

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

# *Achievement in Education*



### KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT

*“Overcoming Obstacles has been a great resource for our teachers. The curriculum allows flexibility in the way the lessons can be taught and is relevant to students’ lives and issues that they deal with on a daily basis.”*

*Kristina Collins, Family Advocacy Specialist  
Kansas City, Missouri School District*

Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD) educators have been teaching the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program in its high schools since 2007. Their innovative approach to using the curriculum to effectively prepare students for life beyond school is unique. They are the first school district to receive the Achievement in Education Award.

In 2003, KCMSD implemented Achievement First (AF), a multi-faceted high school reform initiative that includes the Family Advocacy System (FAS). FAS bridges the gap between school and home by creating the Family Advocacy Period (FAP)—weekly opportunities for students, families, teachers and staff to work together to enhance each student’s success in the classroom.

Initially, advocates were required to plan the sessions. During the 2006-2007 school year, students and advocates were given the opportunity to voice what they thought was missing from FAS, and both groups suggested a curriculum. Educators from every AF school in the district researched various life skills and character education curricula and, after review, unanimously chose Overcoming Obstacles.

Today, Overcoming Obstacles is taught in hundreds of KCMSD high school advisory periods. KCMSD has tailored its use of Overcoming Obstacles to address the needs of students according to grade level. Advocates with freshman and sophomores focus on character building and life skills issues and those with juniors and seniors focus on college and career activities. With the support of parents, each advocate continually reviews student progress and advises students on selecting courses that allow them to set and meet post-high school goals.

Innovation is at the heart of KCMSD, a district that envisions its schools as places where every student will develop a deep understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue higher education, obtain family-supported employment, contribute to the well-being of the community, and seize the opportunity for a rewarding and fulfilling life.

# *Achieve*