GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF

EDUCATION

JANET BARRESI

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

When I took office as Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction in January 2011, the State Department of Education faced significant challenges that limited its effectiveness and efficiency. While some issues were minor, others were decidedly more urgent, impeding the ability of Oklahoma schools to provide a sound education for students.

Over the past four years, I have had the privilege of leading the SDE through a series of actions aimed at building a better agency and a better quality of preK-12 public education. The following summaries will provide you with an overview of the challenges that SDE faced, the actions undertaken and the results of that work. Much work remains; the following summaries also include recommendations to take SDE to the next level.

It has been my distinct honor to serve the State of Oklahoma and help lead an agency of committed and hardworking individuals. The SDE and Oklahoma schools have made great strides over the past four years. If we stay on course, I believe we can create a first-rate public education system.

Janet C Barresi

Janet Barresi
Superintendent of Public Instruction

■ Accountability

Michael Tamborski, Executive Director of Accountability (Interim head)

Mission, challenges initially facing department

• The Office of Accountability meets the accountability requirements of state and federal law by measuring academic progress, publicly reporting each school's performance annually and providing information to both identify schools that are struggling and recognize schools that are excelling.
• Initial challenges included:
  ▪ Improving the collection of accurate data for use in accountability reports
  ▪ Addressing the limited documentation of business rules and implementation processes
  ▪ Maintaining an understaffed office that barely had sufficient personnel to carry-out required functions
  ▪ Correcting incomplete and sometimes inaccurate documentation on the public website

Goals

• Improve data architecture and quality control to minimize error and district burden.
• Continue progression to the WAVE student information system as the official source of student demographic data.
• Improve data availability and accessibility for more meaningful and efficient use.
• Produce more actionable data to inform efforts for improved student outcomes.

Action plan undertaken

• Developing software to assist districts in reporting accurate data
• Overhauling existing documentation and business rules
• Increasing flexibility and interactivity of reports
• Researching ways to combine accountability data with other tools to provide support and guidance for districts

Timeline / History

Data Collection

• Historically, accountability performance metrics were calculated using enrollment, demographic and performance data provided by the testing vendor.
• In 2008, for example, 10.5% (92,864) of test records had a missing or invalid state testing ID.
• In 2010 the WAVE (OSDE's student longitudinal data system) began submitting basic demographic and student information to the test vendor for students in grades 3 through 8.
• In 2013, data validation and correction software as developed through a partnership with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services was introduced to help districts identify and correct errors.
• Dedicated websites were created by the Office of Management and Enterprise Services so districts could track reporting deadlines and view reference materials.

Measurement

• Prior to the A-F report cards, the accountability system (the Academic Performance Index, or API) was complex, but documentation of business rules was sparse.
• The development of the A-F Report Card was developed to provide meaningful information to the public at large about the academic performance of schools. Prior to the passage of the A-F legislation, the previous system using the Academic Performance Index did not yield transparent, meaningful or useful information to the public. Essentially, the public had no useful nor transparent system that provided information on school performance. The continued use of the A-F Grade Card has been credited as the impetus behind whole school improvement and

the initiation of best practices in classrooms. The system is also central to the information utilized in the School Turnaround Program that has yielded significant positive results in the state's lowest performing schools.
• Increased transparency of A-F magnified previously existing weaknesses in data collection, documentation and implementation.
• The initial A-F Calculation Guide (2012) was an improvement but could not serve as a true business-requirements document because it was written to be accessible to the public.
• Staffing limitations led to one person doing both calculations and testing of report card data. These challenges led to report cards not being released until November of the following school year.
• By 2014, A-F calculations were performed by a dedicated developer and the entire accountability staff was fully invested in quality control efforts and testing of the final product

Communication and Reporting
• The original guidance manual regarding A-F was a lengthy calculation guide that was meant to be useful for both technical and public audiences. By trying to be both, however, it could not excel in either.
• The A-F software simplified reporting such that assessment data was not broken down (e.g., by grade) as it was in the past by simplifying calculations.
• For school year 2013-2014, the calculation guide was significantly revised and separated into two guidance documents — one for technical audiences and one for the general public.
• Other accountability documentation (such as Annual Measurable Objectives guides) was significantly revised.
• The Office of Accountability is currently working with a data consultant to restructure our data systems to allow more flexibility and customizability of accountability reporting.
• Our office has become more invested in using accountability metrics to facilitate data-driven decision-making in schools.

Interaction with other SDE departments
Assessments
• Provides testing data used in accountability metrics

Accreditation
• Assists with monitoring for accuracy of data provided by the districts

Student Information (now part of OMES)
• Provides the collection of accountability data through the WAVE
Federal Programs
• Accountability helps identify potential Blue Ribbon School Nominees.

School Turnaround
• Accountability calculates schools designations and provides data support for school improvement.

Special Education Services
• Provides testing data based on alternate achievement standards for the most cognitively disabled students.

Results
Data Collection
• Data correction window allowed districts to significantly improve data quality (126,216 corrections were made during the 30-day correction window).
• In 2014 the percentage of records with invalid or missing IDs was less than a tenth of a percent (.05%; 669 actual records).

Measurement
• Improved processes have reduced the burden on both staff and districts during the data correction and review windows.

Communication and Reporting
• The "Bright Spots" project groups demographically similar schools and pairs them with their A-F data so schools can find other demographically similar schools with students who are achieving above expectations to engage in a mentor/mentee relationship.
• 2014 reports were released in September of 2014, nearly two months earlier than previous years.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities
• The main challenge is that staffing shortages are impacting the ability of the department to complete its required tasks and putting stress on its current staff. OSDE needs to fill vacancies with staff possessing relevant educational expertise and technical skills.
• Several opportunities to improve accountability exist, including:
    ▪ Stakeholder engagement to improve accountability metrics
    ▪ Improved communication of accountability metrics to support decision-making
    ▪ Increased emphasis on actionable data to help educators achieve performance goals and to help parents make informed decisions about their child's education

■ Accreditation and Compliance

Larry Birney, Assistant State Superintendent for Accreditation and Compliance

Historical

Prior to September 2014, what is now the State Departments of Education (SDE) Accreditation and Compliance Division was known only as the Accreditation Division. The Division was primarily responsible for assuring that all school districts complied with various school reporting laws as outlined in Title 70. Approximately ten times a year each school district is required to compile various reports which are used by the SDE to record school district attendance, student population, teacher salary schedules, students added or dropped, class time periods, library media coverage, counseling options, grade spans, and flexible benefit plans amongst other statistical data. The numbers from the various reports are then compiled and sent to various other Divisions such as State Aid, Child Nutrition, Special Education, and Federal programs which use the numbers to calculate the money that school districts will receive from the state and federal government. There are established time frames for each audit with the Districts being required to complete the audits within the time frames. A considerable amount of Districts repeatedly fail to meet the timelines resulting in deadlines consistently being extended and at times other reports requiring the information delayed. There were no repercussions for schools failing to meet extended deadlines.

The SDE utilizes the services of the Regional Accountability Officers (RAO's) to assure compliance with state law in reference to the reporting. The RAO's visit the school districts, review the reports, compare the reports to school records and tour the facility to check for compliance with state law. The RAOs never complete performance audits, only compliance audits. There were 10 RAO's assigned to the Accreditation Division. The RAO's as a whole were not considered trustworthy by either upper SDE management or some members of the State Board of Education. It was generally believed that if an RAO was sent to investigate, nothing improper would be found. As the majority of RAO's are ex-school district superintendents it was believed that their friendship with the superintendents was more important than their employment responsibilities. Prior to 2010, RAO's were often used to punish schools through frequent on-site visits and critiques.

In addition to the collection of statistical data, the Accreditation Division was responsible for new superintendents training, preparing the Governors report of School Personnel Salaries, and managing questions from parents and school districts concerning the transferring of students from one district to another. The scheduling and obtaining instructors for the new superintendents training was handled by a clerk who attended the meetings and took roll. Required meetings were often cancelled and in some cases not rescheduled.

Finally, the Division reviewed all waiver and deregulation requests from school districts and placed them on the consent agenda of the State School Board. State School Board members did not receive copies of the accompanying paperwork and approved the waivers without having the opportunity to review the waiver or deregulation requests. A review of deregulation and waiver requests revealed a lack of communication between the Accreditation Division and other Divisions with one Division approving, and another rejecting similar applications. Some applications were improperly approved by the State Board. In at least one case approval was given in contrast to state law. Management approval signatures and required documentation were often missing from the files.

Prior to September 2014, it was the position of the executive director of Accreditation that local school districts and their school boards were responsible for handling citizen complaints including complaints involving special education, violations of state statutes or SDE rules and regulations. The complaints were considered a local school district problem. If a concern was brought to the attention of the SDE including those complaints brought through the office of the State Superintendent, seldom were the concerns investigated or followed up on by the Executive Director of Accreditation. It was considered the option of the local school superintendent or board to take action

once notified by the SDE. If an RAO was sent to the school there was no requirement by the SDE, to forward an action report back to the Director or the Office of the Superintendent. There was little coordination or communication between Divisions in reference to school accountability. This lack of communication often led to one Division assuming another Division was handling the concern. In turn, the concern often "fell through the cracks" and simply was not handled at all. Few if any investigative records were kept, and those that were retained were spread across the different Divisions thus often not retrievable. The more serious concerns were forwarded to the SDE Legal Department for review. The Legal Department would respond with action to be taken only to discover later that their instructions had never been followed or that no records existed if the follow-up had occurred.

The Accreditation Division RAO's were not trained in investigative processes. When an occasional audit was done, they consisted of a review of paperwork with no thought given to including performance as part of the audit or procedures established on whom to interview. Conducting inventories of equipment found purchased in school records was not done. Verifying with the bank that money shown to be in school accounts was not done. Speaking with District Attorney's, the state auditor, or other stakeholders that could be involved was not done, and ascertaining the impact on the students and their educational and learning processes was not done.

Unless the State Superintendent personally requested an on-site audit, on-site audits were seldom initiated. Under the direction of the Executive Director of Accreditation, all audits were preannounced to the school district often days before the on-site audit took place. After an audit was completed, a letter was prepared by the Division outlining the audit findings and any deficiencies that needed to be corrected. The letter was then delivered by an RAO or by mail often without the knowledge or approval of the Superintendent. There are no records to indicate the schools audited were visited with follow-up training or compliance checks.

The staff within Accreditation office itself was not well managed. The staff complained of micro-management. This resulted work not being completed accurately or on time, bickering between staff members, stakeholder complaints and low morale. Phone calls often went unanswered and messages were frequently not returned. One staff member complained of a hostile work environment stating she feared for her life after an incident involving co-workers. The office was managed by the clock. No one came early or stayed late regardless of the workload. No coffee breaks or lunch breaks were missed. The prevailing office attitude was, do what you have to and leave.

September 2014 to Current
Many large governmental agencies today employ high level compliance officers. These positions go by several names including Advocate General, Vice President of Policy and Guidance, Vice President of Operations or Quality Assurance Administrator amongst others. The primary focus of the position is on ethical, legal, and regulatory compliance with respect to Oklahoma State law and SDE rules and regulations.

In September of 2014, at the Direction of Superintendent Janet Barresi, the Accreditation Division was renamed the Accreditation and Compliance Division. Stressing the importance of the position in helping school district address compliance challenges, the Assistant Superintendent position was aligned to report directly to the State Superintendent.

This change resulted in a change in vision and direction of the reorganized Division. Strong emphasis was immediately placed on the SDE's responsibilities in assuring that through accurate and comprehensive school reporting and in listening and acting on the concerns of parents, teachers, and administrators every child in the State of Oklahoma would receive the best educational opportunities available.

Regional Accreditation Officers (RAO's)
Under the direction of the previous Executive Director of the Office of Accreditation, RAO's were not challenged, or empowered to be involved in the school districts they served. Their responsibilities were seen as primarily as report takers coming onto school grounds, taking the numbers and leaving. This is in stark contrast to what the State

Superintendent believed and was told was happening. Today, RAO's are directed to be ambassadors of the SDE to every school district across the state. Their responsibilities are no longer limited to just auditing the numbers but to build relationships with district personnel. RAO's are now responsible for creating open dialogue with the districts not only for audits but to listen to the challenges facing the school districts and become more knowledgeable in SDE supported educational issues. As the RAO's interact with the school districts, they must become prepared to answer questions involving educational law at both the state and federal level, SDE rules and regulations, No Child Left Behind, Common Core, PASS, A through F, High stakes testing, Teacher Evaluations (TLE), Special Education, Transfers, School Discipline, and other contemporary educational issues where misunderstanding and miscommunication often arise. They were instructed to remain neutral on the topics but to be forthcoming with factual information. They are now responsible for identifying challenges and concerns within school districts and working with the district superintendent, school principals, school staff and the school boards to create an environment of understanding that supports the philosophy that through engagement, mentoring, and on-site training, open lines of communication will result leading to cooperation, and trust, with an emphasis foremost on problem solving and quality education.

Previously, in some instances RAO's would call groups of schools and have them meet at one location bringing with them the paperwork needed to complete a required report or audit. This practice was stopped. All school reporting audits are now conducted on school site.

RAO's were not trained in investigative techniques. Today, RAO's report and investigative techniques are mentored and their actions critiqued. On a regular basis, one-on-one talks on interview and interrogation, report writing, and gathering of information are taught, reviewed and discussed. In most cases, RAO growth and expertise in investigative methods has been outstanding. Any complaint from any source received by an RAO is now documented with language including the compliant, details and statements of what was found, any violation of state law or rule that may apply, what action is recommended or to be taken, and when follow-up with the complainant or school district will occur. These reports are forwarded to the Accreditation and Compliance office where they are reviewed for content. Those reports found lacking are returned for further clarification or investigation.

Assuring school districts complete their quarterly reports and other statistic gathering responsibilities accurately and on time is a continued challenge. To help assure accuracy and timely reporting, paper audits are now strongly discouraged. While paper reporting remains an option for some less technically equipped school districts, they are now primarily obsolete. Prior to this change in October of this year, large school districts would hire moving trucks to transport massive amounts of paperwork to the SDE. This paperwork would be stored by the SDE for years in accordance with state retention laws. Upon completion of each reporting period the Accreditation and Compliance Division now meets with members from the office of Management Enterprise Systems to identify unneeded data, systems flaws, and to explore new ways of reporting to increase the value of the WAVE system and the efficiency of those that employ the process. For example, in working with the RAO's it was discovered that one audit that took considerable time to complete was found to no longer be needed by the SDE. The audit was discontinued. At the same time a need to better audit school transportation requirements and bus driver qualifications was identified. Hence, it is now the RAO's responsibility to personally be involved with school districts in seeing that the school districts comply with all state requirements and complete their required audit paperwork accurately and in a timely fashion. The assurance of on time reporting of information by school districts is now part of their job evaluation. Deadlines for audit submission are no longer extended. School districts failing to complete submissions on time are now contacted, the reason for the delay is discussed and action plans designed to assist in assuring the next audit is completed on time. Schools that repeatedly miss deadlines with no affirmative reason are subject to receiving state deficiencies or possible state Board sanctions.

RAO's were not issued state cell phones nor paid for using their personal cellphones. RAO's travel great distances to cover the schools in their required areas and rely on cellphones for safety purposes, appointments, and the daily answering of questions from inquiring school districts. Cellphones are now issued to RAO's who request their usage.

It is not uncommon for a vacancy or long/short term absence to occur in the ranks of the RAO's. All RAO's have teaching certificates and have been either principals or superintendents. When a vacancy occurs it is the responsibility of the RAO's in the surrounding regions to fill in. Hence, it is not uncommon for an RAO to be offered a position within a school district at a much higher pay scale. With this in consideration, a new RAO position was created. In addition to serving as a roving RAO who fills in vacant regions, this position serves as the Accreditation and Compliance office manager at the SDE, is responsible for all incoming calls from school districts needing accreditation/compliance information, and most importantly, serves as the subject matter expert for the unique needs and reporting requirements of Virtual and Charter Schools. Virtual and Charter school operate under different rules and regulations and reporting requirement than public schools.

In November of 2014, a new Executive Director of the Accreditation and Compliance Division was appointed from the ranks of the RAO's. With this appointment came a change in the organization culture of the Accreditation and Compliance Division. Office staff was reorganized and with the creation of the roving RAO position, a new office manager was brought in improving work productivity, morale, and efficiency.

Compliance
It is the goal of the Accreditation and Compliance Division to assist schools in providing the best educational opportunities available in the State of Oklahoma. In an effort to achieve this goal, the Accreditation and Compliance Division now works closely with other Divisions of the SDE in identifying challenges and concerns facing individual school districts and working in a team approach with school districts to create an environment of cooperation, problem-solving, mentoring, and on-site training.

Complaints coming into the SDE from any source are now taken seriously. The SDE realizes the importance individuals place on their complaints and inquiries.

In an effort to assure all complaints are received, investigated, and responded to in a timely professional manner a SDE complaint process policy was created. This policy standardizes the SDE complaint process and assures the proper documentation and recording of complaints. The majority of all complaints coming into the SDE are forwarded to the Accreditation and Compliance Division where they are documented, proper investigative and response authority identified, and suspense dates for the response attached.

The Accreditation and Compliance Division works hand in hand with other SDE Divisions. When challenges or concerns are identified, SDE Divisions with stakeholder interest are immediately identified and become part of any investigative team created. Specific subject matter experts from School Counseling, Special Education, State Aid, School Finance, and Accountability are frequently called upon to be involved with the Accreditation and Compliance Division in inquiries and investigations. Federal Programs, Child Nutrition, School Turnaround are also often involved. The cooperation between Assistant Superintendents, Executive Directors and members of their teams in working together to educate and assist school districts is highly commendable.

Since September 2014, the newly created Office of Accreditation and Compliance has opened thirty five (35) formal investigations. This number does not include numerous challenges and concerns that were answered weekly without the attention or necessity of a formal investigation. The weekly complaints or challenges often involved students not being admitted into school, complaints from parents with special education students, bullying, lack of concern from school officials on a variety of topics, and teacher concerns with administration or with conduct between teachers or administrators.

Of the thirty-seven formal complaints, fourteen have resulted in SDE on-site audits. Of the fourteen on site audits, four were financial audits and ten dealt primarily with special education. One of the special education visits (Haileyville) was made at the request of the State Board of Education. Four investigations have been forwarded to the State Auditor. Other investigations have led to schools being forced by the courts to enroll students, criminal

charges on sexual abuse, possible charges of embezzlement, and teacher and administrator retirements or resignations.

While some investigations may lead to state or federal criminal charges, or may involve serious financial concerns with the possibility of large sums of money owed to the state, the majority of audits have resulted in opening the lines of communication between the SDE and school districts which leads to improvement in school district operations. Often a review of records and information reveals a lack of training achieved by district personnel, or a lack of knowledge by the men and women responsible for assuring the best quality educational experience possible especially for children on IEP's. In several cases it has been discovered that the paid service provider may not have been providing child services in accordance with state and federal law. In another case, a school district superintendent suddenly resigned because the school was apparently insolvent. A subsequent audit by financial services resulted in the design of a plan of action that resulted in dollars being carried over the first month after the audit process was completed. If this small school district was to have closed its doors, the town and its neighborhoods would likely not have survived.

Throughout these processes, the State Department of Education now works closely with school superintendents and administrators to increase school accountability, improve the performance of schools, and confront the challenges of improper conduct all within the goal of improving school performance and student learning with as little adverse publicity as can be reasonably expected. It is now not uncommon for the Office of Accreditation and Compliance to receive phones calls from Superintendents, Administrators, School Board members, parents and teacher seeking answers to a wide assortment of complex questions from the requirements and definition of a school day to the requirements of school board elections.

Challenges for the Future
In conversations with State School Board Members, school compliance with state laws and rules and regulations, and systemic irregularities remain a high priority. They expressed an interest in prioritizing teacher and administrator accountability, concern with administrators who mismanage districts and simply move to another, increased vigilance in areas of special education, sexual predators, abused or molested students, and companies or individuals that provide services to school districts.

Upon completion of some investigations, a determination has to be made as to whether the violations committed reach a level of concern or threshold that necessitates State Board of Education action. The State Board of Education has the authority to suspend for a period of time or decertify the license held by a state certified educator, administrator, counselor, etc. Determining where that threshold lies is often difficult to ascertain. However knowledge of where the threshold is greatly reduces the amount of investigative work and case preparation necessary to take a case before the State Board. The determination could perhaps best be determined by having State Board members complete a questionnaire or attend a training seminar provided by the SDE that offers scenario based examples with group discussion and consensus on resolution.

Administrative or criminal investigations are often complex, require some degree of investigative knowledge and experience and require a substantial amount of time and personnel to conduct an investigation. This is especially true in cases involving white collar crimes such as embezzlement or fraud. While it is possible to turn over investigative responsibilities to other law enforcement agencies this transfer is not always an easy process. For example, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation must be asked by a law enforcement agency to enter into an investigation. The SDE is not a law enforcement agency so they alone cannot request an investigation. Requests can be made to local District Attorneys however they, like most investigative agencies, prefer to have the investigations all but completed when they receive a case. They see their roles primarily in prosecution of the case. The State Auditor has been of great assistance. However, this can be an expensive process. Given the statutory responsibilities of the SDE and the authority of the State School Board to suspend or decertify school personnel for violations of certain crimes several recommendations should be considered. (1) The SDE should create an investigative team with

members assigned when needed from certain Divisions such as accreditation and compliance, special education, counseling, and finance. Adjunct members would include personnel from school turnaround, accountability, state testing and child nutrition. These members would receive special training in investigative topics such as interview and interrogation, investigations of white collar crimes, evidence collection, case preparation, and investigative report writing. (2) SDE investigative authority should be expanded and clearly delineated in state law. (3) The SDE has the authority to issue deficiencies to schools who fail to abide by state law or rules and regulations. The impact of being issued a deficiency varies from school district to school district with some districts giving the deficiency no more consideration that a traffic warning ticket. In order to be more effective the process of granting a deficiency and the impact a deficiency has on a school district should be revisited. (5) On rare occasions school districts are identified as having challenges that have risen to the level where the problems are impacting student learning or administrations ability to properly manage the school(s) or school district. In such cases the State Board of Education should be empowered to appoint a school monitor. The monitor would visit the school(s), visit with parents and school stakeholders and attend all school board meetings. Most importantly, the monitor would have to approve all administrative or board actions, including payment of bills, hiring and discipline, transfers, etc. during the timeframe of the monitoring. The monitor would remain in place for a defined period of time or until the State School Board was shown the school(s) or school district had the ability to professionally manage themselves.

With some 530 school districts and charter schools and 1,700 schools sites in the State of Oklahoma coupled with an increased awareness in the state that complaints to the SDE are now being listened and responded to, has resulted in an increase in the number and quality of communication between the SDE, educators, and citizens. It is now not uncommon for the SDE to receive several inquiries and expressions of concern each day. While many of these concerns are easily handled over the phone, others require follow-up investigation. In an effort to handle the increased case load, budgetary consideration should be given to increasing personnel within the division. A full time secretary or staff member to handle the documentation of incoming and follow up of complaints is needed. Additional RAO's should be hired to reduce the area and school districts covered in an effort to increase interaction with the school districts in education, training and compliance.

A reemphasis should be placed on State mandated New Superintendents Training. The oversight and monitoring responsibilities should be removed from assigned clerical personnel and given to the Executive Director. The curriculum should be revisited with input from experienced superintendents with the adult learning processes and scenario based training becoming part of the process.

Work should continue on the on-line reporting of quarterly reports, employee benefits, and other reporting computer programs. The simplification of these programs is vital to assuring timely accurate reporting. Much too often are school districts complaining of difficulties in inputting data and information and of the system being off line. At the beginning of each reporting period, the SDE should give consideration to assigning individuals from other divisions to a war room where phone calls from school districts can be answered in a timely fashion and correct statistical data input information disseminated. It is not uncommon for the Accreditation and Compliance Division to receive over a hundred phone calls a day during these reporting time periods. Many calls go unanswered and phone mail boxes quickly fill up. This challenge needs to be addressed prior to the next year.

During the course of school audits or in conversations with school stakeholders it has been discovered that most errors committed by school personnel are the result of lack of experience, lack of training, or lack of knowledge of what needs to be done. The Oklahoma State Department of Education does a superior job of offering a wide range of training opportunities. It becomes then the school district's responsibility to assure their employees are given the opportunity to take advantage of the training. I am reminded of the story told by an IBM representative. The company sent a representative to a large number of fortune 500 companies asking what the companies wanted to see in the next generation computers. From the survey, IBM learned there was not one request that the existing computers could not already accomplish. Despite all the free training available the companies were not aware of the machines capabilities. The same could be said here, the training is available but to learn the processes, school districts must afford their employee the time to learn them.

■ Assessments

Lisa Chandler, Assistant State Superintendent of Assessments

Mission, challenges initially facing department

• The Office of Assessments promotes the academic achievement of all Oklahoma students by providing educators, parents and the public the information and tools needed to improve learning.

• To that end, the Office of Assessments manages the development, administration, analysis and reporting of the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) and the End-of-Instruction (EOI) exams in compliance with state and federal statutory requirements.

• The Office of Assessments also coordinates state participation in national and international assessments, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

• Additionally, the Office of Assessments is responsible for administering the Academic Assessment Monitoring Program (AAMP) through a cycle of desk and on-site monitoring of all school districts.

• Initial challenges this year included:

- increasing efficiency and effectiveness
- closing out a major testing contract
- ensuring communications reach the pertinent audiences

Goals

• To provide valid, reliable measures of the state's content standards

• To ensure concise, timely communications to school districts

• To manage a smooth, seamless transition to a new testing contractor

• To refine test administration procedures to minimize district burden

• To develop clear documentation of procedures, policies and activities

Action plan undertaken

• Redesign the Assessments webpage for clarity and comprehensiveness.

• Implement and monitor an Office of Assessments email address to provide an additional tool for stakeholders to submit technical assistance questions.

• Expand in-service training for test administrators and proctors to include on-site sessions, video conferences and WebEx presentations.

• Draft administrative rules regarding emergency medical exemptions.

• Revise the manual for accommodations for students with IEPs or 504 Plans.

• Revise the manual for accommodations for English language learners.

• Design tracking process for test irregularities investigations.

Timeline / History

• In the immediate past, ongoing administration and reporting of Spring and Summer assessments took place along with the development of new test items and types for the program.

• Recent significant events that involve or affect the testing program include:

- legislation reverting the content standards to be assessed in English language arts and mathematics to the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)
- the first reporting of student results in Grade 3 Reading under the Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA)

- disruption of online testing in the Spring and subsequent termination of the contract that covered the majority of the testing program
- the urgency of obtaining a testing contractor for the Winter/Trimester test administrations and then for the Spring/Summer administrations

Interaction with other SDE departments

- The Office of Assessments collaborates with multiple SDE departments, including:
  - Special Education — to determine appropriate test accommodations for students with disabilities
  - Instruction — to ensure all tests are appropriate measures of the state's content standards and to develop recommendations on performance standards
  - Accountability — to provide the student performance data that are incorporated into the accountability system
  - Student Information — to increase the accuracy of demographic information used for the testing program, to develop online applications to assist school districts and the Office of Assessments in administering assessments
  - Legal Services — to draft administrative code, to handle test administration violations, to develop contracts
  - Bilingual Education — to provide appropriate testing procedures for English language learners

Results

- Increased convenience for district personnel to be trained
- Greater staff efficiency and fewer test invalidations with online test administrator training available
- More succinct communications provided to districts
- Clearer procedures set out for accommodations and the application for emergency medical exemptions
- More positive perception on the ease of online test administration

Ongoing challenges and opportunities

- Challenges facing the state's assessment program include:
  - maintaining an existing program while undertaking significant development of a new assessment program based on new standards when developed
  - managing a new contractor
  - limited staff given the complexity of the program (including one vacancy and the need for a data coordinator position)
- Opportunities that could be pursued include:
  - increasing stakeholder involvement to enhance numerous aspects of the testing program including communication and the usefulness of information generated
  - improving public perception on the necessity and value of testing
  - systematizing procedures for efficiency while providing fair and appropriate application
  - creating and providing assessment literacy professional development

■ Child Nutrition Programs

Joanie Hildenbrand, Assistant Superintendent of Child Nutrition

Mission, challenges initially facing department

• The mission of Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) is to implement and monitor United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations by assisting schools and institutions in the preparation and feeding of nutritious meals to students/children in one or more of the following ten programs under Child Nutrition:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Special Milk Program (SMP)
- After School Snack Program (ASSP)
- Fresh Fruit/Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- Seamless Summer Option (SSO)
- Equipment Grants
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET)

• The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 has been very burdensome for school districts, causing numerous changes in meal pattern requirements, application approval and meal benefit issuance procedures, counting and claiming requirements, monitoring procedures and hiring procedures.

Goals

• Allow state agency staff to attend USDA trainings when available.
• Provide training and technical assistance to all participating institutions through onsite visits, workshops and online trainings.
• Provide "Chef Training" to all school districts through an ongoing contract with Oklahoma State University as a result of the new meal-pattern requirements.
• Work with OMES and computer programmers to ensure mandated changes/updates are done in a timely manner to meet new requirements.
• Keep CNP under the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE).

Action plan undertaken

• Daily contact with USDA provides information on upcoming training sessions.
• Technical assistance and workshops are a continuous work in progress. CNP offers approximately 150 workshops annually, to over 3,000 participants.
• "Chef Training" will be available for all districts in the summer of 2015. A website will also be available so all CNP participants can access online videos, training materials and professional chefs for advice and training.
• Meetings with OMES and the contracted computer programmers are ongoing.
• Assistant State Superintendent of CNP is prepared to go before the Legislature to defend why CNP should remain in the OSDE.

Timeline/History
- CNP was authorized in 1946.
- Reauthorization takes place once every four to five years.
- Reauthorization usually means changes are made to program regulations.
- The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was Reauthorization 2010 and mandated the most changes since 1946.
- Reauthorization 2015 has yet to be revealed.

Interaction with other SDE departments
- CNP provides the only avenue to access economically disadvantaged data.
- State Aid uses the data for its State Aid formula.
- Title I uses the data for its Title I formula.
- eRate uses the data for its eRate formula.
- Student Information Systems (WAVE) — Direct Certification requirements
- Financial Accounting (OCAS) — Financial records for monitoring purposes
- Other departments use the data for qualifying purposes.
- Numerous outside entities use the data for grant-writing.
- State Legislature continually requests data.

Results
- National School Lunch Program — 2014
  - Number of Institutions/Sites Participating: 555 / 1,822
  - Students Qualifying for Free/Reduced Meal Benefits: 62.13%
  - Number of Lunches: 67,303,761
  - Reimbursement Paid: $146,482,630.50
- School Breakfast Program — 2014
  - Number of Institutions/Sites Participating: 559 / 1,775
  - Number of Breakfasts: 34,719,740
  - Reimbursement Paid: $54,623,860.48
- Special Milk Program — 2014
  - Number of Districts/PK-K Sites Participating: 6 / 6
  - Number of Milk Cartons: 48,241
  - Reimbursement Paid: $9,768.62
- After-School Snack Program — 2014
  - Number of Districts/Elementary Sites Participating: 210 / 508
  - Number of Snacks: 2,357,603
  - Reimbursement Paid: $1,780,119.05
- Fresh Fruit/Vegetable Program — 2014
  - Number of Districts/Elementary Sites Participating: 15 / 116
  - Reimbursement Paid: $2,334,466.92
- Summer Food Service Program — 2014
  - Number of Institutions/Sites Participating: 165 / 509
  - Number of Breakfasts/Lunches/Snacks/Suppers: 1,671,301
  - Reimbursement Paid: $4,039,177.95
- Seamless Summer Option — 2014
  - Number of Districts/Sites Participating: 27/251
  - Number of Breakfasts/Lunches/Snacks/Suppers: 1,825,312
  - Reimbursement Paid: $301,893

- Child and Adult Care Food Program — 2014
  - Number of Institutions/Sites Participating: 727 / 3,201
  - Number of Breakfasts/Lunches/Snacks/Suppers: 15,768,566
  - Reimbursement Paid: $56,554,573.53
- Equipment Grants — 2014
  - Number of Districts/Sites Participating: 26 / 46
  - Reimbursement Paid: $527,566
- Nutrition Education and Training Program — 2014
  - 250-300 statewide on-site workshops conducted annually
  - Online training / Ongoing on-site technical assistance and workshops

Ongoing challenges and opportunities

- Implementing new regulations / On-site monitoring — 966 institutions annually
- Assisting institutions to do the best job and feed the most nutritious meals
- Reauthorization 2015
- Constant requests from USDA, Legislature, and outside entities for data
- Working with OMES and contracted programmers to understand mandates
- Ensuring CNP remains in the SDE

■ Comptroller

Mathangi Shankar, Chief Financial Officer

Mission, challenges initially facing department
• To bring efficiency and transparency to the financial operations of the agency and to provide superior support to all departmental programs and the public
• Initial challenges included: inadequate controls, duplicate and ineffective business processes that increased turnaround time for transactions, limited communication with other departments and inadequate reporting capabilities that limited the ability to reconcile agency accounts on a timely basis.

Goals
• Maintain a comprehensive financial system that meets the agency needs and ensure compliance with federal, state and agency regulations.
• Implement effective business processes to ensure timely processing of all financial transactions.
• Provide accurate financial information to assist decision-making at all levels.
• Transparently report all finances received to the OSDE from all sources and the allocation of all funds to school districts through the recently released Financial Transparency website.

Action plan undertaken
• The following steps were taken to overcome the challenges outlined above:
• Reorganization of the unit to make it more functionally aligned and independent. Purchasing, mailroom and supply room operations were transferred to a new division.
• Standardized procedures were documented to facilitate cross-training.
• Electronic imaging of claims gave easy and real-time access to comptroller staff and auditors.
• Regular reconciliation of accounts at multiple levels
• Develop reports in electronic formats for quick processing and reporting.
• Provide monthly budget vs. actual reports to divisions to monitor their spending.
• Elimination of duplicate processes in transactions processing that vastly improved turnaround time and increased efficiency

Timeline / History
Prior to 2011, Office of the Comptroller was known as Fiscal Services and included the Purchasing function along with its other core functions: Budget, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Travel, Mailroom and Supplies. To preserve segregation of duties and implement effective controls, Purchasing, Mailroom and Supplies were separated from Fiscal Services and moved to the newly created Operating Support unit. Fiscal services was then renamed Office of the Comptroller. This reorganization enabled Comptroller's office to focus its efforts in the core functions that it was responsible for and provide better quality service.

Interaction with other SDE departments
In January of 2011, no division or office in the agency developed or maintained their own operational budget. There was little to no monitoring of expenses relative to agency operations. This inefficient system was gradually reformed through the development of sound budgeting practices and training of employees to develop and manage their own budgets. The Office of the Comptroller routinely interacts with the management and staff of all departments in the develop¬ment and maintenance of their budgets, travel and invoice processing and records management. It works exten¬sively with the Purchasing unit on agency acquisitions and with Human Resources for payroll processing as well as federal programs on school payments and financial reporting.

Results

The steps taken to address the initial challenges have yielded positive results that helped the comptroller's office attain its goals. Regular interaction with all agency staff contributed to significant improvements in the processing of transactions and timely reporting. Budgets are monitored and issues are reconciled on a timely basis. The agency is able to promptly and effectively respond to audit requests and other information requests.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities

Challenges internal to the agency are cross-training with limited staff, planned decommissioning of mainframe and integration of agency's financial system to State's accounting system that will continue to address the agency's needs. In addition, beginning with the FY 16 budget, the agency will have to use the new statewide budget system Hyperion to submit any budgetary information, including statewide programs and strategic plan with performance measures.

Business processes currently are being established by the budget office at Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES), and the agency must be prepared to collect and provide information as required by the new system.

■ Financial Accounting/OCAS/Audits

Nancy Hughes, Executive Director of Financial Accounting

Mission, challenges initially facing department

The Financial Accounting Department collects and processes the financial records for over 540 school districts, charter schools and inter-local cooperatives. Financial Accounting consists of three main areas: Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS), school district financial accounting and school audits.

Challenges

With the new OCAS being implemented, it has taken several years to complete all the needed enhancements for the system. There are still several enhancements not completed.

All the federal and state compliance calculations performed each year pose another challenge. We must collect information from Teacher Retirement, CareerTech, DHS, Student Assessment, School Personnel Records, State Aid, Special Education and the Wave. All of this data must be checked for accuracy and then sent to the software vendor to upload into the OCAS. The vendor is sometimes not available, but nevertheless remain the only one familiar with the OCAS system. The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) needs other IT personnel who understand OCAS and can be available when needed.

With over 300 new district superintendents, encumbrance clerks and treasurers in the last three years, quality training has been another considerable challenge.

Goals

The Financial Accounting section is to help school districts submit the most accurate financial information annually. This information is submitted through the OCAS system in the single sign-on, Estimate of Needs and School Audit. The material is used by the agency, state Legislature and other stakeholders for critical decision-making purposes.

Action plan undertaken

School districts' financial information is thoroughly checked and balanced. The data is now being compared with the School District Estimate of Needs and Audit to make certain the financial information received is correct. The data collected is submitted to the USDE to be used to calculate Oklahoma's federal funds.

A school auditing committee has been established to work on a statewide auditing handbook. Many schools had complained because all auditing firms do not audit in the same manner. This committee is comprised of 10 school auditors, the state Auditor and Inspector's office, OSDE chief of staff, OSDE Legal Director, OSDE Financial Services Director, OSDE Financial Accounting Executive Director and Financial Auditing Specialist.

We are working with the state Auditor and Inspector's office and five school auditors and five county budget-makers to update the Estimate of Needs form and make it more user-friendly. Oklahoma State University is going to digitize the form so it can be uploaded into the OSDE State Aid System and Financial Accounting System.

Timeline/History
OCAS
OCAS was established in 1988 with Senate Bill 372. In 1991, House Bill 1236 codified a new law in Oklahoma Statutes under Section 5-135.2 of Title 70 as the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System. Seventy stakeholders were on the OCAS organizational committee. Full implementation for school district revenue and expenditures began July 1, 1992, with 11 test schools.

OCAS permits local education agencies (LEAs) to accumulate expenditure and revenues for a variety of specialized management and reporting requirements, regardless of whether they are district, state or federal. While OCAS is an accounting system unique to Oklahoma, it is also part of a larger accounting system instituted by the USDE/National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Each state has developed its own system that adheres to national standards.

OCAS allows OSDE to set coding edit checks and balancing edit checks to help districts properly code revenue and expenditures and balance their financial accounts. The system also has several reports built in the system that districts can access to help with finances.

Schools can submit and/or trail OCAS data starting in February. July 1 through September 1 is when schools must submit financial data error-free. The final date that schools can make any correction to the financial data is Nov. 15.

Financial Accounting
Each year the Financial Accounting Department receives the financial transactions for the preceding fiscal year from over 540 Oklahoma school districts, charter and virtual schools and inter -local cooperative sites. The data received becomes an information network accessed daily by any party interested in the use of public education funds. The OCAS data is used to meet federal program compliance for Maintenance of Effort for Special Education and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Indirect Cost and Excess Cost. It is also used to meet state compliance for Administrative Cost.

Financial Accounting uses the OCAS data to calculate Maintenance of Effort for Special Education and NCLB, Indirect Cost and Excess Cost to meet federal compliance. We also calculate Administrative Cost for districts to meet state compliance. In addition, the data is reported to USDE/NCES and the U.S. Census Bureau. Financial Accounting also uses OCAS data to maintain the OSDE's newly launched School Financial Transparency website.

Audits
School District Audits is another aspect of the office. The state Auditor and Inspector's Office approves the auditing firms, which must then send their school district contract to our office by June 30 annually. The auditing firms must submit the school audit to our office by the deadline and also send a copy to the state Auditor and Inspector's Office.

The financial specialist reviews every audit for compliance standards. If a district is out of compliance, the district is notified and must respond with a corrective action plan or if the non-compliance is due to a federal program, that federal program will contact the districts.

Interaction with other OSDE departments

All of the Federal Program Departments and Financial Accounting Department are working together to be more consistent with OCAS coding and federal claims processing.

Financial Accounting works with and collects data from Child Nutrition, Comptroller's Office, Early Childhood, Federal Programs, School Personnel Records, Special Education, State Aid, Student Assessment, the Oklahoma Department of Career Technology, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and Oklahoma Teachers Retirement. The information is used in all federal and state compliance calculations and financial reporting.

Results

The Financial Accounting section is reporting more accurate financial school information and is more prepared to answer questions and help school districts when needed on a consistent basis and also able to assist federal program with coding issues.

The data that is prepared and submitted to the USDE is balanced and accurate.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities

Every treasurer and encumbrance clerk must earn training points, and we work and participate with many state organizations to offer this training. Some of these organizations are OkASBO, CCOSA, OCSBM, OSAC, OASIS, POE and SNU. We also work with OkASBO and travel throughout the state to five sites offering training in all aspects of school finance. With so many new superintendents and financial officers in the state, training is a necessity. The challenge is to make sure enough quality training is provided statewide.

The newly launched School District Transparency website is unidimensional in its initial form. Phase two of the website will allow for business analytics and data comparison that will further expand the applicability of the data to make it more user-friendly and more interactive. It will ultimately result in greater transparency for state government, an improved resource for the legislative and executive branches of state government in policy and program development and the development of state law. This can be accomplished with new software being purchased in the future through a joint project with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services.

Financial Accounting needs an IT person trained in the OCAS system to help when Hupp contractors are not available. Unfinished OCAS enhancements need to be completed

Continued professional development for staff is needed to stay updated on state and federal laws and compliance issues. OMB federal guidance is changing so updates will be necessary to stay abreast of new regulations. It is also necessary to attend NCES workshop every year to receive updates from the US Department of Education. Continue working with state organizations to offer financial training.

■ Instruction

Marsha Thompson, Assistant State Superintendent of Instruction

The Office of Instruction includes the following programs:
• STEM — Science, Math, Technology and Ag in the Classroom
• Literacy — English Language Arts (ELA), Reading (Reading Sufficiency Act), Social Studies (Geography/History) and Early Childhood
• Encore — World Languages, Native American Education, the Arts, Gifted and Talented, Instructional Materials and Advanced Placement/AVID

Mission, challenges initially facing department
• The Office of Instruction operates as OSDE's creative engine generating research-based strategies for effective educator professional development, support of ongoing projects in districts and oversight in the implementation of Oklahoma Academic Standards.
• Initial challenges included a reconfiguration of the department, re-staffing, prioritizing the actual needs of districts and helping districts transition to changing academic standards.
• Teacher shortages (larger class sizes, long-term or multiple substitutes)

Goals
• Service, Support and Strategize to meet the professional development needs of teachers and school administrators.

Action plan undertaken
• Analyzing the usage of all funds, determining effectiveness in line with the goals of the agency, eliminating ineffective programs and introducing research-based programs to better meet the needs of districts

Timeline/History
• Beginning with adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, we made a concentrated effort to conduct regional trainings to support districts in the implementation of the CCSS in Math and ELA.
• The REAC³H Network, established in the administration's first year, assisted districts with implementation of action plans and timelines toward the transition to the new academic standards. Originally, leading districts volunteered to attend REAC³H Summits, to receive resources, toolkits and technical assistance to disseminate to other districts in their regions. The network later grew to include direct communication to all districts via regional trainings. The network also assisted schools in collaboration during transition to a new Teacher and Leader Effectiveness system and other statewide reforms.
• OSDE hosted events such as Oklahoma Teacher Convenings, Educator Leader Cadre, OK Math and Science Leadership, Vision 2020 and REAC³H trainings to help with the transition to new state standards in all subjects. These trainings brought teachers from across the state to develop and share resources and to receive professional development.
• With the repeal of CCSS and reinstatement of former PASS standards, the Office of Instruction continued to offer the same level of support through the PASS-Plus regional training model. These trainings give educators hands-on examples of bringing rigor to the classrooms through the teaching of PASS standards in ELA and Math. OSDE hosted 18 academies with over 2,500 in attendance this fall.
• Professional Development on Your Plan (PDOYP) is a virtual tool that provides assistance to educators in Math, ELA and Science. Other curriculum areas are in the beginning stages of providing PDOYP. Modules mimic live training but can be used on a teacher's timeline. PDOYP also incorporates Oklahoma classroom teachers as trainers.
• An emphasis on research-based instructional practices has become the focus of trainings rather than on the standards themselves as we move to the creation of new Oklahoma Academic Standards for Math and ELA.

Literacy

• Literacy has been an area of great focus these past four years. Despite the RSA having been in law since 1997 and more than $80 million spent to strengthen reading, there had been little or no improvement.

• In 2011, Senate Bill 346 was passed to help children succeed in their most critical learning years by focusing on early intervention so that educators can identify problems and adopt individualized learning strategies with children in pre-K and kindergarten. This bill added Response to Intervention (RTI) into law and retention for third graders who score unsatisfactory on OCCT reading portions. There are good-cause exemptions and other methods for students to be promoted. Every year, elementary schools are required to submit an RSA plan (522 districts, 951 sites). This is now an electronic submission.

• The Office of Instruction's Literacy Team provides resources including:
  ▪ Oklahoma Reading Teacher Workshops
  ▪ Summer Reading Workshops taught by National Reading Experts
  ▪ Oklahoma Competitive C^3 Grants for programs such as Alphabetic phonics-based Literacy First, N2:20 and Great Expectations
  ▪ REAC^{3}H Coaches were employed two years, selected from 12 regions of Oklahoma to train teachers and serve in every district.
  ▪ LETRS Training for REAC^{3}H Coaches and Oklahoma teachers was funded through the OSDE Special Education Grant. LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) professional development responds to the need for high-quality literacy educators and provides the foundational knowledge necessary to understand how students learn to read, write and spell.
  ▪ Literacy SWAT Teams provide intensive training at site visits for the lowest performing districts.
  ▪ Systems Changing Oklahoma Reading Expectations (SCORE) grants give Oklahoma educators the support, guidance and professional development needed to create effective systems change. SCORE grants provide support directly to school sites to achieve literacy goals. Grantees will become model schools to scale to state.
  ▪ Reading Leaders for districts with high populations of struggling students and high subgroup populations
  ▪ Voyager Passports Remediation placed in Oklahoma schools
  ▪ Oklahoma schools can choose any one of 13 formative assessments for K-3 students; ELQA formative assessments offered in PreK.

STEM

• The OSDE STEM team was created under a newly hired executive director.

• New STEM projects initiated: FIRST Robotics, Botball, MSP Mini Grants, Think Through Math, Cyber Patriot, Elementary Leadership Grants and STEM Strategic Report

Other Initiatives

• OSDE partnered with National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) to bring the college-readiness program to districts across the state, resulting in significantly improved AP course participation and AP test scores.

• Oklahoma Academic Science Standards were adopted this past spring; two-day Science trainings are being held in multiple sites across the state helping teachers familiarize themselves with the new standards (to be fully implemented in 2016-17) and to create resources for those standards.

• Oklahoma Fine Arts Standards were revised in Spring 2014 and later adopted; Oklahoma Arts Council is assisting with the transition.

• World Languages Standards are in the process of being revised.

American Indian Education

The Oklahoma Council for Indian Education and the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education (OACIE) – created by House Bill 2929 – make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of

Public Instruction in matters affecting the education of Oklahoma Native American students.
• Alternative pathway to American Indian Education certification created.
• Establishment of the teaching of Native Languages in all Oklahoma Schools that satisfies the World Languages requirement for graduation.
• Establishment of the online Oklahoma Indian Education Resource website that strengthens and expands the teaching of Native American culture, traditions, history and governments in Oklahoma.

AP and AVID
• In 2012 OSDE began offering competitive AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) implementation startup grants to boost college readiness for all students.
• Regional Advanced Placement workshops held across the state in addition to Summer Institutes in Norman and Tulsa; Regional Administrator workshops informed administrators of AP programs and grants available through OSDE and the success of the programs.
Interaction with other SDE departments School Improvement, Assessment, Special Education, Federal Programs, Accreditation, Communications, School Support and School Turnaround

Results
• Children are receiving remediation in reading at earlier grades.
• Teachers have an increased knowledge of assessment of students with reading difficulties, the delivery of differentiated methods of reading instruction to meet the individual needs of students and the use of data to adjust instructional practices. Effective instruction is delivered through the utilization of the three tiers of Response To Intervention (RTI) to address early literacy and reading proficiency. This allows the teachers to provide intensive instruction on skills the students are lacking.
• Parents are being made aware of their child's reading level and becoming part of the solution before the child is promoted.
• District feedback indicates emphasis is being placed on data-driven instruction.
• Communication and transparency between districts and OSDE regarding reform initiatives have improved as a result of the regional trainings.
 • The PASS-Plus Academy tour resulted in significantly positive feedback from participating teachers.
• Efforts to connect with teachers increased in the past two years; this includes connecting teachers to OSDE and to other teachers. Directors are involved in social media professional learning communities (or PLCs), consistent subscription-based emails, video messages and podcasts. Facebook PLCs combined membership surpasses 6,500 between ELAOK, OKMATH, OKSCI and various teacher-created sub-groups. As a result, subject-specific virtual communities have been developed by teachers and include participation by instruction directors. This collaboration resulted in the posting of 80-plus products including a combination of guidance documents, instructional resources and virtual professional development modules.
• There is a significant increase in the number of teachers that have received Advanced Placement training.
• Due to the effectiveness and demand for the science standards workshops, 10 additional two-day workshops were added.
• To date, eight schools are participating in the NMSI college readiness initiative more schools are being added for the next cohort. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of high school students participating in STEM and English AP courses.
• To date, 44 sites in Oklahoma are AVID sites.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities
• Creation and implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Math and ELA has yet to be initiated.
• Integrating literacy into areas such as Math, Science and Social Studies.
• Becoming better stewards of state and federal monies.
• Keeping positive morale with educators across the state as we continue to work through change and reforms.
• Office of Instruction has a greater demand for professional development than the capacity to provide that training.

■ Operational Support

Keith Hicks, Director of Operational Support

Mission, challenges initially facing department

The Office of Operational Support is responsible for Purchasing, Printing, Mailroom and Central Supply Operations of the agency.

To provide courteous, timely and accurate customer service in the acquisition of all goods/services and delivery of support for the agency's staff and programs using the highest legal, ethical and professional standards while ensuring compliance and conformity of the statutory requirements within its legal delegated authority.

Goals

Continue to make improvements in business processes/practices and increase levels of customer service in all areas. Action plan undertaken Evaluate delivery of service and individual performance in each of the four units comprising the Operational Support Division.

Timeline / History

In April 2011, Purchasing was removed from the Fiscal Services Division in order to meet federal and state compliance requirements for segregation of duties. At the time that this transition was initiated, there had previously been a lack of or inconsistent practices and policies for procurement of all services from vendors. The extensive use of sole source contracts undermined the ability to provide the best value to Oklahoma tax payers and cast doubt on the transparency of procurement practices. Since that time, Purchasing has continually focused on improving business processes and delivering a higher level of customer service to agency divisions/programs.

During this same time period, an emphasis was placed on decreasing the number of sole-source contracts awarded on behalf of the agency

The SDE Purchasing Department implemented the PeopleSoft/Oracle ePro Requisition System on Jan. 6, 2014. The electronic requisition system enabled the agency to eliminate a paper process with a more efficient, transparent system. All approvals and steps in the Purchasing process are viewable online, which allows stakeholders to verify immediately the status of their requisitions upon demand from within the system.

In March 2013, the Print Shop, Mailroom and Central Supply operations were added to the Purchasing Department to create the Operational Support Unit. This organizational change yielded immediate savings and efficiencies by eliminating one FTE and a part-time FTE in the Central Supply office. This once laborious and expensive operation has been all but eliminated by moving this responsibility to the Mailroom Coordinator. Supply inventories are now managed mostly by the divisions.

The SDE Print Shop completes all of the print work required by the agency with the exception of small print jobs (less than 50 pages) or very large, complex print work exceeding the shop's existing capabilities (i.e. elaborate bindery work, embossing, foil, etc.). Most small copy work can be performed at any of the networked multi-function printers located within the divisions. The SDE does not utilize desktop printers at this time. All desktop printers were taken out of service in 2012 to maximize savings achieved by participating in the state's multi-function printer lease program.

The SDE Mailroom handles all of the agency's outgoing and incoming mail including deliveries by the USPS and private couriers. The Mailroom also makes one courier run daily to the OMES Finance Division and State Treasurer's office at the State Capitol Building. All other deliveries that are not mail-related are received through the mailroom at the building's loading dock.

Interaction with other SDE departments Operational Support interacts with every division/program of the agency on a daily basis.

Results
The number of internal purchase requisitions completed since 2011 is listed below by fiscal year.

FY12   897
FY13   792
FY14   917
FY15   579 (YTD)

The number of sole-source contracts completed since 2011 is listed below by fiscal year.

FY12   58
FY13   8
FY14   9
FY15   17 (YTD)

The SDE Print Shop processes approximately 2,000 print requests per year. The SDE Mailroom processes approximately 100,250 pieces of outgoing mail annually.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities
Challenges the Operational Support Services Division faces on an ongoing basis include:
• Turnover and training of staff who create requisitions at the division/program level
• Adequate staffing in the Purchasing Department to handle the high volume of work processed on a daily basis
• Training division/program staff on basic procurement requirements
• Completing work in the PeopleSoft/Oracle Financials System in a timely and efficient manner
• Keeping up with the demand of providing services (Purchasing, Print Shop & Mailroom) in a timely manner
• Filling position vacancies in the Print Shop

■ School Turnaround, C³ Schools and Federal Programs

Richard Caram, Assistant State Superintendent of School Turnaround, C³ Schools and Federal Programs

Mission, challenges initially facing department
Title Programs Served:
Title I, Part A
Title II, Part A
Title III
Migrant Education
Title VI, REAP
Title VI, RLIS
Title IX, Homeless
Neglected & Delinquent
21st Century
Math/Science Partnership
SIG
School Improvement Grants

Schools Served:
Public
Private
Charter
Virtual

FY 2014-15
Mission
The office of Federal Programs assists districts in their efforts to maintain integrity in the use of federal funds, that compliance requirements are met and that federal funds support increased academic achievement for all children.

FY 2001-2010
Initial Challenges Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
Under the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the office of Federal Programs provided service and technical assistance to over 600 local education agencies.

Implementing all requirements supporting NCLB's focus on accountability was key to reaching and maintaining fiscal and programmatic compliance in the use of federal funds. Included below is a list of federal grants served by the office of Federal Programs, along with an approximate annual award amount and an appropriate description for each:

Title I, Part A: ($145 million) Improving Academic Achievement of Disadvantaged Children — The purpose of Title I, Part A is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.

Title I, Part C: ($1.5 million) The Migrant Education Program works to ensure that migrant students aged 3 to 21 fully benefit from the same free public education, pre-K through 12, provided to other students. It offers services to help reduce educational disruptions and other problems resulting from repeated moves.

Title I, Part D: ($2 million) Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent or At-Risk — This title helps ensure that children and youth in local correctional facilities are participating in

an education program comparable to the one the LEA operates in the school that such children and youth would otherwise attend.

Title II, Part A: ($25 million) Improving Teacher and Principal Quality — The purpose of this title is to increase the academic achievement of all students by helping schools and districts improve teacher and principal quality and ensure that all teachers are highly qualified. The program focuses on using practices grounded in scientifically based research to prepare, train and recruit high-quality teachers.

Title II, Part B: (funding varies) Competitive Grant — This title improves academic achievement of students in the areas of mathematics and science.

Title III: ($4.5 million) The purpose of this title is to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) students and immigrant children and youth meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all other children.

Title IV, Part B: ($11.6 million) The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs. Each state education agency receives funds based on its share of Title 1 funding for low-income students at high-poverty, low-performing schools.

21st CCLC programs provide:
• Academic enrichment activities that help students meet state and local achievement standards;
• A broad array of additional services to reinforce and complement the regular academic program; and
• Literacy and related educational development services to the families of children who are served in the program.

Title VI, Part B: ($3.5 million) The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) assists rural districts in using federal resources more effectively to improve the quality of instruction and student academic achievement. It consists of two separate programs — the Small, Rural School Achievement program (SRSA) and the Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program. The SRSA program provides eligible districts with greater flexibility in using the formula grant funds they receive under certain state-administered federal programs (REAP-Flex). It also authorizes formula-direct grant awards to these districts. The RLIS program authorizes formula grant awards to states to make sub-grants to eligible districts. Districts may use RLIS funds to support a broad array of local activities that support student achievement.

Title X, Part C: ($5 million) The McKinney-Vento program addresses the problems that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Under this program, state educational agencies must ensure that each homeless child and youth has access to the same free, public education as other children, including a public preschool education.

• In the midst of the Oklahoma State Department of Education's (OSDE) heavy responsibilities for monitoring schools, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) consistently monitored OSDE's office of Federal Programs to evaluate Oklahoma's ability to implement processes and procedures aligned to federal law and guidance.

• Consistent communications with USDE were required to ensure the office of Federal Programs was providing accurate technical assistance to school districts regarding fiscal and programmatic matters.

• Districts receiving federal grant awards submitted an annual application. All applications were reviewed and approved before claims were paid. All activity toward ensuring districts received their federal awards was performed in a timely but antiquated manner, as all reviews were paper- and pencil-driven.

• Districts were required to apply the use of federal funds in alignment with the purpose and intent of each individual federal grant program. There was little to no flexibility in the use of these funds.

• All districts receiving federal funds were to utilize them in support of meeting academic student achievement by reaching Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

• If schools and districts failed to meet AYP for two years in a row, they were placed on the School Improvement list and subjected to mandates as set forth in NCLB's School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance.

• OSDE developed and implemented School Improvement policies, processes and procedures in alignment with the required mandates.

School Improvement
Office of School Turnaround
The Office of School Turnaround (OST) is responsible for providing financial assistance and other support, including through the administration of the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, for state and district efforts to turn around the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in Oklahoma, otherwise known as Priority Schools. The OST uses knowledge of turnaround efforts, including those of SIG and Priority Schools, to inform its monitoring, technical assistance and policy decisions. It focuses on building the capacity of districts to improve student outcomes and sustain the reforms in their lowest-performing schools.

The OST also is responsible for helping to coordinate the OSDE programs and initiatives focused on the lowest-performing schools and for working collaboratively with other agency offices to develop strategies, guidance and networks to assist those schools.

The measures being taken to address the achievement concerns of sites identified as Priority Schools include the following:
• A site plan for improvement aligned to Nine Effective Practices
• Baseline School Improvement Status Report (SISR) completed annually
 • Quarterly SISR which includes results of quarterly benchmark assessments
 • English Language Learner Plan to the Title III Office
• Site visits and surveys to gather data and address issues and concerns relating to school improvement initiatives and as a tool to make mid-year adjustments

The technical assistance provided by OSDE for Priority Schools includes:
• Quarterly site visits by a School Support Leader and/or School Support Specialist
• Telephone calls to support the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan
• Webinars to collaborate in the development of the school improvement plan, support school improvement efforts and provide technical assistance with the development and implementation of the school improvement plan and budget
• Regional professional development to focus on specific needs identified by a site's needs assessment
• Collaboration with other OSDE departments (Title III, Federal Programs, Special Education) to address critical school improvement areas identified by a site's needs assessment and support efforts to improve student learning and achievement

School Improvement Grant (SIG) Program Description
School Improvement Grants (SIG), authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Title I or ESEA), are awarded to OSDE to create competitive sub-grants to LEAs that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources to raise substantially the achievement of students in Oklahoma's lowest-performing schools.

The assistance provided by the OSDE for SIG Schools includes:
Evaluation Activities
• Quarterly Data Reviews using the Oklahoma Data Review Model — OSDE is currently using a portion of SIG reserve funds to provide on-site data analysis to SIG Schools. The SIG Director formally monitors progress at least three times a year at each SIG School. The purpose of the data review is to analyze school benchmark assessment data at the student level in reading, mathematics and other content areas as requested. The data review helps determine how assessments align with state standards, develop timely action steps and facilitate the adjustment of teaching and learning for improved student achievement. The goal is for the school leadership team to ensure that individual teachers have a focused summary of the data to monitor the progress of students, subgroups and class groups.
• Quarterly Implementation Meetings to ensure the implementation with fidelity of required SIG initiatives.

• End-of-Year School Improvement Grant Advisory Board Review, accompanied by a rubric, to evaluate implementation artifacts and recommendations for a corrective action plan to address implementation issues
• Site visits and surveys to gather data and address issues and concerns relating to school improvement initiatives and as a tool to make mid-year adjustments

Technical Assistance
• Telephone calls to support the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan
• Site visits to support school improvement efforts in the areas of school culture, data and instruction
• Regional meetings to promote collaboration with OSDE, as well as between sites and LEAs
• Collaboration with other OSDE departments (Title III, Federal Programs, Special Education) to address critical school improvement areas identified by a site's needs assessment and support efforts to improve student learning and achievement
• Regional professional development to focus on specific needs identified by a site's needs assessment
• Webinars to collaborate in the development of the school improvement plan, support school improvement efforts and provide technical assistance with the development and implementation of the school improvement plan and budget
• School Support Leaders (SSLs) provide mentoring support and guidance to School Improvement Grant (SIG) leadership to facilitate the development and implementation of the school improvement plan by building on the school's strengths and addressing the identified needs. SSLs read SIG applications and SIG plans to monitor implementation of the plan via site visits and provide timely feedback and coaching comments through an online planning tool. SSLs meet with individual principals frequently, attend and facilitate Professional Learning Community meetings, and complete classroom observations as needed.

Action Plans/Next Steps (School Turnaround and SIG)
• Insist on the use of data as a driver for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Visit school sites and attend PLCs as an observer to facilitate and support the use of data as a driver for decision-making and to adjust instruction and meet the needs of learners. Collect data to support the use of assessments for learning to increase the academic achievement of students.
• Collect quantitative and qualitative data on designated schools that have changed their letter grade from an F to a grade that is at least a D or better on the A-F Report Card. Use this information to link designated schools, increase the capacity of the Office of School Turnaround and facilitate providing support and technical assistance to a designated site through the use of the experience and lessons learned from a previously designated site.
• Use of data to perform a triage on schools identified as needs improvement. Establish a set of criteria to rank-order schools identified as needs improvement. Choose a set number of high-, medium- and low-priority schools from the list. Establish processes to provide support and technical assistance to schools and measure results by improvement on benchmark and/or interim assessments. Compare the results on assessments for learning to the end-of-year state assessments to measure increase in student achievement.
• Edivation Project to provide access to professional development via the use of videos and an online environment to collaborate and share ideas. PD360 and the School Improvement Network provide video programs and a variety of materials associated with research-based instruction, data-driven decision-making and the development of positive school cultural norms. This resource also allows the opportunity to develop educational leadership by providing the same type and quality of resources to principals and leadership at a site or LEA without the additional cost of travel and preparation of materials.

FY 2010-2014
New Education Reform Initiatives — Opportunities and Challenges
In order for states to receive reprieve from NCLB's 100-percent proficiency mandate, USDE offered states the opportunity to participate in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver. OSDE accepted the opportunity and participated in this effort by creating and implementing rigorous educational reforms aligned to four key principles included in the waiver.

Thirteen sub-waivers affecting the Office of Federal Programs were implemented; therefore, the office of Federal Programs supported this effort with the following understanding:
• The ESEA Flexibility Waiver came accompanied with new vision supporting rigorous educational reform.
• The new vision addressed all children becoming college-, career- and citizenship-ready by the time they transitioned from high school to the adult world.
• OSDE would undergo a major shift in coming out from under NCLB's compliance-driven purpose to becoming a service-oriented agency.
• The office of Federal Programs fully supported and implemented the 13 Title I sub-waivers included in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver.
• Implementing the ESEA Flexibility Wavier did realize challenges due to state legislative changes as well as outdated federal NCLB fiscal requirements such as supplement not supplant, comparability and maintenance of effort.

Goals
FY 2014-15
The following address increased academic student achievement.
Goal 1:
To support the ESEA Flexibility Wavier in a highly collaborative manner by implementing the Professional Learning Community Team concept (agency wide).
Goal 2:
To undergird the agency's mission and vision by:
• Performing professional research for best practices supporting education reforms
• Creating, implementing and sustaining supports for all new reform efforts
Goal 3:
To continue building effective and harmonious professional relationships with district patrons.
Action plan undertaken

FY 2014-15
Action Strategies Supporting Goals: 2014-2015
The office of Federal Programs completed the following strategies in support of goals:
Goal 1:
Increased collaborative efforts — breaking down silos
• Created the cumulative report addressing the numbers and types of agency-wide Professional Learning Community Team efforts implemented over the past two years.
• Professional Learning Community Teams addressed all educational reform efforts and served to build capacity in understanding and implementing reforms.
Goal 2:
Implementing best practices for the purpose of supporting and sustaining efforts toward meeting goals
• Implemented the Federal GMS (Grants Management System). This online grants-management system provides quality reporting, increases productivity and improves the quality of work results.
• Developed and implemented the Federal Programs Strategic Plan for the inclusion of Data Reviews in the District Consolidated Monitoring process
• Developed and implemented performance-based monitoring indicators utilized during collaborative district monitoring efforts
• Developed and implemented Oklahoma's Comprehensive Academic Plan for the ELL. This plan is extensive and contains a strong professional development piece for teachers and leaders and provides best practices for the delivery of instruction.
• University of Virginia (UVA) School Turnaround Program — Implemented supports for guiding districts and school efforts in their quest to help their students succeed

Goal 3:
Building harmonious professional/educational relationships with district patrons
• Ensuring inclusion of Title I Committee of Practitioners — serving in an advisory role
• Ensuring inclusion of district superintendents and principals in receiving updated information regarding issues addressing federal programs and school improvement

Timeline/History
January, 2011 – 2014:
ESEA Flexibility Waiver

OSDE determined to participate in USDE's offer to receive flexibility for specific NCLB requirements. This was accomplished through OSDE's creation and implementation of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver.
• Thirteen sub-waivers were made available supporting the use of Title I federal dollars and districts were relieved to make application of this opportunity.
• Due to legislative rulings, the Waiver was revoked and was not reinstated until Nov. 24, 2014.
• The office of Federal Programs continues its efforts to fully support all elements addressed in the 13 sub-waivers as well as all educational reforms.

Interaction with other SDE departments
January, 2011-2012:
A longitudinal review of all divisions within OSDE was conducted for the purpose of looking for best practices in providing services to districts. Moving from strictly a compliance agency to becoming a full-service agency was demonstrated as a high-need priority.
• The Federal Programs office was determined to correct this high-need priority by forming collaborative agency-wide teams to improve the quality, efficiency and productivity of the agency as a whole, as well as strengthen communications with district patrons.
• Building capacity in understanding OSDE's new mission and vision was necessary for all OSDE staffers, as educational reforms were on the horizon.
• This effort was found successful, but continued efforts are needed.

Results
2011-2014:
Strong evidence is observed regarding the following efforts:
• Professional Learning Community Teams have increased capacity of understanding regarding educational reform efforts in Oklahoma.
• Increased academic achievement has been demonstrated by schools in improvement.
• Increased efforts toward implementing effective Systems Change approaches for schools needing the greatest assistance through the UVA systems process.
• Systems Approach to building quality schools is steadily increasing through UVA's efforts in school improvement.

Ongoing challenges and opportunities
2014-2015:
Future challenges and opportunities will most likely be realized in the following areas:
• Challenge: Increasing funding for all educational efforts
• Challenge: Building agency capacity in support of the new mission and vision
• Opportunity: Implementing effective systems change processes
• Opportunity: Establishing trust and building collaborative relationships with district patrons

C^3 Schools

C^3 Schools are schools that were designated after a District Determination Review was completed of Priority Schools in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years. Six schools were selected in 2011-12 and seven schools were selected in 2012-13.

C^3 Schools are provided with additional School Improvement Funds to assist in the implementation of the turn-around process. Each school's leadership and faculty were evaluated. Changes were made in the leadership and faculty when it was determined that certain individuals did not possess the characteristics needed for a successful turnaround. The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) was involved the interview/evaluation process. The evaluation resulted in the replacement of several superintendents, principals and teachers. At some sites, up to 50 percent of the staff was replaced. In one instance, the district was dissolved as a result of the parents' engagement in the turnaround process; their only option was to annex their district to a neighboring district. Life has changed dramatically for the children, and for the better, in the annexed district.

Each C^3 school is assigned its own "shepherd" from OSDE who works closely with the leadership to guide them through the turnaround principles and assist them in tackling the burdens that have prevented the school from achieving success. Site visits are made up to six times a year.

A systems approach is developed for every challenge that the school may encounter, seeking out "quick wins" and planning for long-term gains in student achievement. The school improvement office focuses on embedding culture, data and Instruction with each systems approach. OSDE establishes strong intentional PLCs (professional learning communities) that drive instructional and cultural change, gathering quantitative data and supplementing it with qualitative data collected through site visits. Systems are put in place for Response to Intervention, Positive Behavior Interventions, Extended Day and School Calendar for increased learning time. C^3 schools qualify for School Improvement Grants, Edivation Online Professional Development, Voyager Passport and Model Schools Conferences. Each C^3 school must include a systems approach to sustainability to assist them in continued success. To date, 50 percent of the C^3 schools have a C or better grade. The remainder continues to make great progress. OSDE has experienced some pushback, particularly from the state's two largest school districts.

University of Virginia (UVA) Partners for Leaders in Education

UVA has assisted twofold in the work the OSDE has accomplished in School Turnaround. First, Oklahoma has three schools districts, including 15 school sites participating Cohort 10 of the UVA program. Guthrie, Anadarko and El Reno school districts are in their second year and have made great progress and turnaround in their schools. In fact, Anadarko Public Schools were highlighted in a recent magazine article published by the University Of Virginia Darden School Of Business.

District leadership is put through a rigorous evaluation process to decide their "readiness" for the program. When a district is accepted, its staff begins to attend week-long "boot camps" at UVA to interact with leaders in business and education from across the country. The program takes school districts through a step-by-step evaluation process and begins to find root cause to the challenges each district faces. School leaders are provided a systems approach to create change.

It is tough work, and sometimes requires the elimination of longstanding traditional practices that have placed them in turnaround. UVA provides technical assistance with data, culture and instructional change along the way; UVA staff makes site visits twice a year. There are summer and winter retreats that expand, and the use of data and serve as check points. This January, for instance, is a mid-winter convening of all the Cohort 10 schools from across the country and includes site administrators, teachers, board members and representative of the OSDE from par-

ticipating states. Oklahoma's group will be close to 100, mostly teachers. The teachers always take away — "this is the best PD [professional development] I have ever had the privilege to attend." We look forward to having an Oklahoma join next UVA Cohort in March 2015.

OSDE is beginning its second year in a new venture of UVA that can best be described as a "thought partnership among six states" — Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. With UVA shepherding the work, these states are collaborating in the systems approach to School Turnaround. The group meets three times annually to share experiences — good and bad — with school turnaround. While each state has its own unique approach to school turnaround, all approaches are centered on best practices. The convening is sponsored by WestEd Comprehensive Center, of which Oklahoma is not a part but has been asked to participate because of the systems that are in place in School Turnaround. Oklahoma and Colorado are sponsored by the South Central Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma. As a result, we have reduced the federal reporting burden on schools from an OSDE standpoint. We have established working PLCs at OSDE and have changed our compliance/monitoring practices.

■ Special Education Services

Rene Axtell, Assistant State Superintendent of Special Education Services

- SoonerStart Early Intervention (birth to 3 years)
- Preschool – 619 (3 to 5 years)
- Oklahoma Parents as Teachers (OPAT) program
- School age (5 years through 21)
- Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Act
- State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) – Oklahoma Tiered Intervention System of Support (OTISS)

Mission, challenges initially facing department

- Special Education Services is committed to providing guidance and support to promote excellence in education from infancy to adulthood for children with disabilities, as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).
- Among the challenges we faced were: an audit from USDE-Office of Special Education Programs with a required Improvement Plan; restructuring of the division to fully address the needs of districts while ensuring full implementation of IDEA; the sequester of federal funds; sole-source contracts with no accountability measures; and shortages of district special education personnel.

Goals

- Assist and support all stakeholders in the understanding and implementation of the IDEA.
- Disseminate information to families, schools, communities and agencies through meaningful resources; foster collaborative partnerships; and provide timely and accurate technical assistance to meet the needs identified by local educators.

Action plan undertaken

- Conducted analysis of current staff and structure of division, internal processes and procedures for fiscal management, data system — collection/submissions, instruction and assessment supports
- Eliminated ineffective and inefficient processes and procedures —streamlined processes and procedures to provide better service to districts
- Implemented the Special Education Teacher Boot Camp to address teacher shortages
- Eliminated Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP) in accordance with federal requirement and to assure special education students are provided the same access to high standards as all students, and revised Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP) to include two vendors (Pearson for science and social studies via portfolio, and Dynamic Learning Maps, or DLM, for math and ELA) through an online program in which students can work online or teachers can enter data on the student. DLM helps provide information for classroom instruction. and teachers report that they love it Delete and replace with "Response from educators has been positive".
- Updated process for the Oklahoma Parents as Teachers (OPAT) program

Timeline / History

• Revisiting of policies and procedures
• Revisiting and creation of information to assist special education personnel on appropriate accommodations for instructional and assessment purposes
• Creation of Co-Teaching and Universal Design for Learning to assist with Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements
• Creation of OTISS framework and user guides
• Creation of professional development packages based on research-based instructional practices

Interaction with other SDE departments

• State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), a requirement under IDEA —Office of Federal Programs, Office of Instruction and Office of School Turnaround
• Alternate Assessments — Office of Assessment and Office of Accountability
• Assessment Accommodations — Office of Assessment
• Grants Management System — Office of Federal Programs and Office of School Turnaround
• Agency PLCs — Office of Federal Programs, Office of Instruction and the Office of School Turnaround
• Assistive technology requirements — Office of Assessment and Office of Instruction
• OTISS reading pilot — Office of Federal Programs, Office of Instruction and Office of School Turnaround
• Reading pilot/project — Office of Federal Programs, Office of Instruction and Office of School Turnaround
• ACE projects — Office of Counseling
• Online Grants Management System — Office of Federal Programs, Office of School Turnaround, Fiscal Services and 21st Century Grant.

Results

• Due to fiscal reduction of contracts (much of which was duplicity in services) and placing OSDE-SES purchases and travel on hold, districts were provided with full IDEA funding during the federal sequester in FY 14.
• More open communications and partnerships with districts and primarily special education directors and teachers — more service-oriented
• Transparency of data calculations and data results
• Involvement of district personnel as stakeholders in review of information for manuals, training and implementation of IDEA purposes
• Streamlined processes and elimination of unnecessary duplication of reporting

Ongoing challenges and opportunities

Dissemination of information/communication to reach correct district personnel, frequency and reach of trainings, coordination with OMES related to data

■ State Aid

Renee McWaters, Executive Director of State Aid

Mission, challenges initially facing department

The Office of State Aid provides assistance to public school districts by maintaining, allocating and distributing a $2 billion budget of state-appropriated dollars to 517 public school districts and 26 charter schools. The FY15 funding formula will distribute $1.8 billion and the remaining state-appropriated funds will be allocated and distributed through School Activities or line items.

Goals

• Make accurate and timely funding allocations and payments to school districts in accordance with state law and regulations.
• Continue to streamline data collection over the web.
• Maintain the funding formula as a web-based process that allows districts to have access to all their data at any time.
• Provide more data access and transparency to the schools.
• Work more closely with other sections of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and other state agencies for improved integration of data.

Action plan undertaken

• Establish and implement internal procedures to collect, verify and use accurate and complete financial data for funding allocation.
• A project is in place with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) to rewrite the funding formula in a web-based system.
• Shift from a monthly mailed hard copy of county 4-mill data collection to being a data collection through the web.
• Implement a project for district/charter schools to submit data from their Estimate of Needs over the web to the State Aid section for the funding formula calculation.
• Implement a project for district/charter schools to submit Flexible Benefit Allowance (FBA) data over the web to allow for a quicker adjustment in their allocations.
• Launch a project for district/charter schools to submit driver education information via a web system.

Timeline / History

• Funding Formula:
  ▪ Collect data and calculate the funding formula by July for the initial allocation, and late December or first of January for the mid-year allocation adjustment.
  ▪ Assess any penalties pursuant to law: administrative cost, general fund balance, class size and noncompliance.
• Make scheduled payments on a monthly basis (August through June).
• Collect data and prepare the annual report for the OSDE in February of each year.
• Update the Technical Assistance Document that provides financial information to the districts and public.
• Act as staff for the Oklahoma Commission on School and County Funds Management.

Interaction with other SDE departments

The State Aid section relies on data from other departments within OSDE.

• The Wave/October Report collects data for several different sections for the funding formula calculation.

  ▪ Bilingual counts — Accreditation

  ▪ Gifted and Talented counts – Gifted and Talented

  ▪ Special Education Disability counts – Special Education

• Free- and Reduced-Lunch counts – Child Nutrition

• Data is collected from other departments for the allocation and/or calculation of allocation on School Activities/line items.

  ▪ Reading Sufficiency Act (K – 3 Grade student counts) — Reading Sufficiency section, Divisions of Instruction and Assessment

  ▪ ACE remediation (Limited Knowledge and Unsatisfactory student counts) – Divisions of Assessment and Instruction and Office of School Counseling

  ▪ Alternative Education Statewide Progress – Alternative Education

  ▪ Reading Proficiency Act – Literacy

• Calculations for district allocations based on State Aid data

  ▪ Textbooks/instructional materials — Average Daily Attendance, Division of Accreditation and Compliance

  ▪ FBA — Eligible Certified and Support Staff, Division of Accreditation and Compliance

  ▪ Staff Development — Average Daily Attendance, Division of Accreditation and Compliance

  ▪ Driver Education — Students completing the requirements, Division of Accreditation and Compliance

Results

• Provide districts with up-to-date financial information.

• Distribute accurate payments to school districts in a timely manner.

• Assist districts with helpful documentation and to answer questions.

• Through the recent release of the Financial Transparency Web site, provide state aid and school funding information to the Legislature and other interested parties to assist decision-making and determine fiscal impacts of any legislative changes and policy initiatives.
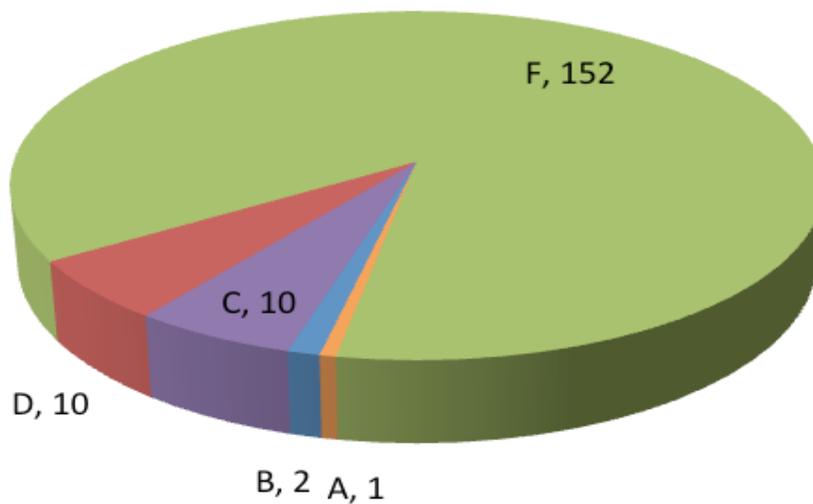
Ongoing challenges and opportunities

Work is in progress with OMES in building an integrated web-based system to include, but not be limited to:
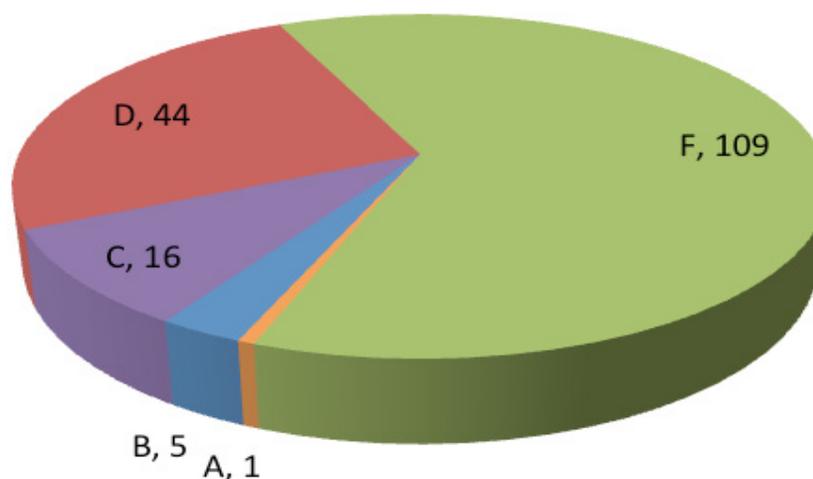
• Populate and calculate the Average Daily Membership (ADM), Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and Average Daily Haul (ADH) from the Wave student information.

• Financial Support of School (State Aid) Formula Calculation

• Allocation and Payment Distribution

• Class Size District Submission

• Provide capability for analysis of various sources of revenue and expenditures within the context of current state laws and policies to assure effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Comparison of Priority School Grades: 2013 vs. 2014
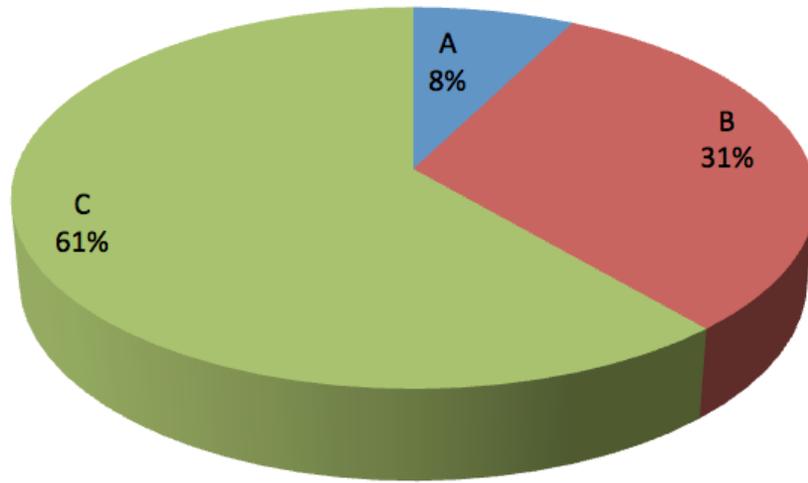
Priority School Grades for 2012-2013

F, 152
C, 10
D, 10
B, 2 A, 1

Priority School Grades For 2013-2014

D, 44
F, 109
C, 16
B, 5 A, 1

Comparison of Focus Grades: 2013- vs 2014

Focus Grades for 2012-2013

A 8%
B 31%
C 61%

Focus Grades for 2013-2014

F 5%
A 8%
B 26%
C 45%
D 16%