

Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

KANSAS

Union and district work together to enhance educators' skills and knowledge

In 2002, Olathe NEA and district administrators developed the **Professional Growth Process and Assistance Program**. Part of the growth process is a career ladder that runs the gamut from “new educator” (phases one, two, three, and four) to “career educator.” The assistance program, which dovetails with the career ladder, takes a collaborative approach to supporting educators who need to improve their skills and knowledge. Created because the Olathe School District and Olathe NEA believe that all educators can continue to hone their skills and improve their practice, the program as a whole helps ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

Positive results

- Among new hires, teacher turnover is lower than it is in neighboring school districts.
- Recruiting teachers is less challenging than it was before the program was instituted.

How the program works

- Educators may be referred to the Olathe assistance program in three ways: (1) joint referral, when an educator and administrator determine together where improvement is needed; (2) administrator referral, when an administrator refers an educator due to unsatisfactory job performance; and (3) self-referral, when an educator seeks and asks for help to improve in specific areas.
- The review panel that oversees the program has eight members: four appointed by the Olathe NEA president and four by the superintendent.
- Educators who are accepted into the program receive support from an instructional assistant, who reports directly to the review panel.

- With the help of the instructional assistant, the educator develops an action plan and timeline, which are submitted to the review panel for approval. The action plan identifies areas where improvement is needed, specifies evidence of achievement, and sets targeted goals.

Feedback on performance

- During a two- to three-month transition period, the educator is given an opportunity to improve in targeted areas. Monthly progress reports are prepared.
- Walk-through observations, formal observations, and feedback conferences are conducted on a consistent and frequent basis after the transition period ends.
- Feedback on the educator's performance must align with district standards and indicators.

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Great Public Schools for Every Student