

# **TOOLS FOR QUALITY PRACTICE**



## **A Resource Guide for Professional Learning**

**Developed and sponsored by the Kansas Learning First Alliance  
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# ***Tools for Quality Practice: Executive Summary***



## **Background:**

Kansas Learning First Alliance (KLFA) is a partnership of 24 leading educational associations that have come together to make Kansas first in the nation in teaching and learning. The Alliance represents an unprecedented, self-initiated commitment to develop and deliver a common message to all parts of the education system, align priorities, share and disseminate success stories, encourage collaboration at every level, and work toward the continual and long-term improvement of public education based on solid research. KLFA has focused efforts in three areas: Student Achievement, Professional Development, and Public Engagement. To see a full list of the 24 member associations and to learn more about KLFA initiatives visit the Kansas Learning First website at [www.teachkansas.org](http://www.teachkansas.org).

Over the past few years there has been some extensive and valuable formal research conducted within Kansas as a collaborative effort between Kansas Learning First (KLFA), the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE), the Kansas Association of Teachers of Mathematics (KATM) and the Kansas Staff Development Council (KSDC). The major message from these research efforts which were conducted **BY** Kansas educators **WITH** Kansas educators is that two things appear to make the biggest impact on student achievement--

- #1) Alignment of the district/school program of study to the state curriculum standards  
**AND**
- #2) Time and attention devoted to quality professional development

## **In this resource:**

In keeping with KLFA's goal to make Kansas first in the nation in teaching and learning, we have assembled this resource guide, "Tools For Quality Practice". It is a synthesis of the key findings from this Kansas research furnished along with a library of other resources that might prove helpful as we continue our march toward school improvement.

The resource guide has been arranged in the following sections—

- ◆ **Executive Summary** – this section provides some background about this project and an overview of the content included in this resource guide.

- ◆ **Improving Teaching and Learning in All Kansas Schools** – this section highlights key research findings about the general topic of school improvement and restructuring.
- ◆ **Professional Development** – a section that introduces “best practice” in professional development that is linked to improved student learning.
- ◆ **Improving Student Achievement in Reading** – a section highlighting resources to positively impact student achievement in reading.
- ◆ **Improving Student Achievement in Mathematics** – a section highlighting resources to positively impact student achievement in mathematics.
- ◆ **Partnerships for Improvement** – Building on the strong link between community and parental involvement, this section provides “helps” to create strong community and parent connections.
- ◆ **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** – This portion of the resource is a detailed description of how NCLB has been implemented in Kansas and its connection to the Kansas Quality Performance Accreditation process.
- ◆ **Collection of References** – this final section provides a complete list of all references cited within each of the individual sections of this resource guide.

### **The landscape of education in Kansas:**

A strong, clearly defined vision for improving schools has been a focus of our state work for many years now. Long before the advent of No Child Left Behind, Kansas was already focusing major attention on many of the requirements outlined in the new federal law. One of the most recent initiatives of the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) undertaken in order to help our educational community better understand the vision for Kansas students is the identification of seven CORE PRINCIPLES. KSBE believes that these seven core principles must form the basis for any redesign of our educational system. These seven core principles are:

- ▶ **All students in Kansas must be held to essential and challenging learning standards as defined by the State Board of Education.**
- ▶ **All students must be provided appropriate instruction to successfully learn the essential standards.**
- ▶ **The education system must be flexible and adaptable to meet the learning needs of each student.**
- ▶ **Curricular and instructional decisions and corresponding policies must be based on standards, data, and research.**
- ▶ **Professional growth and development that increases the capacity of those who work in the system to help all children learn must be ongoing and continuous.**
- ▶ **Schools must actively engage parents in the education of their children.**
- ▶ **The community, through the local board of education, must be involved in establishing the expectations and determining the structure of the education system and receive regular reports on its progress.**

Each of the seven core principles includes some examples to help clarify the intent of the board in regard to each principle. In addition to this general summary of the vision of each principle, white papers focusing on each individual principle were commissioned by KSBE. The white papers are fairly lengthy documents written by Kansas educators. Each paper is extremely informative and includes the following sections: “Introduction”, “Research”, “Vision”,

“Recommendations for the Kansas State Board of Education to Consider”, and most conclude with a formal Bibliography. At this time, the white papers for Principles #1 through #4 are complete and appear on the KSDE website. To view the entire document go to [www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org) and click on the “Board” button on this home page. Select “Core Principles of System Redesign” from the drop down menu that appears in order to find links to each portion of this document. To navigate to individual pieces of the full document, use the direct URL’s to the individual portions as follows:

The Seven Core Principles(an overview) including clarifying examples---

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/core\\_principles\\_introduction.doc](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/core_principles_introduction.doc)

White paper for Principle #1—

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle\\_1.doc](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle_1.doc)

White paper for Principle #2—

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle\\_2.doc](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle_2.doc)

White paper for Principle #3—

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle\\_3.doc](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle_3.doc)

White paper for Principle #4—

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle\\_4.doc](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/principle_4.doc)

Core Principles Power Point---

[http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/core\\_principles\\_powerpoint.ppt](http://www.ksde.org/commiss/coreprincipals/core_principles_powerpoint.ppt)

### **Conclusion – Purpose of this guide:**

The guide is not intended as an exhaustive discussion of the research, resources, and practical classroom implications that exist in our world of education today. It is, however, a starting place for our Kansas colleagues to use and build upon based on their unique and individual needs.

Please note: Many of the resources cited within this document are provided as electronic links. Bear in mind that changes to the URL’s included here are outside of our control and may have changed since the printing of this document.