



**SANDY GARRETT  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

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**'Leave No Future Behind' is State Superintendent Sandy Garrett's  
Challenge to Oklahoma School Leaders in 2009 State of Education Address**

OKLAHOMA CITY - State Superintendent Sandy Garrett today delivered the 2009 Oklahoma State of Education address before a record crowd of some 3,000 superintendents, principals, counselors and school leaders, as well as several lawmakers and state officials.

Her speech – which kicked off the Oklahoma State Department of Education's annual "Leadership" conference for school leaders – outlined the need for schools to transform and respond to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. These needs, she said, are far different from previous generations and a "perfect storm" of national and global events makes it even more critical schools quickly respond.

"Education's perfect storm is a simultaneous occurrence of events in America and around the globe, one that came together producing an emergency situation," Garrett said, explaining the forces of the perfect storm are the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, a potential workforce where many lack the skills needed to be successful, and changing demographics that include a record number of Oklahoma students in poverty and homeless.

"These changes require constant rethinking about what kind of education all people need in order to become productive citizens," she said, indicating the global marketplace has resulted in the ability "to move jobs wherever there is an Internet connection."

"Today, we must concern ourselves with the mores, threats and opportunities of the global community – which means focusing schools on the future."

Garrett said too many schools are educating students exactly in the same manner they did 50 years ago, using an outdated school calendar, ignoring technology and innovation, and treating students as if they have the same instructional needs when clearly they do not.

"With few exceptions, the essential structure of school has not changed – the school day, the school calendar, the school year, four years of high school and only teachers talking," she said, showing a video where middle school students repeatedly indicated they were bored, that their instruction included none of the technology they used outside of school, and they lacked learning opportunities to truly show their teachers what they knew, could do and create. One female student in the video called "No Future Left Behind" says: "The future called; I told them you were busy" another male student asks: "How can you prepare me for my future using the tools of your past?"

Garrett said the answer to the perfect storm is innovation, high standards and better assessments, recruiting and rewarding teachers, early learning and convincing families that post-secondary education is necessary. She said that schools using student poverty as an excuse to lower student expectations and ignore innovation is hollow given the success of such schools as the KIPP Reach College Prep charter schools in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Serving students primarily minority and low-income, the free and open charter schools offer more than 500 additional of instruction than the typical public school and have



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been dramatically successful. Nearly all KIPP students matriculate to college and many earn scholarships to attend high school in private boarding schools.

"Yes, lengthening the school year is costly, but can we afford a school calendar based on an agrarian economy?" Garrett asked "The existing calendar puts our students at a disadvantage when it comes to competing globally."

In addition to rethinking the quality and quantity of instruction time, she lauded making more choices available to parents, including charter and magnet schools, specialty schools and language immersion schools. And, technology, she said, was key to effective instructional efforts in any school.

"Once learning was confined to little boxes with four walls and a chalkboard," Garrett said. While many schools still have students power down when they enter those four walls, many are now using "PDAs, blogs, podcasts, wikis and other tools. For students and teachers in these schools, the world is their classroom."

In wrapping up the 45-minute address, Garrett said it is possible for Oklahoma to give every child a bright future.

"Long after we are gone from this place and time, people will know what was important to us and if we were visionary leaders or not," she said. "Will they see that all students gained the knowledge and skills to be successful? We should do whatever it takes to leave no future behind!"

**SDE**