

Maps for Kids

Assessing Progress Beyond Bricks and Mortar A Report to Patrons of the Oklahoma City Public Schools

Executive Summary

**prepared by
The Assessment Committee
June 2004**

**Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation, Inc.
420 N.W. 13th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73103
www.okckids.com**

The Assessment Committee Members

**Carol Berry
Sam Bowman
John Bozalis
Robert Buswell
Mike Chandler
Rochelle Converse
DeAnn Davis
Pam Deering
Jimmy Dew
Drew Dugan
Monty Evans
Sherry Fair
Jennifer Garner
Joyce Henderson
Jean Hendrickson
Lisa Johnson
Wendy Jones
George Kimball
Tom Loy
Susan McCalmont
Frank McQuarrie
Ted Metscher
Tom Price
Greg Pringle
John Rex (Chair)
Sherry Rhodes
Hossein Sarjeh-Payma
Manny Soto
Robert Spinks
Cindy Sullivan
Zach Taylor
John Thompson
Diane Vinson (Coordinator)
Larkin Warner (Editor)
Sandy Wisley**

Executive Summary

Maps for Kids Assessing Progress Beyond Bricks and Mortar A Report to Patrons of the Oklahoma City Public Schools June 2004

1. Background and Purpose

In 1999, the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation created the Project KIDS (Keep Improving District Schools) Committee. This citizens committee developed a set of recommendations for improvement of the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) that are contained in an August, 2001, report entitled *MAPS for KIDS: Building a Learning City*. The report's proposals for buildings and equipment were the basis for a major tax initiative approved by the voters of Oklahoma City in November 2001. Financing was provided to the district for a ten-year, \$531 million program of new and remodeled school facilities, additional technology, and school buses. This effort is being implemented by the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area Public Schools Trust.

In addition to the building and equipment recommendations, the Project KIDS Committee developed a set of operational recommendations for OKCPS to better serve the educational needs of students. These operational recommendations were also included in the 2001 *MAPS for KIDS* report. A commitment was made to provide accessible and reliable data on how the district has been responding to the operational recommendations. To this end, in 2003, the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation appointed a citizens Assessment Committee.

The purpose of this report of the Assessment Committee is to provide school year 2002-03 base line information on OKCPS which can be used in the future to assess the extent to which the district is responding to the operational recommendations contained in the *MAPS for KIDS* publication. It is, in effect, honoring the reporting commitment made in 2001. The Assessment Committee limited its analyses to the 2001 recommendations and did not develop any new policy proposals.

2. The Oklahoma City Public Schools as an “Urban” School District

An assessment of OKCPS must start with an understanding that this district, like many others occupying the central cores of large American cities, is an “urban” district. Its many challenges are much more daunting than those faced by most suburban and rural school systems. At the heart of these challenges is the fact that a large share of the urban districts' students come from households that have relatively low incomes.

- In 2002-03, 84.5 percent of the OKCPS students were from households whose incomes were so low that the students were eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

- Students from low-income households generally have parents/guardians who themselves do not have extensive educational backgrounds.
- Most children begin their formal schooling less well prepared than those from higher income households.
- Children in urban districts often receive less academic reinforcement at home.
- Many children live in relatively high-crime neighborhoods inhabited by children from similar backgrounds.

Added to these basic problems of being an urban school district, OKCPS has experienced more than three decades of stress.

- Between school years 1969-70 and 1979-80 the district's enrollment dropped from about 73,000 to 42,000 as a result of the turmoil associated with racial desegregation and forced busing.
- Further difficulties developed in the 1980s with the financial stresses of Oklahoma's oil boom and bust.
- The 1990s and beyond are witnessing major demographic change as the district has continued lose White non-Hispanic and Black students, while gaining large numbers of Hispanic students who often need help with the English language.

3. Academic Results

The Project KIDS Committee placed great emphasis on the need to improve student academic performance. Shortly after the *MAPS for KIDS* report was issued, the federal government adopted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This law created a framework by which the performance of schools and school districts is evaluated and judged in the context of bringing *all students* up to a targeted level of achievement. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has adopted an Academic Performance Index (API) as its measure of results.

- For elementary and middle schools, 90 percent of the state's API depends on student performance on state-mandated tests in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- For high schools, the main determinants are end-of-instruction tests for Algebra I and English II courses.
- Other variables entering in the calculation of API include attendance rates, dropout rates, and some measures of performance relating to higher education.
- In 2002-03 the district-wide API for OKCPS was 753—well below the statewide average of 1046.
- All students, including those from different racial/ethnic groups must exhibit Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Under the rules of the No Child Left Behind Act, failure to achieve AYP first brings remedial actions and ultimately can result in sanctions.

The meaning of being an urban school district becomes clearer when the district's academic performance is compared to that of 17 neighboring districts in Oklahoma,

Canadian, and Cleveland Counties in 2002-03. The OKCPS district as a whole does not perform well in comparison with most other districts in central Oklahoma.

- Only one district of the group had a higher percentage of students eligible for free/reduced price meals, that is, from relatively low income households.
- In general, the lower the share of students from low income households for a district, the higher the share of students judged to have satisfactory performance on the state-mandated tests.
- Districts such as OKCPS with high shares of students from low income households also had poor performance with respect to absences, dropout rates, graduation rates, percent taking the ACT test, ACT test scores, percent going on to college, and the need for remediation once in college.

Within the district itself, there was great variation in the academic results exhibited at individual school sites.

- In 2002-03, 19 of the district's 62 elementary schools had APIs above the state average.
- The Belle Isle Enterprise Middle School had the highest API in the state; the district's other eight middle schools had APIs far below the state average.
- Among the high schools, three with selective admissions policies had APIs close to or above the state average; the other six were far below average.

A chronic academic problem at OKCPS involves students not completing high school, not going on to college, and not graduating from college. There is a 40 percent reduction in the number of students between the average number enrolled in the middle school grades and the number of the district's seniors. While 45 percent of the high school graduates go on to college in-state, nearly 60 percent required at least one remedial course in math, English, science, or reading. Only about 5 percent of the district's 9th graders graduate from college in Oklahoma receiving an associate degree within three years or a bachelor's degree within six—a share far below the 30 percent of adults with such degrees in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

4. Safe and Orderly Environment

Like many school patrons, the Project KIDS Committee was particularly concerned with discipline and the need for an orderly school environment for OKCPS. Teachers shared with the committee their urgent concerns over the need for effective and consistent disciplinary policy. Ultimately, disruptive students need to be removed from the classroom. "Alternative education" facilities are provided for students who, for one reason or another, have difficulty participating in a normal classroom setting. The Project KIDS Committee recommended exploring multi-district cooperation in the provision of alternative education and the expansion of alternative education to the grade school level.

- In 2002-03, suspensions of 10 days or less for OKCPS occurred at the rate of 24.4 per 100 students, compared with 7.8 per 100 statewide.
- With nearly 40,000 students in 2002-03, OKCPS had placed nearly 1,000 students in alternative education facilities. Many were discipline related placements.
- Very tight budgets during 2002-03 meant no expansion of alternative education services to grade school students, and no multi-district facilities were developed.

5. School Performance

School performance refers to what occurs at the individual school site. The Project KIDS Committee expressed concern over the need for early childhood education, greater involvement of adults in children's education, and the special need for improving middle school performance.

- As is typical of urban districts, a high share of children starting school in OKCPS need an extra boost in order to be ready for first grade. The district provided services to about 6,000 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children in 2002-03.
- Once children were in school, the district provided many opportunities for extended learning beyond the regular classroom times—including after-school programs.
- Tutoring by caring adults supplements regular classroom activities. The Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation helped recruit and organize the services of 673 tutors during 2002-03.
- The remarkably poor academic performance at district middle schools has led to the reconfiguration of grades as the district's construction program is undertaken. When completed, the district will, for the most part, no longer have the traditional middle schools with grades 6, 7, and 8. More typical will be K-8 or 7-12 schools.

6. District Performance

District performance considerations relate to such matters as the efficient overall organization of OKCPS; the recruitment, retention, and professional development of quality employees; the proper allocation of authority and accountability within the district; and efficient financial management and record-keeping.

- The Project KIDS Committee strongly supported a recommendation for the expansion of "schools of choice" in which parents/guardians (and children) have the option of exercising some choice as to which particular school to attend within the district. During 2002-03, the district maintained some degree of choice through magnet schools, specialty schools, quasi-independent "enterprise schools," and provided state-mandated support to independent charter schools.
- The district and the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation continued support for teachers to undertake the activities necessary to receive National Board certification. Teachers and administrators participated in an extensive array of professional development programs.

- Because of a tight budget during 2002-03, it was impossible for the district to respond to the Project KIDS Committee’s recommendations for improved teacher compensation.
- There was a belief by the Project KIDS Committee that the OKCPS in past years had an administrative structure that was too highly centralized. Steps were taken in 2002-03 to assign more authority and accountability to the school site level and to reduce the size of the central administration.
- In 2001, the OKCPS had no overall computerized information system linking personnel, finance, and academic data. It had been several years since the external auditor had been able to offer an “unqualified opinion” on the district’s finances. Moreover, the district was notorious for failing to pay vendors in a timely manner. The Project KIDS Committee recommended a major overhaul of management information systems.
- During 2001-02 the district adopted a new “enterprise resource planning” computerized information system. The transition to this system involved a great deal of stress and criticism by personnel. In the spring of 2003, invoices were apparently still not being paid in a timely manner. However, the district received a clean audit for 2002-03.

7. The Future

Near the close of the 2002-03 school year, OKCPS hired a new superintendent who had extensive experience raising the performance of urban school districts in Texas and Colorado. Superintendent Bob Moore is in the process of adopting a set of management tools that have been proven to be successful. New management tools being implemented in OKCPS include the following:

- The *High Performance Model* of management based on the widely adopted techniques referred to as Malcolm Baldrige criteria.
- An *Organizational Health Inventory* which enables leaders to identify weak spots in the management of school sites, organizational teams, and central administration.
- The *CSMpact for Schools* which is a survey-based system of identifying experiences and attitudes of OKCPS students, employees, and other stakeholders.
- The reorganization of the district across *six geographic feeder patterns* which follow the natural progression of students from kindergarten through high school and which are led by administrators with the title of Executive Director of Student Performance.
- The designation of about 40 *Instructional Facilitators* spread throughout the district and providing special assistance to low performing schools and classes.

The base year information contained in this report for 2002-03 is especially important because of the expectation that important positive results will be observable in subsequent years as these new management tools are implemented. Future assessment reports will utilize data generated by these new tools and will track basic information on student, school, and district performance contained in this 2002-03 base line report.

Preface

This is the story of a District emerging from years of neglect.

Only about 5 percent of our 9th graders graduate from an Oklahoma college in a reasonable amount of time. This is just over ½ the rate for Millwood and Tulsa, 1/3 the rate for Moore, and 1/5 the rate for Edmond. It is also just about 1/3 the state average. This is a huge opportunity for improvement in the lives of so many.

The Oklahoma City Public Schools District has a proud history. Many of our finest citizens are graduates of the District. The City has made a historic commitment in the form of Maps for KIDS which will provide first class physical facilities, technology and busses for every student. Through the leadership of our Superintendent, Bob Moore, the District is pursuing a plan, with proven tools and systems that will provide the opportunity for consistent and comprehensive academic progress for every student. We have many fine educators whose efforts will be given the opportunity to succeed in the context of this new environment.

The families of our students will determine whether every student arrives at school healthy and ready to learn. The first 33 months of life, including the 9 months before birth, are the most important in the life of each person in determining the ultimate capacity for learning. Significant momentum is developing through a number of efforts in our State and Community to insure that every child has a fair chance at success in life. Oklahomans for School Readiness, Success by Six and Turning Point are three major parts of this comprehensive effort. The combination of early child preparation and high quality pre K thru 12 efforts will insure this opportunity for all students. The statutory goal of Oklahoma is that 90% of our 3rd graders are reading at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. Students learn to read through the 3rd grade and read to learn thereafter.

Thank you to the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation, our School Board and to Chairman Cliff Hudson for giving leadership and support to Maps for KIDS and Superintendent Moore. This combination of Board, proven leadership, high quality educators, and high quality tools and systems, supported by strong families and the community, give the Oklahoma City Public Schools District an opportunity not seen in many years. It should produce a model urban school district for the State and Country.

A special thank you to Larkin Warner and George Kimball for their work in developing the information and shaping this report. Thank you to the Committee and to the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation for their work and support for this initial report on the progress of the District in the Maps for KIDS era beginning July 1, 2003.

John Rex, Chair, Assessment Committee

June 11, 2004