Kansas Teacher Licensure Process Improvement

Federal legislation places significant emphasis on having a highly effective teacher in every classroom. Challenges such as teacher shortages, changes in populations, and lengthy required licensing processes can affect a state's ability to ensure an effective teacher is available. The Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) was looking for a way to make its teacher licensure and re-licensure processes more efficient, update old paper processes by using technology, and minimize the mail and phone time required with clients. To address these needs, the Central Comprehensive Center (C3) at the University of Oklahoma collaborated with its partner, the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) in Houston, Texas, by engaging KSDE's Teacher Licensure and Accreditation (TLA) team to examine and redesign the processes. C3 and APQC representatives conducted a process audit and began building new processes for the work by analyzing the current processes, identifying potential barriers, organizing internal decision-making processes, setting goals, and implementing new, improved processes.

Since the collaboration, the TLA team at KSDE has reported sustainable improvements of the staff members' capacity to better meet the needs of KSDE and its customers, the teachers of Kansas. By streamlining the teacher licensure processes through the use of technology the result was faster application processing time, an increase in accuracy, and better use of resources. Processing time for teacher licensure or re-licensure requests is now reduced, thereby ensuring Kansas can get highly effective teachers into the classroom as quickly as possible. The TLA team has also reported improvements in the communication of licensure requirements, online process for in-state applications, team training and brainstorming, online submission of supporting documents, search capabilities, specialized consultants, process for walk-ins, customer service, and IT help. The TLA team continues to use these process and performance management tools to develop new licensure guidelines. Costs have also been reduced. The process of printing and mailing over 20,000 licenses has been changed from a labor-intensive paper process to an electronic process. KSDE estimates potential financial savings of over $60,000 per year ($30,000 in postage and $30,000 in administrative time) could be realized as a result of this process improvement with C3 and APQC. The KSDE Director of TLA Dr. Scott Myers said, *"We are consistently working our way through all of these efforts and are starting to realize some of the rewards of all of this hard work. In fact, we are launching the home printing of teacher licenses. This seemingly simple step will save KSDE tens of thousands of dollars a year! Fantastic!"*

"State capacity is critical, so what the Comprehensive Center has done for us is they have allowed us to build that capacity with their helpful guidance and support for us over the years. Results from our improvement process with C3 leading the way for us, has been true honesty. … [T]hat review process allowed us to be really honest with ourselves … in a way that when we're done with it, we go WOW look what we did together," said Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Diane DeBacker, in response to the improved licensure process.

The Central Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma continues to work with states in its region to build their capacity to ensure state systems' efficiency and effectiveness are continually improved. For more information, visit the Central Comprehensive Center website to watch a video on this project at www.c3ta.org.