

## **Motivation, Rewards and Consequences: Local efforts to support and encourage schools and students to maximize performance on the Kansas assessments**

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### *Preamble:*

*This is the first edition of a paper that we expect to periodically update. Readers who can offer suggestions of practices they have adopted that have helped to motivate students and staff are invited to write. Your thoughts and ideas are welcomed. Write John Poggio at with your suggestions based on your experiences. We will periodically revise the paper and distribute it for consideration among Kansas educators. Thanks to all contributors for taking the time to share your efforts and ideas with others.*

### **The Need for Attention**

Prior to major events and competitions, it is both common and acceptable for participants to find themselves involved in activities designed to motivate, heighten, and otherwise give/offer support and encouragement toward meeting the demands and expectations of the challenges before them. Indeed the more important the event, the greater is the likelihood that motivational efforts will be part of the “game” plan. There is a real world presence to such events beyond athletics; consider sales meetings, political conventions, and association and club meetings, etc. In a word, a century of educational psychological research encourages “practice” to ready and sharpen a person for any event. Additionally, motivation designed to encourage and reinforce positive performance on such events is not left to chance; we underwrite and ascribe to many forms of activities that support and encourage strong performance. Again, support by one’s peers and mentors provide a device and a strategy intended to encourage achievement. By the same token, and again taken from the well documented annuals of educational psychological research, consequences that result in rewards for successful performance instill, i.e., reinforce, positive behaviors and help the behaviors to endure, whereas “punishment” is not as strong or persistent a motivator, though penalties do make the message of failure very clear (and punishment does not ordinarily assure the desired behavior). Based on tradition, many have viewed formal educational testing as an event that needs to occur, but without much fanfare: tests are scheduled and students are left on their own to meet the challenge of the test. “Do your best” is the typical refrain and judged a sufficient “motivator” unto itself; but by itself, even this potentially positive offering may be interpreted as a challenge or a threat... “Do your best ... or else...”

That some students are not motivated to do well on education assessments is a reality (CETE, 2001). Yet our research finds that the vast majority of Kansas students will work hard to demonstrate their learned knowledge and skills when asked. We also observe that the student’s disposition is often manipulated by the local school environment. Work at CETE shows that in some schools it appears that most every student gives assessment experiences their best performance effort, while in other locales a large percentage of students will not take an assessment seriously. Just as successful coaches will not send their athletes into competition without practice or positive reinforcers, evidence suggests educators could improve the validity of their students’ scores were there some greater attention focused on the importance of advising students and encouraging them to do there best. What we have learned from successful coaching mentors is that their “students” are individuals and each person requires somewhat different “motivations” -- what works for one, may not be the ingredient that works for another. But sterling performance absent a purpose and a desire to succeed should not be assumed or left to chance.

### **What can be done? From Theory and Experience to Practice**

A student's motivation for academic work (actually for most any work) is directly related to her/his own expectations for success. Educational theory suggests (and it just makes good common sense) that students who have a high expectancy for success will have higher motivation, will persist for a longer period of time, and will make greater efforts to overcome obstacles (i.e., attend to and work to solve test question problems) than students who do not think they can succeed.

So how can we help students develop high expectancies for success? Research points to four strategies to help students increase their expectations for success. Consider the following (order is not important):

First, students need to have experienced success with similar activities in the past. Providing ample practice and positive feedback with the subject matter will go a long way toward building those high self-expectations. Additionally, students can increase their own expectations by preparing for state assessments through practice with similar item formats in simulated testing situations (but not the actual assessments of course), which provide at least some opportunities for success. Teachers and administrators can help students set personal goals based on their performance on prior state assessments. Students who reach or exceed their personal goals could receive special recognition and awards.

Second, positive peer role models can provide support to students who are struggling with motivation. Encourage students to share their strategies as well as their feelings associated with taking the assessments. Uses of a pep club, rally, assembly, or positive comments from students at other grades are ways to foster such positive conditions.

Third, verbal encouragement and praise from respected adults will help to boost students' expectations for success (this can be strengthened by "after the test" celebrations and awards, etc.). Talking with parents about their role to provide encouragement and offering positive reinforcement, building an encouraging school environment, and giving appropriate one-on-one praise will enable students to understand that they can be successful. Sending a newsletter to parents informing them of upcoming test dates as well as providing suggestions for helping their children prepare for the assessments will help students to work to do their best.

Last, controlling any physical or emotional disturbances will increase a student's expectations. The old advice, eat a well-balanced and nutritious breakfast, holds true. Further, consider teaching students relaxation and breathing exercises to help them deal with the anxiety they are likely to experience. Providing drinks and snacks for students during breaks from testing, as well as using aroma-therapy devices may be ways to help students focus on those test questions rather than hunger pangs and stress.

Remember, students need to experience prior success, have access to positive peer role models, be encouraged, praised and reinforced by respected adults, and be free from physical and emotional distractions. Use your creativity and ingenuity to ensure that all students have high expectations for success.

Additionally, motivation can be increased by promoting an "effort attribution" mindset in the student. Most students and teachers view tests as measures of students' knowledge and abilities. Although this is true, it is also true that tests indirectly measure effort in the testing situation. It is crucial that a student understand that her/his effort is a major impact variable in test performance because this recognition can promote a student's formation of an internal, variable, controllable attribution for success (effort contributes to success). Although the acquisition of knowledge and skills is within the student's control prior to testing, such an attribution association is unique to effort during the testing situation. That is, while seated for an assessment, the student has no control of knowledge or skills learned, but does have complete control over effort s/he makes. We know from research in many situations that students who make "effort attributions" for success are more likely to try

harder and to persist in the face of challenges. Conversely, the student who views the test as measuring strictly ability rather than vitally coupled with effort is unlikely to try as hard to do well, not realizing that he or she can influence performance through effort.

### **Kansas Educators Respond**

We know of no published, formal study or evaluation that speaks directly to “what works best” when it comes to motivating students to work hard and try their best on large-scale mandated assessments. But qualitatively, case study experiences suggest that attention to student motivation can result in a more wholesome, positive environment and experience, if not in actual higher scores. Over the past two months, we have surveyed Kansas educators and inquired what they use as motivators to support stronger test performance. Responses to date have been far ranging and diverse. Below without editing are the replies we have received from Kansas educators. We are sharing this information for your thoughtful consideration, reflection and potential use. These remarks and suggestions speak to all -- test developers, policy makers, school administrators, parents and teachers. What does seem to run through these “practices” and beliefs is:

1.

they are multifaceted (more than one option as a path to attain a reward is ordinarily in place);

2.

they are multidimensional (often there are a number of activities and related policies, not just attention to the “student motivation” problem);

3.

they employ either positive (a reward is offered) or negative (less frequently a “penalty” is applied) consequences;

4.

it is not unusual for these activities to be initiated first with staff and then students; and,

5.

for the practices described, they appear to have the desired result.

From our work and evaluation on student performance on large-scale assessments at CETE, we find that practice, supported by leaders, and planned motivational strategies to succeed yield very desirable outcomes. Following are the practices, ideas and suggestions that have been sent to us by Kansas schools, districts, administrators and staff. Presentation of these methods and approaches should not be interpreted as an endorsement of or support for a practice by CETE, KSDE or KSBE. The intent in sharing these local Kansas district/building assessment motivation efforts is to place an emphasis on the attention given to motivational aspects of the testing program and encourage districts or buildings to engage in similar practices. In a few cases, a point of view has been expressed that relates to policies, values or regulations. Though some of these remarks are not practices per se, they do link local values and beliefs with activities and approaches taken. Identified is the contributor by USD number and name. Readers interested in more information from a particular USD, should contact central office administrators for additional information unless otherwise noted in the text. In two cases, the identification of the USD contribution was unavailable. Contributions are arranged in no particular order.

#### **USD 471 - Dexter**

State Assessment Incentive for All Students:

1.

2. If the class scores above the state average, they receive a pizza party at school.

3. If the class scores at least 5% above the state average, they receive a half-day field trip (such as bowling) and pizza for lunch.

If the class scores 10% or above the state average, they receive a full-day trip plus pizza for lunch where ever they might go.

We invite the teacher to join the class in whichever incentive the students earned. Some prefer not being out of the class and don't participate, but most enjoy spending extra time with their students. It's really neat to see this type of bond. Our effort is to get students to view progress as a "team" effort. Those who do well will encourage less able students to at least give their best effort, and those who are less able usually want to feel they have contributed to the "team." Naturally with NCLB legislation, we'll have to revisit comparing local scores to state averages, but nonetheless will continue some type of incentive program.

### **USD 330 – Mission Valley**

Mission Valley Middle School 5th & 6th grade students who scored in the proficient or advanced level on Spring 2002 state reading or math assessments took part in the Kansas Action for Children March at the Statehouse. They also were given a guided tour of the Statehouse.

In past years, a poster has been made for each building in the district to highlight a particular area of achievement or significant improvement on tests.

High school students were assembled by grade level to review and discuss implications of scores and performance. Students also recorded scores from various areas of testing in portfolios to help them get a better understanding of how they were doing individually.

Students receiving certificates for performance were recognized during an all-school "academic pep assembly".

### **USD 383 - Manhattan**

We use the released version of the Kansas Assessment performance assessments and the practice exercises sent out by the state. Our Test Coordinator, meets with each grade level to carefully go over the procedures and materials. Our teachers take the testing very seriously and I believe their attitude is what the students pick up on. Our students know it is important.

Our continual focus on "doing your best" is what works here. We have provided resources for teachers to use in preparation for the assessments. Teachers have worked together to lay out a schedule focusing on different aspects of the tests. Because our expectations are high, I think students try hard here.

### **USD 396 - Douglass**

We did something to boost student interest in doing well on the Terra Nova achievement tests at our middle school this year. It could be applied to state assessments I'm sure.

1. Goals were set with each student based on their scores last year. We used the grade

equivalent to set the goals because we felt the kids would identify with that number. For example, if a 6th grader scored at a 5.3 GE last year, I would expect him/her to score at least at a 6.3 this year. If they scored at a 2.3, they should be able to score a 3.3. Of course, they could exceed their goal. Setting goals is somewhat subjective and there are lots of nuances to it I will not take the time to delve into, but you get the basic idea. This information was on a goal setting sheet and was signed by the student.

2. Each grade level with at least 75% of the students attaining or exceeding their personal goal enjoyed pizza and assorted goodies brought in for lunch and a session of warball.
3. We kicked this off with an assembly where the teachers performed a military skit about improving on the Terra Nova tests and defeating the enemy, "Apathy."
4. All grades earned the party with the following class percentages of students achieving their personal goal: 78% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 75% of 7<sup>th</sup>, 87% of 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **USD 259 – Wichita**

### Elementary

4th grade students wrote cards of encouragement and well wishes to the fifth grade class before their assessments.

They also baked "healthy smart" cookies for them on the first day of each assessment.

In turn, when the 4th grade took their state math assessment, the 5th grade taped cards to 4th grade lockers.

### Middle School

We, on all the assessments, will have lots of count-down bulletin/intercom messages stressing the upcoming big day;

We have food/drink during the assessments;

We use aroma-therapy devices.

### High School

We send home information in the parent newsletter about the importance of testing.

The principal talks to each English class.

We are thinking about a way to send home messages on the bottom of the progress report card about what testing is coming up.

Miniaturize State Excellence Awards (Outstanding Academic Achievement on the State Assessments) and display them on the Pupil Services windows.

Students winning these awards had their names put in the school newspaper.

Had a reception to distribute the actual awards.

Principal and Assessment Coordinator personally visited all English II and III classrooms and handed out the "Just for Parents" booklet sent to the schools by the state and

emphasized the importance of the state assessments.

Challenged students to increase scores over the last year's class and when they did, they were given theater passes and/or pizza cards.

USD 259, con't:

The Wichita district understands and appreciates that incentives for students is an important element toward success, but more fundamentally success is not the sole responsibility of students. Our buildings' promotion of the importance of the assessments is a very important issue, and needs to be addressed, but just as important are the attitudes of instructors toward the importance of the test, and what the teacher does to translate this to his/her students. We know that an instructor can sabotage a test directly (by demeaning its importance or bemoaning loss of "important" instructional time) or by just ignoring the value of the tests and doing nothing to empower students to do well on the tests. Teachers may be the most important key to motivating students. And students must have some specific information on which to set personal testing goals. They must know how they performed in previous tests. Students cannot set a goal to improve if they do not know how they did in the past. Students must be aware of what strategies will help them perform well on the test. This will help empower them to take charge of their performance. And finally, the celebration of success will affirm their efforts. We are working in classes with students on strategies and the testing taking skills; it is important that students acquire testing skills but more important is assuring that content knowledge and understandings are in place. Appropriate assessment skill and content knowledge instruction must be present, and teachers are the key to getting students to acquire and use those skills. In the final analysis we should not subjugate subject matter knowledge and thinking skills and processes to create a citizenry of skilled test takers. We are working very hard to create instructional opportunities and experiences that combine teaching the subject matter along with procedural skills.

**USD 385 – Andover**

1. All High School students receive a grade for the performance assessment piece of the state assessments. (*mentioned by many others at all grade levels*)
2. We recognize outstanding achievement on the state assessments with both individual recognition and building recognition.
  - a. Individuals scoring advanced get the state certificate at an all school assembly.
  - b. Schools meeting the "Standard of Excellence" are recognized with a banner to hang in their building at the first back to school assembly for staff.
  - c. Schools making significant improvement on the state assessment (as measured by a certain amount of improvement on the building index scores) also are recognized at the back to school assembly.

**USD 313 - Buhler**

One thing we do at the high school is to take the "pep assembly" approach others are using just a little farther. We recently received the certificates for Advanced Category achievement and we will present those at the pep assembly so students can see the recognition and know there are benefits to doing well on the assessments at the personal level not just school level. Every little bit is helpful.

**USD 268 - Cheney**

In Cheney, we are working from a variety of angles in attempt to motivate our children to do well on their assessments.

Each building in our district has identified students who have scored in the basic and unsatisfactory categories on state assessments (on the last state assessment that they took, so our MS students are judged based on their performance in 4th and 5th grade). These students are then required to attend "extra help" sessions.

Our elementary school keeps these targeted children 3 days per week after school to work with them. Each teacher keeps his or her own students that need help. Every teacher in the building is involved. We run an extra bus route to accommodate this.

In our Middle and High School, these extra help sessions are offered at the end of the school day, during our seminar time. Our math teachers divide the math kids and work with them once a week. Reading is another day and writing on another. In many cases, we have students going to three "help sessions" each week. We are also offering optional help sessions in the evenings that parents and students are invited to attend.

In our elementary school, many tactics were used. Teachers met with each child and told them where they were capable of being (in relation to quintiles). Then, "deals" were made that if x amount of the class met their goal, x would happen. Pizza parties, pop on Fridays, popcorn, etc. were used. The result for us last year was 85% of our 4th graders scored at satisfactory and above.

In January, we are having parent/student meetings with the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10th and 11th graders. At these meetings, we will be discussing the changes in AYP and how important these assessments are. Their child's last state assessment scores will be provided, so they can see where their child falls. We will discuss specifically how many children must be satisfactory and above and the consequences for us as a school if we don't meet this goal. Our local BOE has agreed to personally contact each family that doesn't attend this meeting. The following week, the Superintendent, Curriculum and Testing Director and 2 BOE members will be individually meeting with each 10th and 11th grade student. We will show them where they scored on their last state assessment, and ask them to make a commitment in writing of where they think they are capable of scoring this year. We will all sign this document, as an agreement of their commitment to the cause. These documents will then be reviewed when the results come in, and rewards given for those that meet their goals. We haven't set these in stone as of now, but potential rewards will likely involve early release from school.

Last spring when we met the standard of excellence, our Principal agreed to ride his bicycle to a neighboring town and back. We had a huge send off and he returned at the end of the day. All students in the SOE grade were given ice cream sundaes with all the works. We have purchased a banner for this school that now hangs outside to show everyone their accomplishment.

Each January, we recognize all of our students that scored advanced at half time of a basketball game. All families involved are admitted free of charge. We present them with the certificates from the state department, and our booster club gives them a certificate and a treat. Last year State Board member Steve Adams came to Cheney to hand out the awards.

## **USD 227 – Jetmore**

Several years ago the K-12 language arts curriculum was re-aligned to incorporate the teaching of the state reading and writing standards. Teachers have also been trained in the six traits writing model as well as various other beneficial research-based models to help in their instruction across the curriculum as reading and writing were two of our three targeted goals in our second QPA cycle. The state standards which will be measured on the reading and

writing assessments the junior year are the basis for the curriculum of the reading and writing skills class.

During the spring of 2001, our board of education approved the addition of a new graduation requirement that would require all freshmen entering the fall of 2001 to take a new reading and writing skills class their sophomore year. We did not increase the number of total credits (which remained at 23); however, it did decrease the number of electives by one. The new class counts as an English credit, but cannot be used in place of the four English required English credits that are already required for graduation. There is also an "opt-out" provision which is available for students that performed at the satisfactory or above performance levels on the state reading/writing assessments their eight grade year. Those students have a choice in whether or not they want to take the class. This way, no one knows for certain whether students are required to take the class or have chosen to take it as an additional English elective. We also use their performance on their TerraNova reading and language arts tests their 9th grade year and local performance assessments as additional evaluative measures in cases where students are on the borderline of the satisfactory performance level on the state assessments. In the few borderline cases where an opt-out allowance is made the sophomore year, students are made aware that if satisfactory performance is not demonstrated their junior year on the assessments, they will be required to take the class and pass it successfully their senior year in order to graduate.

This BOE approved graduation requirement also states that students that do not perform at the satisfactory or above performance levels the eleventh grade year will also be required to take the reading and writing skills class their senior year and pass it successfully before they may graduate. However, credit will only be issued once for taking the class if a student must take it both their sophomore and senior years.

This is our district's best effort to help insure that all students will have the opportunity to learn the skills that they may have missed from our regular English and language arts classes. We are offering the reading and writing skills class for the first time this year as the 2001 entering freshmen are now sophomores.

### **USD 481 - Rural Vista**

At White City School, we do an academic pep rally toward the start of the testing window. The cheerleaders come up with silly cheers about being smart, book worms, etc, throwing out Smartees, trivia game, handing out state assessment certificates etc.

Not real earth shattering, but it puts emphasis on the assessments and lets people know we think it is important.

### **USD 475 – Geary County**

Base on our review of a formal survey conducted by the Center for Educational Testing at The University of Kansas it was found that students were able to articulate their desire to perform well on the Kansas Assessments. Results further indicated that students do take the tests seriously, but that their poor performances are linked to their not having been taught the concepts tested. Working from conclusions from the CETE survey, district curriculum and instruction staff have facilitated teachers at all levels in studying the match between our instructional support materials and the math standards. When particular concepts are not adequately addressed in adopted texts, efforts are made to provide additional materials for teachers and students. Content area staff development in mathematics has been a district priority for several years. Focus group meetings have provided grade level teachers opportunities to discuss issues of pacing and to share successful instructional strategies. In

short, we have tended to place more emphasis upon responding to the results of the CETE survey and to our students' performances on the tests rather than placing particular emphases upon motivating students externally at the time of the tests.

### **USD 214 - Ulysses**

At our middle school, educators are taking the KAP tests very, very seriously. Our entire faculty and administration is (and has been since August) conducting an on-going curriculum evaluation, standards evaluation, and professional qualifications evaluation in an attempt to do everything possible to see that our students are given the best educational opportunity available anywhere in America. So I do not feel the real problem lies at the feet of school officials; but lies with the attitudes of students and parents.

Our students do not believe there is any consequence for a poor showing on the KAP tests. And... up until now there has not been any consequence! But now, suddenly, there is a new, powerful awareness...but, among educators only.

I don't know whether CETE or the KSDE is responsible for public information and awareness... but whom ever is responsible... the public still does not see the validity or importance of these KAP tests.

This is the strongest suggestion I can give you... start a solid PR campaign, directed to the common public, that clearly sets out the importance of such tests.

Along with that... put some teeth in the consequences for poor performance that penalizes the student, not the school. Perhaps a condition that a student who fails (unsatisfactory or basic) be retained in the current grade for another year and re-tested.

At middle school we have identified those students in each grade 6,7,8 who have received Unsatisfactory or Basic scores on past tests; plus students who have scored below 10NPR on our shelf-tests; plus students continually on the failing grades lists. Those identified students will receive mandatory remedial-tutoring for 1 hour each day starting 2nd semester. Next year those students receiving U or B will be required to give up an elective for one or both semesters to take a remedial-tutoring class.

But I appeal to you... put teeth in the statute and regs for the student who fails, and not penalize the institution.

### **USD 473 – Chapman**

The elementary principal has a Pizza Lunch for those students performing in the advanced level on the KS Assessment. This is a real motivator for this age. *(CETE note: a number of other schools mentioned this as a reward, but included Proficient as well)*

### **USD 372 - Silver Lake**

Something we did last year was to recognize the previous year's fifth grade students and parents at halftime of a football for achieving a state standard of excellence. To our surprise nearly every student and parent showed for the game. The other thing we did was create a t-shirt for the students that list the district's years of reaching the standard of excellence and made a point to present them to the students in front to the student body. The hope is this grade level success will motivate other classes to achieve this standard.

This year, the superintendent of schools has taken the released items of the math assessments and reviews these items with the students one hour each week. This will continue until all the released items are reviewed with the students.

### **USD 220 - Ashland**

At Ashland we:

- 1) Hold an academic assembly towards the end of the school year.
- 2) Invite local media to cover event.
- 3) Invite parents and public.
- 4) Recognize each student and parents for Standard of Excellence (SOE) on each test.
- 5) Recognize each class that reached standard of excellence.
- 6) Host a reception after the assembly in the cafeteria.
- 7) Award time out of school for standard of excellence as follows:
  - a) released 3 hours early for SOE on 1 test OR SOE as class
  - b) released 5 hours early for SOE on 1 test AND SOE as class
  - c) full day out of school for SOE on 2 tests
  - d) full day out of school & a movie pass for SOE on 2 tests and SOE as class

### **USD 393 – Solomon**

At Solomon Jr. - Sr High School we have a pizza party if a class improves the scores of the last class to take the test. We wait until a few weeks before we take the next state tests. We then order enough pizza for every student in that class to have two or three pieces. We pick a time during the day to have the pizza delivered and then we dismiss all members of that class to the commons and they have fifteen or twenty minutes to eat their pizza and drink a pop. It is not a big deal, but I do think that it helps some. When we give the tests we always mention the pizza party if they raise their scores.

### **USD 231 – Gardner-Ederton**

We have a tremendous teaching staff. However, I had a concern that our teachers did not clearly understand the importance of the Kansas Assessments. I put a power point presentation together to touch on the importance of the tests, showed graphs of how we did last year in math, reading, and writing, and stated my expectations for them. (*very impressive power point presentation – contact if you would like a copy.*) I set 3 days on my calendar and met with every teacher individually for 15 minutes. I was also very intentional on LISTENING to their concerns. Bottom line is that the meetings were well received and it did serve as a motivator to our teachers.

### **USD (not identified)**

The philosophy has been that the State Assessments are like students representing your school at "State" in sports...treated as a BIG deal! The cheerleaders were included, and they created an Academic Cheer, which was performed, complete with the band, etc. in a pep rally we had before students took the assessments. I also went around to the classes of students and gave them a "pep talk" as to our high expectations, and basically told them I had confidence in them, and that I knew they could "beat" the scores from the class above them who took the assessments last year! Parent and teacher volunteers came together the morning of the assessments and put together healthy snacks (juice, peanut butter/crackers, grapes, trail mix, etc.) for all students before the assessments. The cheerleaders had posters with candy taped on attached to the lockers of all the students taking the assessments. They also made posters

that hung around the school just as we do for state basketball, with sayings such as "Go Sophomores - Score High at State!" We had a celebration party for the sophomores when their scores came back that they had beat the class before them, and our reform committee provided pizza and pop. We also made a big deal of Academic Assemblies, giving all students who met the state standard a certificate, and had their group picture put in the local newspaper, and noted their names in the district newsletter. My belief was that kids pick up easily on what is "valued" in a school, and they need support to know that the entire school and community are behind them when they take these assessments that not only represent themselves, but also represent our school and district across the state. We also informed students before the assessments that they and their parents would receive their scores and that we would probably be noting their scores on their transcripts.

### **USD 450 – Shawnee Heights**

Shawnee Heights has developed a "testing session" rubric. The factors monitored include: Preparedness, Time Management, Focus on the Tasks, Punctuality, Works Independently, Completion, Review/Checking, and Attitude (contact David Bowman at [redacted] to receive the complete rubric). The rubric is in response to teachers requesting a strategy to "focus student attention on the testing task" (take the test more serious, provide instant feedback - a grade or an incentive based on the rubric, reinforce test taking strategies). An additional result is maintaining teacher focus on the testing session. It is suggested teachers chose two to three factors to monitor.

### **USD 411 – Goessel**

Our administration inspired our teachers to take the assessments seriously by offering a "bonus" certificate for a free personal day to be used within that school year for a certain number of assessments that reached the standard of excellence. Some teachers have provided a healthy breakfast with fruit and such before assessments. Some teachers have hosted actual parties with balloons and cake to get the kids fired up about taking assessments. We have an "assessment party" that is hosted the half day before spring break where students have an opportunity to interact through games, relays, and treats. This rewards them for the great effort they have just put into testing.

### **USD 266 – Maize**

Maize has implemented a variety of strategies to help improve student motivation:

□

Student recognition assemblies, recognizing the "Advanced" performance category, inviting parents with a donut/coffee reception following.

□

Communications home to parents regarding the testing dates and "best practices" for preparing their student for the tests—early to bed, good breakfast, etc.

□

Having met the standard of excellence the entire grade level had a lunch pizza party where businesses donated the pizzas and served the students;

□

Having met the standard of excellence the entire staff used an in-service afternoon for

celebration—bowling party (We felt it important that the community recognized this achievement).  
□

With video available in all the classrooms, the building principal has spoken to entire grade levels establishing the importance of the state assessments, shared results from the past couple of years and challenged students to do their best.  
□

Elementary level motivation assembly (rally) prior to testing emphasizing that students do their best.  
□

Administrators, counselors conduct classroom walkthroughs during the testing to help monitor testing procedures.

### **USD (not identified)**

I went to the CETE () website after developing a list of all other 5A schools in Kansas. On a spreadsheet, I listed all similar-sized schools, the percent tested, the number of students tested, and each of the assessments. I entered the scores of all 5A schools on the spreadsheet then sorted each column. On two of the assessments, our school was in the top seven (7) among 5A schools. In social studies, we were fourth from the bottom. I met individually with our SS teachers and shared the results. They were quite surprised, disappointed, and embarrassed. I do not know if these results heightening their awareness and will improve our scores this year, but I do promise you one thing... their attention was grasped. Now we can get down to the business of what to do about the low scores.

### **USD 232 – Desoto**

At De Soto High School, we have tried a number of things to increase student motivation for the tests. For simplicity's sake, I'll include them in list format.

1. We have begun taking grades in class on the performance pieces of the tests as well as for participation.
2. We have given students feedback each year on how they performed on the tests and asked them to set goals from year to year.
3. We have tried (and succeeded) at creating a very comfortable testing climate...individual classrooms, snacks, music, light conversation with administration during breaks. We also take all possible students that may cause disruptions or need extra help and test them in a smaller, separate environment. Same for sped. ELL and at-risk students.
4. We have explained the importance of the tests on numerous occasions and used actual newspaper clippings to depict how scores are reported to the public.
5. We have created a series of short video clips of popular teachers doing humorous skits that stress the importance of the tests. This has proved to be very popular with the kids.
6. We have also stressed to teachers the importance of modeling a good attitude towards the tests.

Our staff has long agreed that the testing climate and attitude has been our greatest asset. Our scores have steadily increased for 2 years in a row now.

### **USD 503 - Parsons**

High School Math - We require any 10th grade student who scores unsatisfactory on the

state math assessment to take a third math class entitled Math 3 that focuses solely on the state math standards. The first year we did this there were 38 students who had to take Math 3. 77% of those students passed the state math assessment a year later when we gave them off grade testing at 11th grade. We used it as an exit test (Final) for the Math 3 class. This year we had approximately 20% fewer students score in the unsatisfactory category on the state math assessment. It gives students a reason to put forth their best effort on the test and lets us identify and deliver help to those students who truly need the help.

### **USD 353 – Wellington**

We have a theme of "Do Your Best.....Beat The Test!"

High School Cheerleaders come over for a pep rally.

Classes not testing make bookmarks and hallway posters for "Do Your Best....Beat The Test!". Hallway posters such as "Bring It On!" with the signatures of the students to be tested. The principal reads Dr. Seuss "Hooray For Diffendoofer Day!" to classes preparing for the test. (This is about a testing situation and how you must believe that learning how to think should be fun.) In Math we have several weeks of short reviews on standards that are addressed from ESSDACK.

At the High School, each year, just prior to the time assessments are given, we have a special assembly. At this assembly we give award certificates to the students who had exceptional scores on last year's assessments. This is something that is easy to do and might help to motivate students to put more effort into their assessments.

### **USD 312 – Haven**

I firmly believe they will not take it seriously until it means something to them personally. To do that we must make it (scores) a part of their grade, graduation/promotion, and requirements. The same holds for teachers. We do encourage, not yet mandated, the state assessments do become a part of their grading system. Possibly replacing an assessment already in place or as an additional measure.

### **USD 439 - Sedgwick**

The following strategies and student motivation ideas came from contributions suggested by Kansas curriculum directors based on a survey we carried out. We were looking for ways to motivate students and wanted to know what other schools in Kansas were doing. The compilation is a result of that email request for information. We have shared these with our staff, who decide what they want to do. These efforts are paying dividend for us and the contributors.

#### *Suggestions regarding Student Incentives, Rewards and Consequences:*

- Nutritional snack breaks (e.g. peanut butter and apples, trail mix, cheese and crackers) during the testing sessions
- High school students receive pop and cookies.
- Allow students to bring snacks the day of the test
- Water is purchased for students (bottle) to have with them during testing
- Provide incentives for students along the lines of breakfast or snack items
- If students work diligently (i.e., pay attention, are respectful of others, appear to give a good effort), the principal comes by and gives them a pop after the last day of testing
- Information sent to parents concerning tips about how to help their students be best prepared for the testing periods
- Let students know that those that do not score well on the assessment will be required to attend special tutoring sessions during their seminar period the following school year

- Rewards and celebrations for students and teachers
- Students showing improved performance have been awarded a pizza party and some additional time at lunch
- Students at the middle school who have shown gains have been rewarded with an annual trip to Worlds of Fun
- Award certificates and recognize students and their parents at a community function or district function such as 1/2 time of football or basketball games
- 'Celebrate' the day(s) of hard work on the assessments by going to the park
- Take a half-time at a ballgame to recognize the classes that achieved the Standard of Excellence
- Special/reserved parking privileges for the students who show dramatic increase in performance on testing or who make the proficient or advanced category on a state assessment
- T-shirts, movie passes, watch a movie, field trips, small parties, good job stickers, picture in newspaper, school paper, district paper, letter home, school pencils, special seating at lunch
- We are considering letting students skip their finals IF they have scored well on the state tests
- Provide a day off for an entire class if they score above state average
- If both grades at which we test score above the state average, the whole school gets a day off
- The entire class that has the most growth receives: 1 week early release from school, and 1 week of the 1st class to eat lunch (everybody has to wait on them)
- Students scoring in the Advanced category receive 1 free day off of school
- We have threatened them with having to take summer school if they don't do Satisfactory or above...our scores are up just a little.
- Set a goal with each class to raise the total class averages by a certain amount and then they would not have to come to school the last day
- K-6 level, have a pep rally and hold a contest between classes for best attendance during testing days

Suggestions regarding Staff Involvement:

- Teacher recognition for demonstrated effective efforts in working with students have taken place during BOE meetings, staff meetings, and in-services
- Pep-talk to the teachers by administrators about the fact that their attitude and approach to the testing is paramount
- Additional rewards for teachers have come through sponsorship to attend conferences
- We have teachers celebrate with the class when they complete the tests with a positive attitude..."Show 'em what you know!"
- We (teachers) return test results to students and explain what the group scores tell us
- We talk about how we use the results and give them examples of changes we've made in textbooks, curriculum, time on task, implementing new programs, etc. The kids know what we're talking about because they have seen how some of these areas have changed.
- We applaud their successes with awards assemblies, newspaper articles, letters home to parents, and banners showing our achieving of various levels of success. The banners are not unlike what we do for athletics with the KSHSAA or league/regional banners.
- Use the results to help place students or advise students into classes at the junior high and senior high level. Likewise, the faculty have referred to a test result when making assignments or developing lessons. For example, the English teacher referred to the editing skills results of the test and explained that she would be spending more time of this area because it was a weak area for their class. Likewise, she indicated that they were very strong in capitalization so she would be backing off on that skill.
- We have worked hard on having our faculty approach the tests with a positive attitude. *It's amazing how the students follow their lead.* A sense of humor...if we're testing...you're not getting homework...seems to lighten the mood.

## **USD 339 - Jefferson County**

Our number one motivational strategy is that we spend a lot of time as a staff reviewing the state data on student achievement. We are very deep into the school improvement model, and our increased achievement over the past few years is evidence that it works. We completely restructured our instructional program five years ago, based on our data. We review data, in every imaginable form. As instructional "groups" we review data at least two hours a month. We have been honored by having just under 100 schools visit us to learn more about "how" we increased student achievement so dramatically. We also do a number of other activities designed to reinforce the importance of the state assessments. One unique activity is our "earn a day for yourself". If 60% of the groups taking the assessments in the district earn the "Standard of Excellence", we give all students a day off - and all staff a paid day off. It is somewhat a PR thing - but does motivate some students to stay on task during the assessment. If a reader wants to see how the state assessment program has positively impacted instructional change – plan a visit and come to see us. Our change is real - we do nothing for "test-prep". A review of our state assessment results from five or six years ago, compared to the last three years, shows dramatic change, and we are doing it through instructional planning and attention.

### **And, from CETE/KSDE**

Each of subject area assessment Examiner's Administration Manual contains a thorough section focused on "Get Ready Activities" for students taking the General assessments as well as for students who will be taking the Modified assessments. (Recalling the first pages of this paper, the notion of the Get Ready activities grew out of the sense that coaches put their athletes through a vigorous and comprehensive "warm-up" just before each event; these activities are intended to do the same for your students.) The activities are designed and offered to begin each test assessment session. They provide some motivational stimuli, but equally important offer the student "practice" focusing on the nature and structure of the examination questions that they are about to experience. Use of these activities have proved very positive to ready students as an assessment session gets underway. Feel free to use these even in the weeks before testing (either the general or modified activity tasks), or to add to or supplement their content and coverage. As the Examiner Manuals are online, they can be accessed and downloaded from our web site at any time ().