Hwy 281 (2007)

Tina Buck
USD 254
212 East Lincoln
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104
Phone 620-886-5644
tbuck@cyberlog.com

Rep B East of Hwy 281 (2006)

Deb Perbeck
Parsons USD 503
2900 Southern, Box 1056
Parsons, KS 67357
Phone 620-421-5950
dperbeck@vikingnet.net

Rep B West of Hwy 281 (2006)

Pam Gaschler
Ft. Hays Ed. Serv. Cntr.
305 Pickens Hall
Hays, KS 67601
Phone 785-628-4382
pgaschler@fhsu.edu

KSDE Representative (2006)

Jane Groff
KSDE
120 SE 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66612
Phone 785-296-2226
jgroff@ksde.org

Service Center Rep. (2006)

Carol Simoneau
ESSDACK
1500 E. 11th, F16a
Hutchinson, KS 67501
Phone 620-663-9566
carols@essdack.org

Central Office Rep. (2007)

Jim Karleskint
USD 337, Royal Valley
15912 166th Rd.
Mayetta, KS 66509
Phone 785-966-2246
karleskintj@rv337.k12.ks.us

Ex Officio

KSDC-KASCD Liaison

Patti Bishop
3421 NW Rochester Rd.
Topeka, KS 66617
Phone 785-286-8530
pbishop@usd345.com

KASCD-KSDC Liaison

Lee Cox
USD 361, 124 N. Jennings
Anthony, KS 67003
Phone 620-842-5183 x302
leec@usd361.k12.ks.us

KNEA Liaison

Judy Rapp
12216 Blackfoot Drive
Olathe, KS 66062
Phone 913-829-9196
jrapphc@olatheschools.com

Spring Conf. Chair (2006)

Debbie Kleinau
Manhattan USD 383
2715 Hobbs Dr.
Manhattan, KS 66502
Phone 785-587-2060
debbiek@manhattan.k12.ks.us

Nominating Com. Chair

Terry Eis

Program Committee Chair

Jill Smith

Fall Institute Chair (2005)

Volora Hanzlicek
Sabetha 441
107 Oregon
Sabetha, KS 66534
Phone 785-284-2175
hanzlicv@sabetha441.k12.ks.us

Quality Practices Chair

Deb Perbeck

Advocacy/Collab. Chair

Sue Kidd
Ed. Service Ctr., Greenbush
16879 46th St.
McLouth, KS 66054
Phone 785-863-3425
Fax 785-863-3425
sue.kidd@greenbush.org

Awards Chair

Sherry Reed

Membership Chair

Terry Eis

Middle School Forum Chair

Cathy Colborn
Medicine Lodge MS USD 254
100 E. 1st
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104
Phone 620-886-5644
colborn@cyberlodg.com

Publications Chair

Mary Adcock

Staff

Executive Secretary

Sandee Crowther
Lawrence USD 497
110 McDonald
Lawrence, KS 66044-1063
Phone 785-832-5000
scrowthe@usd497.org

Publications Coordinator

Mary Adcock
Buhler USD 313
2501 E. 30th
Hutchinson, KS 67502
Phone 620-662-4891
mjadcock@cox.net

Treasurer

Tom Jerome
Box 458
Eudora, KS 66025
Phone 785-542-2170
Tjrome815@aol.com

Kansas *Direct Connection* is published four times a year by the KSDC.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the KSDC Board of Directors.



KSDC Mission

The Kansas Staff Development Council (KSDC) promotes high standards in student achievement by advocating, modeling, and providing resources for quality professional learning.

KSDC Beliefs

We believe:

- The ultimate purpose of staff development/professional learning is to improve student achievement.
- A staff developer is anyone who systematically empowers others to change their practice through professional learning.
- Effective staff developers use a research base to continually define and refine best practices.
- Effective collaboration is essential for our organization, quality staff development, and professional learning.
- Effective organizational development is required if all students are to learn.
- Organizational development requires individual change.
- Each educator has a moral responsibility to improve professional effectiveness through lifelong learning.
- Reinforcement and support systems are critical to the transfer of learning into practice.
- Ongoing assessment is critical for effective staff development decisions.



KSDC's Vision:

The Kansas Staff Development Council (KSDC) will engage all Kansas educators in high quality professional learning by 2010.

Communities In Schools Joins In Work Of KLFA

Communities in Schools Kansas (CISK) became the newest member of the Kansas Learning First Alliance when its request for membership received unanimous approval at the latest meeting of KLFA. This addition brings to 24 the number of KLFA members, whose mission is to “make Kansas first in the nation in teaching and learning.”

Communities In Schools National is anchor to the nation’s leading community-based organization helping young people stay in school and prepare for life. For more than 25 years, Communities In Schools

has helped students *choose success* by ensuring their access to the “Five Basics”:

- A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult

- A safe place to learn and grow
- A healthy start and a healthy future
- A marketable skill to use upon graduation
- A chance to give back to peers and community

Systemic change, information technology, and NCLB-mandated

parental involvement opportunities were the major topics of conversation for the meeting. As it becomes more apparent widespread student success is the goal, not just pockets of excellence, the need for systemwide

improvement also increases. Helping districts look at their organization and operational strategies was discussed as a potential new focus of KLFA activities.

Another initiative being considered by KLFA is one that makes 21st century instruction and assessment become more visible. A number of important technological companies, along with several educational organizations, have created a partnership to help schools better prepare students for a rapidly changing world, which often has as its catalyst emerging technologies. KLFA discussed a proposal that would help the state move to the forefront in that arena, but did not take any action.

KLFA agreed to become a secondary partner in a grant proposal being prepared by the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC). As a secondary partner, KLFA would work with KPIRC to help generate professional development strategies that would help schools better work with parents as they work to support their children’s efforts.

Members also heard a report on a national educational summit being organized by Learning First, a national group composed of 11 national organizations. ■

As it becomes more apparent widespread student success is the goal, not just pockets of excellence, the need for systemwide improvement also increases

Kansas Staff Development Council

Lisa Brookover, President

USD 445

615 Ellis

Coffeyville, KS 67337

Sandee Crowther,

Executive Secretary

Lawrence USD 497

110 McDonald Drive

Lawrence, KS 66044

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