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Kansas helps high school students explore teaching careers

As the Kansas State Board of Education considers ways to recruit and retain educators, Emporia State University is making preparations for the Kansas Future Teacher Academy's 18th year.

Every year, the state's nationally renowned Teachers College at Emporia hosts 25-60 high school students for five days. During the academy, participants learn about opportunities for careers in education, problem-solving and leadership skills, personal goal setting, and the use of technology in education.

For the last six years, the academy has been held at two locations – Emporia State and Dodge City Community College – to accommodate summer schedules and geographic distance. This year the KFTA will be held June 24-28, 2007 at Emporia State University and July 7-14, 2007 at Dodge City Community College.

"The goal of the academy is to expose high school students in Kansas to the rewards of the teaching profession," said Scott Waters, director of the KFTA. "Having two locations allows students to benefit from this exciting opportunity without having to drive great distances."

Funding for the academy is provided by the Kansas legislature.

Applications are available from high school counselors and will be accepted through March 16. Students are allowed into the academy based upon their academic standing, involvement in school and community activities, and interest in exploring a career in teaching.

The KFTA is coordinated by the Jones Institute for Educational Excellence at ESU. For more information about the academy, visit www.emporia.edu/jones/kfta/ or contact Terri Weast at 620-341-5372 or Scott Waters at 620-341-5764.

At its January 2007 meeting, the Kansas Board of Education considered a number of options for increasing the number of teachers in the state classroom. More teachers are needed due to:

- Fewer people entering the profession: in 2006, Kansas issued 1,620 initial teaching certificates, compared with 2,007 in 2005 and 1,749 in 2004.
- Teachers exiting the profession after only a few years in the classroom: of the 1,767 new teachers in Kansas classrooms in 2001-02, only 1,098 were still in Kansas classrooms in 2005-06.
- Baby boomer retirement: the percent of teachers and administrators age 55 or older has grown steadily, from 16 percent in 2003 to 21 percent last year.

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