MYTH BUSTERS

Kansas School Performance

FACTS: Kansas public school performance is consistently in the top 10 to 15 nationally, with at least 4 out of every 5 students scoring at or above basic performance levels. Every state in the top 10 except South Dakota spends more per pupil than Kansas. While rank and per pupil expenditures are indicators of Kansas public schools’ efficiency, the percentage of youth scoring at or above basic performance levels is a reflection of effectiveness.

... Some public school opponents are arguing that “proficiency matters, not rank.” Kansas PTA finds value in both types of indicators, as well as, a common understanding of the term proficient.

FACT 1. Kansas public schools’ performance consistently ranks high. Kansas public schools rank 9th nationally and 3rd regionally on the combined 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) score – where 80% of all students’ combined scores were at basic or higher performance levels.

FACT 2. Kansas schools continue making significant progress. About 85% (B+) of Kansas students performed at or above state standards in reading and math in 2010, up from less than 60% in 2001.

FACT 3. The performance bar is rising, from basic to proficient. Proficiency refers here to student achievement levels in relation to education standards. NAEP uses 4 levels of student achievement at each grade level in relation to national standards: below basic, basic, proficient, advanced. The Kansas Assessments use 5 levels: academic warning, meets, exceeds, exemplary. In keeping with federal law enacted in 2001, states across the country adopted standards and set the starting performance point, as mandated by law, at the lowest-achievement demographic group or school in the state. On average state standards align with NAEP’s current basic performance level. Today, 48 states and territories including Kansas are raising the bar beyond basic in alignment with recent changes to federal law and shifting standards to what NAEP now defines as proficient, where every single student is expected to be college and career ready.