

Dave Trabert

From: David Smith <davidsmith@smsd.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 4:11 PM
To: Dave Trabert
Cc: Stuart Little
Subject: FW: Tax Credit Scholarship

Dear Mr. Trabert,

Thank you for your e-mail, and for your question.

First, in order to respond to you, we should be clear on what our target is. The goal for students across the state of Kansas, and indeed across the country, is college and career readiness. The current state assessment system does not capture growth towards college and career readiness. In addition, as you know, state assessments have little or no meaning for the student who has to take them, and I know of no college admissions officer or employer who has ever asked a student for their scores on a 10th grade state assessment. Also, no single assessment provides more than a snapshot in time, and as such would be a poor measure of what a student knows and is able to do over time. On a measure that does matter for college readiness, the ACT, our students score more than two points above the state average.

Instead, let's talk about things that DO matter for our students. In June, 2019, the Shawnee Mission Board of Education passed a [Strategic Plan](#), developed by our community, which lays out clear objectives for our students, including a personalized learning plan which prepares them for college and careers, with the interpersonal skills they need for life success. Such an interconnected set of objectives requires a complex system of goals and measures; anything less would be meaningless for our students, and unworthy of their aspirations, or the needs of this community.

We use a variety of formative assessments to monitor our students' progress. Our goal is to see growth over time. Other meaningful measures include high school course content readiness, engaging students in internships, the acquisition of market-value assets, and achieving credentialing (which qualifies students for specific jobs upon graduation). Our participation in the Real World Learning effort being led by the Kauffman Foundation is precisely geared to support these efforts. The district has made an institutional commitment to measure growth towards these objectives, using a variety of formative measures, and regularly reports to our Board of Education on our progress.

To directly respond to your question: Getting all children to grade level, at the same time, has never happened in a system that serves all children. Unlike private schools, public schools willingly serve all students who enter their doors, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who enter our classrooms significantly behind their peers. No institution that serves all students can guarantee that every student will be at a specific measure of achievement at a specific time. What we strive for every day is to support children in their learning growth so they demonstrate mastery of important competencies that lead to college and career readiness. Toward that end, it is strongly in the public interest (and by public, I mean all members of the community, including the approximately four out of five residents who do not have school-aged children) that public funds be used to support schools that are governed by publicly elected boards, willing to serve all students, and accountable to their communities.

I hope this is helpful.

David A. Smith
Chief Communications Officer

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Shawnee Mission School District
 Center for Academic Achievement
 8200 W. 71st Street
 Shawnee Mission, KS 66204
 913.993.6447 (O)
 913.744.5104 (C)
www.smsd.org



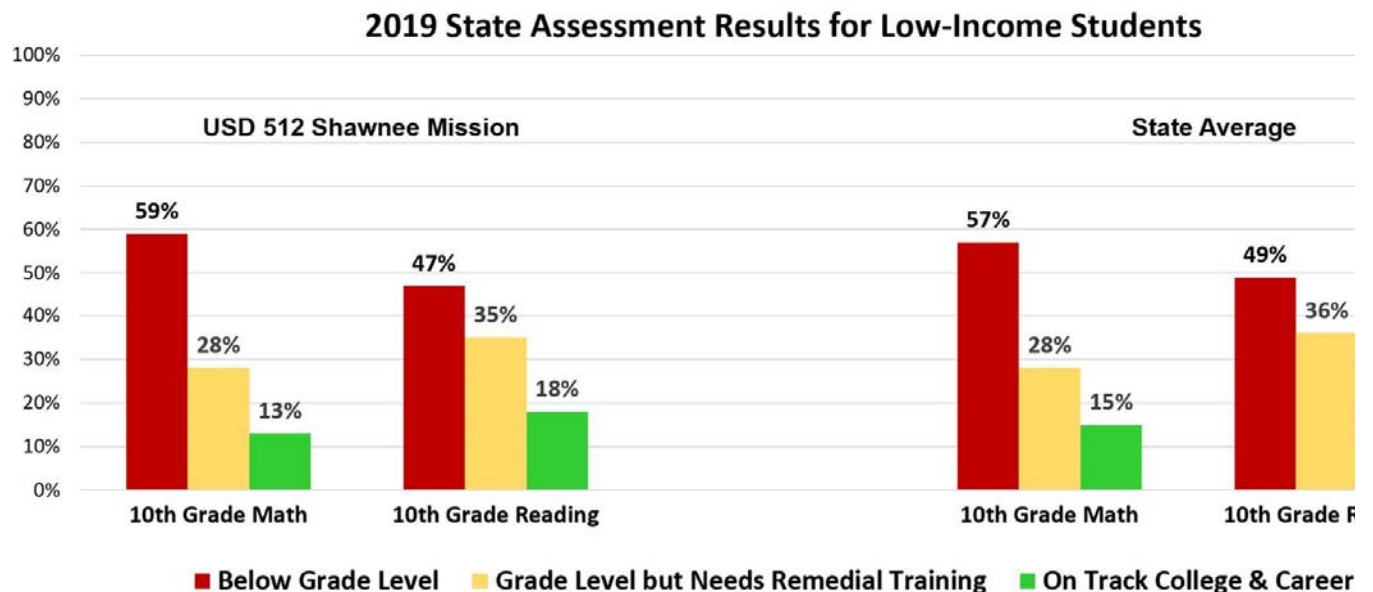
Begin forwarded message:

From: Dave Trabert <dave.trabert@kansaspolicy.org>
Date: January 28, 2021 at 12:43:26 PM CST
To: stuartjlittle@mac.com
Cc: heatherousley@smsd.org, marysinclair@smsd.org, bradstratton@smsd.org, saragoodburn@smsd.org, LauraGuy@smsd.org, jamieborgman@smsd.org, jessicahembree@smsd.org
Subject: Tax Credit Scholarship

Hi Stuart,

I understand you testified in opposition to the tax credit scholarship program on behalf of the Shawnee Mission School District.

The 2019 state assessment results show SMSD has four times as many low-income 10th-graders below grade level (59%) than are on track for college and career (13%); results for English Language Arts are similar. As disappointing as these numbers are, they've also gotten worse over the last five years.



So here's my question. If the SMSD board doesn't want low-income kids to have an opportunity to use a scholarship and keep them trapped in a public school that isn't working for them, please explain the district's plan to get these kids at least to grade level. Please also explain how long the board thinks it will take to get all low-income kids to grade level.

Your response – or lack thereof – will be used in a story we're writing. Please respond by the end of business on Wednesday, February 3.

Thanks for your consideration.

Dave

Dave Trabert
Chief Executive Officer
Kansas Policy Institute
12980 Metcalf, Suite 130
Overland Park, KS 66213
(913) 213-5038 O
(316) 993-4667 M
www.KansasPolicy.org
www.SentinelKS.org
www.KansasJusticeInstitute.org
www.KansasOpenGov.org

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