

## Innovative District Summary

District Name: USD 333 Concordia

District Superintendent: Beverly Mortimer

Local School Board President: Rick Limon

District Address: 217 West 7th

Street

Concordia

66901

City

Zip

Contact Name: Beverly Mortimer

Title: Superintendent

Email: beverly.mortimer@usd333.com Phone: 785-243-3518

District Classification:  Urban  Suburban  Rural

KSHSAA Rating: 4A

Number of Schools in District: 1 Elementary 1 Middle/Junior 1 High

         Other (please specify):   

Current District Enrollment: 1,072 (headcount)

Percent of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch: 59%

Beverly Mortimer  
Superintendent

Rick Limon  
Board President

Date: 11-22-2013

# Innovative District Application

## Narrative

The applicant must explain the process as to how the district is being innovative. The narrative must include:

- Description of educational programs;
- Description of parental and community support;
- Specific goals and measurable pupil outcomes to be obtained;
- Explanation of how pupil performance in achieving the specified outcomes will be:
  - Measured
  - Evaluated
  - Reported; and
- Description of what state laws, rules and regulations from which the district is requesting to be exempt.

**(Please limit narrative to no more than 10 pages.)**

**Submit application to:**  
Office of the Governor  
Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 241S  
Topeka, KS 66612

**Deadline: December 1, 2013**

July 1, 2013

# USD 333 Innovative Schools Narrative

USD 333 Concordia is committed to our foundational mission of providing engaged learning, effective teaching and trusting relationships. The Concordia community is a rural farming community located in Cloud County in North Central Kansas and hosts our county's seat with a population of just over 5000. Concordia's largest employers include the school district, hospital, community college and manufacturing companies with an emphasis on welding.

## *Introduction*

Concordia Public Schools continually strive to ensure our students are provided the skills appropriate for the needs of today's most demanding professions, as well as, our most prestigious post-secondary colleges and universities. Concordia Public schools has a K-12 enrollment of 1000 students and firmly believes we are able to provide our students with outstanding programs that contribute to their post-secondary success. Concordia High School has built a tremendous relationship with Cloud County Community College and is able to offer over 16 concurrent credit classes on our campus. This provides many of our most driven students the ability to walk across the stage at Concordia High School graduation with a full year of college credit without setting foot on a college campus. In fact, we currently have some exceptionally driven students in our facility that have created a plan of study that will allow them to not only walk across the stage next May and receive a high school diploma, but also receive their associates' degree in business at the same time. College readiness is a crucial piece of our student's preparation in USD 333 throughout the elementary, middle and high school years, but we feel we, as educators, play an important role for those students who prefer to enter the work force immediately upon graduation as well.

Concordia Public Schools strive to continually work with all stakeholders in our local community as well as our region to identify specific employment challenges facing our area businesses, and service providers. Concordia offers a number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that cater to the needs of our current, local and regional employability needs. Concordia High School offers opportunities during the school day for students to receive industry recognized certification, while receiving high school and college credit. Our Certified Nurse Aide(CNA) program in conjunction with Cloud County Community College

addresses a specific need in our community at our nursing homes, hospice facilities and hospital for the certified nurse aid, while also encouraging many of our licensed high school CNA's to further their education at Cloud County Community College upon graduation to enter the RN program. USD 333 further extends the career readiness initiative with our American Welding Society Welding Certification program. CHS has partnered with five local and regional businesses to provide a one of a kind welding education experience that again allows students to receive high school credit and an industry recognized certification simultaneously. Many of our students will not only walk out of our welding program upon graduation with very high employability skills with a baseline AWS certification, but also be a step ahead with skills needed for additional certifications with their employer.

The programs USD 333 has in place are thriving; however we as educators are determined to do more. We want to avoid complacency by introducing innovative solutions, which allow educators to do what is best for students. Limited personnel resources in rural areas hinder college and career readiness, while statutes in licensure, accreditation, CTE pathways and limits on local credits block school districts like Concordia from bridging the gap and creating a seamless K-13 transition to post-secondary opportunities. The four items we request to investigate and exempt ourselves from in this innovative schools application begin with the licensing and recertification challenges imposed specifically, but not limited to our Career and Technical education staff members. Accreditation is our second clear topic of discussion as we firmly believe our current AdvancED District Accreditation process provides all the tools necessary to ensure student success. New Pathway creation is our third important aspect of our mission for college and career readiness and student engagement, while we would like to close with our fourth and final exemption that determines how we offer local credit. We would welcome the invitation from KSDE to collaborate at an advisory level to investigate solutions in which we are requesting exemptions from and that are discussed in further detail in the remainder of the document.

We will establish a baseline with the 2014 senior class, identifying the percentage of students graduating with one year of college course completion or an industry recognized certification. USD 333 will report annually our growth to our business partners, post-secondary leaders, community members and multiple state agencies, including KSDE. We will utilize our data to continually monitor and provide feedback to make data driven decisions regarding future offerings at Concordia Junior Senior High School and throughout the district.

## *Licensure*

USD 333 requests the flexibility of local control pertaining to any and all regulations and statutes regarding the licensure of highly qualified teachers. There is a consistent theme throughout rural Kansas in speaking with managers, owners, and foremen about finding qualified employees to fill all needed and demanded positions. School administrators have the same challenges, and the theme is emphasized by the strict regulations we face with licensure in one of the most unprecedented funding shortages to K-12 education in history. As educators turnover or retire, we have openings in tough to find departments that administrators could fill with capable and willing "in house" individuals, but receive a blemish on our building reports because our people are not "highly qualified" specifically in the content area. We would prefer to have local control over this decision as we know our people and feel their qualifications and experience are much more important than a specific endorsement. For example, we employ a 24 year veteran, very gifted educator, who is nationally board certified for ages 3-5. This person has a bachelor's degree licensed in K-9 elementary education and a masters degree in K-9 special education, who by KSDE requirements, is not qualified to teach our 4 year old state pre-kindergarten program. According to KSDE requirements, this individual would not be considered "highly qualified" and would blemish our building report without adding an additional endorsement of early childhood special education which would include several hours of course work, expense and student teaching.

Local control is crucial in finding full-time or part-time educators to fulfill career and technical education positions. Rural Kansas is facing a lack of instructors qualified to teach a number of highly skilled areas. Current licensing requirements and regulations do not provide the specific needs that current career and technical education courses and pathways require. Individuals from industry have the specific needed skills required of career and technical education pathways. We are requesting local control in determining whether an individual has the specific skill set including, but not limited to, integrity, industry certification and industry experience needed to instruct high-level industry recognized career and technical education courses.

Administrators also face challenges in supporting our current licensed CTE educators. We currently have instructors licensed in industrial technology who do not have a master's degree that face the rigor of trying to relicense through KSDE requirements for specific additional college credit. While we feel continuing education is extremely important, our request is to allow local control to award licensure renewal for

advancing individual skills through specific industry recognized certifications such as AWS Welding, OSHA, NCCER and other systematic industry recognized licensure programs. In speaking with our industry partners, these certifications play a much more applicable role in the development of our students. They will not only become college ready, but also career ready.

### ***Accreditation***

USD 333 is requesting an exemption from all KSDE regulations and state statutes related to accreditation of schools. Concordia High School has been accredited by North Central Association Commission on Accreditation for more than 100 years. North Central joined with the Northwest Commission and the Southern Commission to form AdvancED, a global accrediting agency. USD 333 earned **full district accreditation** in 2011 from AdvancED. The process started in 2006 and after a five year cycle of work with emphasis on continuous improvement, culminated with an external team review of USD 333 as an entire system. USD 333 involved district stakeholders in the process which included following a research-based set of standards to establish a vision, assess current reality, implement an improvement plan, monitor progress and evaluate results.

Our request for exemption is not to avoid accreditation, but to allow us to continue with our current process with AdvancED, especially while the Kansas State Department of Education continues to develop and implement their newly created district accreditation model. We believe that a high quality accreditation process has the potential to drive student performance and continuous improvement. This process examines the whole district including the programs, the cultural context and the community of stakeholders to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of the students. We continue to maintain building level school improvement efforts, and at the same time unify and align with overall system improvement goals so that our system is moving in one direction together. In our professional opinion, this process sets our bar higher than current accreditation practices in Kansas; we want to be held to a higher accountability level.

AdvancED is the premier global accrediting agency, with more than 100 years of dedication to raising the quality of education in schools/districts. AdvancED serves nearly 30,000 public and private schools and districts in over 70 countries around the world. Through this global network, educational providers benefit from international recognition, shared standards of educational excellence, a unified clear and powerful

accreditation process and external evaluation focused on continuous improvement. (Additional information about AdvancED can be found at [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org))

The AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems are:

- 1) Purpose and Direction-The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.
- 2) Governance and Leadership-The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.
- 3) Teaching and Assessing for Learning-The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.
- 4) Resources and Support Systems-The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.
- 5) Using Results for Continuous Improvement-The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

As previously stated, KSDE is currently in transition to a district accreditation model. USD 333 Superintendent Bev Mortimer has been active in assisting the state through participation in a mock accreditation visit and by sitting on several panels at state-wide events, in support of district accreditation efforts. Our ultimate goal is to continue to work with KSDE so that we can demonstrate to the State Board of Education and KSDE that the AdvancED process goes above and beyond state expectations and ask to continue our involvement in the process rather than duplicate accreditation; we want to set the bar higher for our district.

### ***New Pathways***

USD 333 wants an exemption from any and all regulations and statutes that restrict districts to only utilize the Career Clusters and Pathways adopted by KSDE. We would like to develop new pathways that are relevant to our community and the local work force. We would like to develop these pathways with the help of local industry and our post-secondary partners so that our students have direct career pathways to

employment in our community. We would also welcome the possibility to work with members of the Kansas State Department of Education in assisting with the development of these pathways.

USD 333 would work within the National Career and Technical Education 16 clusters in developing these pathways. Our goal throughout this process is to have the pathways adopted through KSDE so that other schools throughout the State of Kansas would have the opportunity to offer these pathways. This would also allow the pathways to have approval for Perkins Funding and .5 CTE Kansas funding.

USD 333 currently is investigating two pathways for development. Both of these pathways would lead to students obtaining skills and certifications that the workforce is asking for. The first pathway would be a Nursing Pathway. Currently at Concordia JR/SR High School we offer the CNA course through a partnership with Cloud County Community College. But, the course is currently not part of an approved pathway, nor is there a way for the course to be part of an approved pathway. As students are developing individual plans of study we feel it would be a tremendous benefit if we had a pathway into the nursing field for students to enroll and become a completer. We feel that this would increase our enrollment with students interested in the nursing career path. This would also increase the number of graduates with a certification that allows them employment immediately after graduation. We would also encourage our students through the pathway to pursue additional post-secondary training within the nursing field.

The second pathway we are considering would be an Energy Systems Pathway. In our partnership with Cloud County Community Colleges Wind Energy Program, it has been determined that occupations involving energy which would include natural gas, wind, solar and electric are in high demand. The issue that post-secondary is facing is that enrollment numbers within these programs is far less than what the industry needs are. We want to develop a pathway that helps students experience what careers are available in regards to energy. The program also would give our students an introductory set of skills that would increase the success rate of students entering a post-secondary school or entering an apprenticeship program with an employer. The development of this program would be a joint effort between post-secondary, industry and Concordia High School in developing a program that is relevant for our students to be college and career ready.

As it was stated earlier as part of our accreditation, USD 333 follows a continued model of improvement. This model will be followed in the development of new pathways. The needs of the local workforce continue to change, and with our goal to have 100% of our students, college and career ready upon



graduation, our career pathways have to change also. We continually have to meet with local industry, community leaders and post-secondary institutions to help determine what pathways our district needs to investigate developing. Our pathways have to be relevant to all stakeholders involved.

### ***Local Credit***

USD 333 wants an exemption from any and all regulations and statues that dictate awarding credit to students for extra-curricular activities or other prior experiences outside the school day. As a district we are asking for local control in determining whether students participating in extra-curricular activities or other prior experiences outside of school could be awarded credits. By allowing students to be awarded these credits, it would free our student's schedules to take additional college courses or Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. This would help with our goal of students graduating from high school with one year of college completed. We currently offer numerous dual credit courses in our facility for enrollment, however, the flexibility in scheduling for students, would allow these individuals a greater opportunity to enroll in courses on campus at Cloud County Community College. Students would also be able to complete CTE pathways and certification programs. Students would have the opportunity with their individual plan of study to enroll in courses that follow their desired career goals.

First, we want flexibility in awarding credit for extra-curricular activities. These activities could be credits for athletic or non-athletic activities. We want to have communication with all of our stakeholders in determining the number of extra-curricular activities that would warrant awarding of a credit. As an example, if a student participates in three athletic extra-curricular activities, the student could be awarded .5 Physical Education credit. Current statues dictate that schools cannot award any credit including physical education credit to students for participating in extra-curricular activities. We understand the importance of physical education on developing wellness with our students but if a student participates in three sports in an academic year, we feel as a district, that the student can demonstrate the competency equivalent to that of a semester of PE credit.

We also have fewer students that participate in extra-curricular activities at Concordia Junior-Senior High School. By allowing students that participate in activities to be awarded credits we feel that it will increase the participation numbers within our school. Students that participate in extra-curricular activities have

shown to increase academic performance. As we are trying keep our students focused and on track with graduation so that they will be College and Career Ready we feel this would help connect a greater number of students to our school community. Extra-curricular activities are tremendously beneficial to students to help develop and practice the 21<sup>st</sup> skills that employers are asking for.

Secondly, we want flexibility in awarding credit to students that have outside school experience. We feel that students that have participated in leadership opportunities in such things as 4H should have the opportunity to use this experience and be awarded credit. We would require these students to develop a portfolio showing competency in meeting the requirement that credit will be awarded for. The example with the 4H student that has had numerous leadership opportunities could develop a portfolio showing their experiences with delivering speeches and be awarded credit for a speech course. USD 333 will establish a committee that would evaluate the portfolios and determine whether the student would be awarded credit.

It is our goal through this process to award credits to students for all the activities that make-up learning throughout the school. All these activities have a tremendous impact on our students being College and Career Ready upon graduation.

### **Support Statements**

*"As president of Cloud County Community College, and on behalf of our faculty, staff, Board of Trustees and service area constituents, we wholeheartedly support USD #333's application to be designated as an Innovative District in Kansas. USD #333 has already demonstrated that they are an innovative, forward-looking school district by partnering with Cloud on concurrent academic and technical offerings for their students. But more than this, they have piloted the opportunity for qualified high school students to attend Cloud full-time during the day as concurrent students with the outcome being USD #333 students graduating College and High School at the same time.*

*The District has set a goal of graduating 100% of their students with either a full year of college or a certificate/industry credential. To accomplish this, the District needs to be able to make decisions outside the constraints of well-meaning regulations that, in practice, hinder innovation.*

*Cloud County Community College welcomes and encourages USD#333s application for Innovative District status. We guarantee our full cooperation and our full support behind and with the goals USD #333 have set forth."*

**Dr. Danette E. Toone**

**President**

**Cloud County Community College**

*"Cloud County Community College (CCCC) and USD 333 are working together to help provide a seamless opportunity for students to gain fundamental knowledge of career opportunities, acquire cutting edge technical skills, and apply these skills to the real world environment. Students who take advantage of these directed opportunities will be highly trained and find a direct path into high demand, high pay career opportunities. CCCC has direct connections with industry through advisory councils, partnerships, student and faculty internships, and workforce relationships to help provide great career opportunities for our students. It makes perfect sense for CCCC and USD 333 to work together to help our students in such a manner."*

**Bruce Graham**  
**Cloud County Community College**  
**Wind Energy Technology Department Chair**

*"I am so happy to write this note of support for USD 333 to be one of the Innovative School Districts outlined in House bill 2319. I knew when I heard this bill on the Senate floor that Concordia would be a perfect fit for this new creative idea in teaching students. It will be an opportunity for us to educate our kids at the local level with our own local experts. We have a very progressive-minded school board and superintendent who understand the type of students we have and future careers they can fill. They also know the community leaders who have the knowledge and who are able to teach and train students to fill future Kansas jobs especially in rural regions like ours. These people will be suburb teachers in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing and business who haven't been able to teach but now can be the experts in the classroom on a topic they know best. We are also fortunate to have Cloud County Community College in Concordia which will be able to take these graduates and offer even more education in areas that best suits our students in our region. I am excited for the possibility that USD 333 to be one of the new Innovative Districts - I know we have the enthusiasm and the experts in our school administration, district and community to make it a success."*

**Senator Elaine Bowers**  
**Concordia, Kansas**

*"I am currently a junior in high school and I am taking 18 hours of college credit this semester. The program I'm in has been an amazing opportunity for me. My senior year I plan to graduate with my associate's degree in business and go on to K-State to get my master's in business. I appreciate the opportunity I have been given to get a jump start on my future career."*

**Stormie Hittle**  
**CJSHS Student**

*The USD 333 Board of Education fully supports this application for "Innovative District" selection. The district has faced many challenges with reduced funding and declining enrollment, but the staff, the administration and the Board continue to be positive and forward-thinking. The "can-do" attitude has already paid off, with the development of an excellent welding program that involved five community partners and Cloud County Community College. The staff in USD 333 has the capacity to further expand programs for students in our rural area. If several barriers, outlined in the proposal, can be removed our district can take SB 155 and make it work better, and possibly develop a model that other communities and KSDE can adopt.*

**Rick Limon**  
**President**  
**USD 333 Board of Education**

*"As the Site Council President and a mother of four children, who have attended, or are attending school with the USD 333 District. I am in favor of the newly proposed Innovative District Program goal of 100% of the Concordia students will graduate with one year of College and/or an Industry Certification. This type of forward thinking will insure a leg up for our students in the next phase of their education or as they enter the work force."*

**Carleen Nordell**  
Concordia JR/SR High School  
Site Council President

*"I'm really impressed with the state of Kansas Innovative Schools initiative and then specifically what USD 333 is pursuing. Principal Quentin Breese talked about out-of-the-box thinking and Superintendent Bev Mortimer is just a futuristic and visionary type of individual. How can we get more productivity and how can the state of Kansas get out of the way with burdensome regulations to enable our schools to do more with what we already have or do more with less. I know the state has cut back or put a lid on financing. I think economic conditions require "how to get more with less." Hats off to Superintendent Mortimer and the Administrative team. I was impressed with their enthusiasm; you can't fake enthusiasm and you can't fake passion. Their energy lifted my energy and probably everybody else's in the room."*

**Joe Jindra**  
President and General Manager of 1390 KNCK Radio of Concordia

*"USD 333, Concordia Public Schools has raised the bar and successfully engaged in the world renowned AdvancED systems accreditation. They are in their second cycle of committing to this level of rigorous continuous improvement, having completed their first cycle in 2011. AdvancED is in its third cycle of district accreditation being used across 50 states and over 70 countries. AdvancED is committed to continuous improvement within its organization, so they conduct research to evaluate the protocol every five years when they raise the standards relative to the latest educational research available. This process has been honed three times and now includes an even more systemic protocol than in the past. Both schools and districts engage in an Internal Review and rate themselves using rubrics and providing evidence on the following components: purpose and direction, governance and leadership, teaching and assessing for learning, resources and support systems, use of results for continuous improvement, student performance, and stakeholder feedback. The protocol for External Review includes a team of both in-state and out-of-state members who interview many stakeholders at both the district and building level, analyze artifacts, and conduct classroom observations over a three and a half day review. This process is very comprehensive and provides a systemic analysis of the district. The district gets feedback that enables them to celebrate their strengths and tackle those areas most likely to leverage improvement. This process includes professional learning and networking opportunities for educators."*

**Nancy Bolz, Ed.D.**  
Director

*"I am a licensed teacher for the state of Kansas. I have taught both business curriculum and math for 25 years. I have also worked in residential carpentry since the age of 16. I have spent countless hours doing remodeling projects for contractors and also worked for school districts in the maintenance departments. I think it would be very beneficial for our students to have someone like myself to be able to teach in disciplines that we have a lot of training and experience. I think my experiences in the work environment are very valuable. Just because I have not sat in a classroom to receive the licensure does not mean that I do not have the skills it takes to teach this discipline. This would give our school a lot more flexibility if someone like me was able to do this. Thank you for your consideration."*

**David Gieber**  
CHS CTE Teacher