

2018

Orman for Kansas
Problem Solving Platform
Plan 5 of 8

ORMAN  DOLL
GOVERNOR

Kansas Public Education: A Model for the Nation

ORMAN  DOLL
GOVERNOR

www.OrmanForKansas.com

Kansas Public Education: A Model for the Nation

Our public school system has been a source of pride for Kansas for decades. Led by our State Board of Education, over 35,000 committed teachers, and thousands of other dedicated school professionals, Kansas has always prided itself on delivering a quality education to all its public school students.

Over the past decade, however, Kansas' commitment to its public schools has lagged behind much of the nation. Kansas was among the 10 states in the United States with the deepest cuts in educational funding between 2008 and 2018. This has led to growing class sizes and reduced extra-curricular activities in many school districts. It has also led to a significant teacher shortage in many parts of the state. According to the National Education Association, in 2017, the average yearly salary of \$49,422 for a teacher in Kansas lagged significantly behind the national average of \$59,660. We need to correct this if we want to continue to attract high quality educators into the profession of teaching.

My running mate, Sen. John Doll, spent 20 years as a teacher and a coach, much of it in rural Kansas. My wife, Sybil, worked as a public school teacher in the Turner School District in Kansas City, Kansas. I recognize how deeply committed our public school teachers are to the students they teach and the communities they serve. I also have the benefit of the deep insights into education that can only be gained by working in the classroom. We need to value our educators and recognize the vital role they play in raising our children, building our economy, and making our communities a great place to work and live.



One of the things that I've learned from my wife is that the best education policy is a growing economy. So much of what drives student performance happens outside of the classroom. By growing the economy and creating good jobs and opportunities for parents, the resulting improvement in the home environment has a positive impact on student success. A growing economy that expands our tax base will also allow us to invest in education without increasing tax rates. **As a result, we've spent a lot of time and energy focusing on how we grow the Kansas economy, so we can lift up all Kansans and invest in our priorities without raising taxes.**

Investments in education will also pay long term dividends for Kansas. Our economic success as a state is dependent on kids getting the right foundation through our K-12 public school system. According to our Kansas Board of Regents, 99% of all new jobs created post-2009 have required some form of postsecondary education. If we don't properly prepare and graduate students in the K-12 system, they won't be positioned to take advantage of the job opportunities of the future. In fact, the greatest driver for a state's long term economic success is an educated workforce.

2018

Orman for Kansas
Problem Solving Platform
Plan 5 of 8



In a 2016 report published in EducationNext, a trio of top economic minds from the Hoover Institute, Leibniz University of Hannover, and the University of Munich, found that as much as 20 to 35 percent of the variation in GDP per capita across states can be linked to educational achievement. For our economy to thrive it is absolutely critical that Kansas have an excellent K-12 education system.

While I believe we have a very good public school system in Kansas, led by our dedicated teachers, I also believe we can do more to drive better outcomes. To achieve this, we need to identify and address the true root causes of educational underperformance and test new methods to address them. This will not be achieved by moving large portions of the population – and the funding – away from the public school system. The impact of that would only be to further tax our public schools with larger class sizes and a loss of more great teachers – leaving the vast majority of students behind in the process. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that success cannot be achieved by just doing more of the same at ever increasing costs since that is something Kansas cannot afford.

The State Board of Education clearly understands this. The Kansans Can initiative they developed three years ago should be the foundation upon which our public school model of the future is built. An Orman Doll administration will embrace this approach, while at the same time encouraging the implementation of best practices to address the root causes of educational underperformance. Additionally, just as companies develop their human resource plans to support their business strategies, Kansas needs to focus on developing the right types of talents to support its economic engine of the future. This means that a “one size fits all” strategy will be insufficient and we must recognize the varied profiles of students and the varied requirements of the Kansas economy.

An Orman Doll administration will be absolutely committed to making the public school system in Kansas a leader in the nation. This is one of our top priorities – one where we cannot afford to fail.

We will make our education system a model for the nation!

My Plan

Over the last 30 years, we have seen dramatic productivity improvements in almost every industry in the United States. This has happened even as quality has improved dramatically. Given the rapid evolution both of what is possible with technology and of what is needed in terms of talent to fuel the economy as it is rapidly changing, the education model itself must also evolve. Purely protecting the status quo is not an option, so to be successful it will require embedding innovation at every level within our educational system.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Orman".





Embrace the Innovations from the Kansans Can Initiative

Three years ago, the State Board of Education embarked on a new educational initiative called the Kansans Can program. The program was developed with significant input from stakeholders across the state. Specifically, the Board went on 20 listening tours in communities throughout the state and asked three simple questions:

- Describe a successful 24-year-old?
- What is the role of K-12?
- What is the role of Higher Education?

They then returned to seven communities to get additional input from the business community to ensure that their goals and objectives aligned with those of all the stakeholders.

Through that process the State Board of Education identified five outcomes to be measured:

- Social and emotional growth
- Kindergarten readiness
- Individual Plan of Study
- High school graduation
- Postsecondary success

The State BOE also recognized that the learning environments in Kansas are very different across the state. What works in a large urban school district might not be effective in a rural district. As a result, they're in the process of testing innovative approaches through pilot programs in varied environments to avoid a "one-size fits all approach" to education.

The program is in its third year of implementation with pilot projects throughout the state. Importantly, the schools participating in the pilots are ones where the administration, teachers, and other employees have overwhelmingly agreed that they want to participate in the pilot program. The innovations developed through this program will likely have a significant effect on school design well into the future.

The State BOE's leadership in acknowledging that our approach to education needs to evolve as our student and community needs evolve is an important first step towards getting the educational outcomes we're seeking. The design of the program is a demonstration of what can happen when we take a fact-based approach to problem solving. It has already led to innovations and will ultimately lead to a set of redesigned school models that will lead to success for students across the state.

In particular, I like the measurement tools that the State Board has developed to assess school performance. It specifically takes into account many of the external factors, such as poverty, that affect student performance. By doing that, we can assess the true performance of a district over longer periods of time – allowing us to learn from high performing districts and flagging issues for districts that aren't meeting expectations.

Tackling something as ambitious as the Kansans Can program takes dedication and time. It can't be subject to the ups and downs of political cycles. **An Orman Doll administration will work to make certain that the Kansans Can initiatives continue and that the state benefits from all the work being done to reimagine education in a way that delivers better outcomes for kids.**





Embrace Innovation Across the System

As the Kansans Can program evolves, it will invariably create a set of Kansas-based innovations that improve educational outcomes in the long term. In the short term, we can also leverage the findings of other states to improve outcomes for kids. Educational innovation is happening in every state and we need to take advantage of – and contribute to – those findings. We must all become students of innovation.

To do this, I am proposing the following:

We must create a learning culture within the system that identifies best practices in the state and outside the state and shares them broadly with teachers who are recognized for their innovations.

There are almost 100,000 public schools across the United States. All these schools are faced with the need and the opportunity to improve their outcomes and many of them are experimenting with tools and approaches to achieve better results. There are also numerous clearinghouses of educational innovations across the country. We need to have an educational model that actively looks for new learnings from every direction and evaluates how applicable they are for the needs of Kansas. There is no reason why Kansas needs to take on this challenge alone.

We must also focus on opportunities to improve outcomes and productivity through the use of technology. Over the last 15 years, we've experienced dramatic changes in technology functionality and cost that's changing how almost every industry approaches delivering services to consumers. Education is no exception. Technology is enabling new approaches to educating kids that weren't possible just a few years ago. As an example, it is estimated that as many as 67% of American 3rd graders are entering 4th grade without being proficient in reading. In Edinburg, Texas which has a high number of English Language Learning students, achieving English proficiency in early learners is essential. Teachers in Edinburg are using augmented reality lessons that use 3-D zoo animals to teach English spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as well as math concepts, in their pre-k and kindergarten classrooms. In one study of classrooms with 90% ELL students, kindergarteners went from being able to recognize and pronounce fewer than 10 letters to recognizing and pronouncing all of them in 26 days.

Technology can also help teachers do their jobs more effectively and focus on higher value uses of their time. This applies to something as common as grading writing assignments. If a high school or middle school teacher spends just five minutes reading, giving feedback, and grading a writing assignment, doing that for five classes of 20 students will take that teacher more than 8 hours of non-teaching time. That's time that could be used working directly with students.

In Washington, as an example, a machine learning technology that grades standardized essays is also being tested on the writing process – giving feedback based on benchmarks while the student is writing. As a result, “students are able to practice more, learn from their revisions and corrections, anticipate common mistakes and attempt multiple revisions before submitting a final assignment.” This has also allowed English teachers to have more time to teach and make higher-quality suggestions to individual students because they're not having to focus on routine areas.

“

Teachers are on the front lines. They have been innovating in their classrooms for decades. To succeed, we must make sure we fully leverage all the innovative ideas that teachers generate.

We also need to engage our best source of innovation – our dedicated teachers. Teachers are on the front lines. They have been innovating in their classrooms for decades. To succeed, we must make sure we fully leverage all the innovative ideas that teachers generate.

We need to provide teachers with the tools to innovate and share best practices. In the private sector, great ideas expand organically. If Uber or Lyft don't start a ride sharing service in Brazil, someone else will start one. In the public sector, however, the incentives for sharing best practices are limited. We need to change that. I'd like the State of Kansas to prepare a knowledge sharing portal, where teachers can share their best ideas, including lesson plans, strategies for addressing challenging problems, and external resources that they've used in their classroom. Those individual contributions will be made available to all Kansas teachers and evaluated by those who use them. The feedback will not only help identify the highest ranked innovations, but also provide additional insights to further improve the initial innovation.



Knowledge sharing is a foundational platform in any organization with multiple locations. Particularly in professional services, companies that create new intellectual capital every day, this is an important part of how they constantly improve and scale their businesses by ensuring that any tool created somewhere in the organization can be made available for anyone across the system. A knowledge sharing portal will require some curation of what gets included and how everything is organized. With some minimal investment, however, our teachers and schools will see enormous benefits as best practices are shared broadly. It will also eliminate the repetitive development of the same items allowing teachers to spend more time interacting with students.

As we look to bring new teachers into the profession, a portal like this should be invaluable. I've directly observed the benefit of this to new teachers as my wife put all of her lesson plans on a hard drive and shared them with her sister when she entered the profession as a Spanish teacher. The thousands of hours of work that my wife put in to develop the best lesson plans possible would have been wasted if she hadn't thought to share them.

I plan to reward teachers and school districts for the development and sharing of the most impactful innovations. Through a "Governor's Challenge," we will provide financial incentives for innovations that are proven to be effective, not only in the district where it's created, but also in another district where it's been shared and effectively implemented. These awards will be handed out annually. The goal is to reinforce the notion that educators have a responsibility to all Kansas children, not simply the ones in their districts. If we fully harness the energy, intellect, and commitment of our great Kansas teachers, we will create a world class public school system.

Invest in Targeted Programs to Build the foundation for Success

For us to succeed we need to make sure that we focus on the unique needs of each student. We need to evaluate student progress and create the most effective ways to intervene to ensure that emerging development issues do not become full blown problem areas. On this front, much is already happening in the system and we need to evaluate how best to support these successes and help them spread.

The objective to make sure each student has an Individual Plan of Study in the Kansans Can program is a vital component to making this successful. There are other global and targeted interventions that will also help students succeed. The following are initiatives that we should consider incorporating into our approach to educating kids.

We need to explore our ability to offer universal pre-K of some form. Universal pre-K would offer two main benefits. First, it would help many parents in being productively employed in the workforce rather than staying home caring for children during the day. Second, and more importantly, it would support the Kansas children in being prepared for entry into kindergarten and beyond, particularly given the critical importance of developing early reading skills.


We need to evaluate student progress and create the most effective ways to intervene to ensure that emerging development issues do not become full blown problem areas.

We need to explore ways to address the summer reading deficit issue through summer reading programs. The summer reading deficit is a major issue and can significantly set back the reading progress from the previous academic year. Programs that afford students access to books for summer reading have been shown to significantly curb the summer reading deficit. Results from summer reading programs in high poverty elementary schools where students got to pick 12 books per summer were impressive – reading achievement increased by 35-40% of a grade level at an incremental cost of about \$50 per student annually over three years. In many places, these programs are managed by the not-for-profit sector and funded with charitable dollars, which is something I would pursue as we looked to role these programs out throughout the state.

We need to explore other summer programs such as BELL for students at risk of falling behind. BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) targets students in grades 6-8 who are typically performing 1-2 years below their grade level and are at particular risk of falling further behind. It offers 6.5 hours of daily summer programming designed to increase literacy and math skills. Results to date have been encouraging with high attendance, even though voluntary, and a positive effect on math skills.

Addressing High Priority Needs

Measuring social and emotional growth as the State Board of Education is proposing with the Kansas Can program is critical to addressing growing needs among our youth. While this will invariably help in the long run, there are some immediate needs that require additional attention.

Teachers have been on the front lines of addressing the emotional needs of their students for decades. Many have developed unique strategies to identify and help kids who are feeling isolated or marginalized. We need to make sure that any strategies that are created to develop kids socially and emotionally, incorporate the insights of teachers, in addition to trained mental health professionals.

One of the areas that requires immediate attention is the increase in deaths by suicide among our young people. In Kansas, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15-24 and has risen to the third leading cause of death among children aged 5-14. A national CDC survey of high school students found that 16 percent reported seriously considering suicide, 13 percent reported creating a plan, and 8 percent reported trying to take their own life. Those numbers demonstrate the real need to develop a proactive plan to address suicide prevention.

The impact of suicide reverberates throughout communities and families. There is almost nothing more devastating. School districts, particularly those in Johnson County have pulled together working groups to develop strategies for addressing and preventing suicide. In order to get ahead of this issue on a statewide basis, we need to facilitate the sharing of best practices and creative approaches to this growing issue.

School safety is also of deep concern to parents across Kansas. As we develop more effective approaches to social and emotional health we, should also improve the safety of our schools. We can do more, however, to ensure our schools are safe. In many instances, we spend more time and resources ensuring the safety of our places of work and venues than we do our schools. This needs to change.

Various approaches have been tried across the country to keep our kids safe. From active shooter exercises, to metal detectors, to more advanced strategies, communities across the country are working to ensure our kids learn in a safe environment. We need to establish a school safety task force to evaluate all these approaches and implement a statewide approach to keeping our kids safe.





Helping kids with dyslexia is another area where Kansas can improve. One in five students, or 15-20% of the population, has a language based learning disability and dyslexia is the most common of the language based learning disabilities. The impact of not being able to read effectively compounds over time and can have lasting effects. Kansas is one of the few states without dyslexia legislation. Last year, Kansas established a Dyslexia Task Force. An Orman/Doll Administration would continue the work of the Dyslexia Task Force with a goal of making Kansas a leader in its approach to helping kids with dyslexia.

Estimates differ on the number of kids struggling with Dyslexia – from a high of 1 out of 5 children to a low of 1 out of 20. What everyone agrees upon, however, is that without early identification of the problem and a modified approach to learning, dyslexia can lead to anxiety, depression, poor academic performance, and a higher dropout rate. As we work to make sure every Kansas student has the tools to succeed in the 21st century, we need to address these specific challenges.

Support Career and Technical Pathways

My wife Sybil and I have supported a number of organizations that pair a high school student with something they are passionate about with an adult mentor. One such organization is called Mind Drive. Kids from the Kansas City area, generally from lower income households, work on technical projects with adults with expertise in a particular field. As an example, they've built electric vehicles and used 3-D printers for a range of different assignments. The power of such programs to transform lives is remarkable.

The individual plans of study as part of the Kansans Can program is intended to help uncover these hidden passions and the capacity for students to excel in particular disciplines. The State of Kansas needs to do its part in helping to create the environment for these plans to be as impactful as possible.

We need to restore funding for SB155, which allows high school students to take courses at our community and technical colleges. SB155 was one of the best ideas to come from the Brownback Administration. Unfortunately, some of the funding for it has been eliminated. In particular, transportation funding, which allowed students who weren't in the immediate vicinity of the college to take advantage of SB155, has been reduced. If we want these career pathways to be available to all students, we need to restore this funding. While we need to be realistic about how far we're willing to transport a student, I'd like every Kansas student to be able to access at least one community or technical college.

We should develop a blue print for introducing Career Academies into our high schools. Career Academies are programs students apply to enter in grades 9 or 10 and are taught by a single team of teachers through high school graduation. The community is typically made up of 150-200 students focused on a specific career such as healthcare. Career Academies have been shown to deliver an 11% increase in average annual earnings (\$2,460) sustained over 8 years which amounted to \$19,700/student over that time at an incremental cost of roughly \$760/student per year. At the same time, it can shorten the amount of time and money that a student has to spend in higher education.

Career Academies are in use in a number of Kansas high schools. As we learn from the successes and failures of these organizations, we can develop a blue print for other school districts that might want to implement similar programs.

Career Academies can also help address local workforce issues. As an example, if USD 250 in Pittsburg introduced a Rail Industry Career Academy, they could help meet the workforce needs of companies like Watco, the largest short-haul rail company in the nation.

We need to focus on the creation of Apprenticeship Programs at the high school level. Currently there are 400-500K students in the United States every year who are in formalized apprenticeship programs that have been developed through collaboration between schools and companies. In Kansas, we must explore providing our students who have the desire based on their career goals with opportunities to learn their crafts while they are still in school. While much of this learning will happen at the school itself, there are opportunities to extend this off campus in real world apprenticeship models.

2018

Orman for Kansas
Problem Solving Platform
Plan 5 of 8

ORMAN  DOLL
GOVERNOR



The Orman Doll administration recognizes the vital role that public education plays in Kansas. **We have demonstrated our deep commitment to public education over decades, not just when it's convenient at election time.** Our goal is to build on the great work that our State Board of Education, dedicated teachers, and school professionals have done to make public education in Kansas a driving force in our communities.

This requires evolving our model over time in a manner that achieves both better outcomes and higher levels of productivity. While these are often framed by career politicians as contradictory goals, these are outcomes that are routinely achieved by private businesses in all industries in the United States. To achieve this requires that we roll up our sleeves and do the hard work of understanding the true root causes of educational underperformance and test new methods to address them.

We need to create a culture of outcome based innovation in the Kansas public school system and build on the current Kansans Can program. To start, we will take learnings from other states that have already been able to help address some of the key leverage points across the K-12 years. We will also explore ways to utilize technology to improve all levels of education in the system. Finally, we will build the collaboration between companies and public school system to ensure that high school students are being taught the skills – and receiving the experiences – necessary for them to take advantage of the opportunities that Kansas businesses can offer.

If there was ever an area where innovation should be embraced, it is in our educational system where we have large, willing, and dedicated educators who are ready and able to make this happen. If we create a culture of innovation, create the tools to enable it, and truly partner with and support our teachers, I have no doubt that we will make our education system a model for the nation!

Ray Orman

ORMAN  DOLL
GOVERNOR