A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR THE KANSAS WRITING ASSESSMENT

Since the initial development of a state wide performance assessment in writing in 1992, teachers across Kansas have commented that the Kansas Writing Assessment has provided educators with the following benefits:

- a symbolic statement to students, colleagues, administrators, patrons, and entire communities emphasizing the importance of writing;
- a sharp interest in expanding our knowledge of the teaching of writing;
- the reinforcement of the teaching of a writing process;
- a model that has helped many teachers who were unsure about or inexperienced in teaching writing to move forward with confidence as they incorporate writing into their classes:
- professional development opportunities to focus on writing and to develop practical lesson plans for teachers to teach writing;
- a common vocabulary to talk about the teaching of writing both with our colleagues and with our students;
- a method for sharing information about individual student writing ability with administrators, parents and other non-specialists; and
- an assurance that all students across Kansas experience at least one common writing activity in their fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade years.

With these benefits in mind, it is our hope the Kansas Writing Assessment continues its progress well into the future in supporting the following goals for writing instruction in Kansas:

- to produce data that capture large trends across the state and that can be used as a measurement of writing skill and competence;
- to function as a source of common experience that promotes dialogue about writing and the teaching of writing among Kansas educators;
- to reinforce the teaching of writing and the writing process in all Kansas classrooms;
- to challenge Kansas students in developing their writing skill and critical thinking abilities in order to produce higher quality writing products;
- to help shape writing instruction in Kansas based upon sound principles and to reinforce a rich array of writing strategies that are scientifically-based in research to meet students' diverse needs and abilities;
- to facilitate the teaching of writing that focuses on real-life audiences and purposes;
- to reinforce that the best way to determine and encourage students' writing ability is to focus on writing that is student-owned, developed over time, and guided by ongoing feedback and supportive response;
- to encourage more writing across the curriculum in all content areas and disciplines; and
- to reinforce that good writing is often built from reading a variety of good model texts and is but one element of effective literacy instruction.