

Approved: 1-25-93

Date

## MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Duane Goossen at 3:30 p.m. on January 21, 1993 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Pottorff (excused)  
Representative McKechnie (absent)

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education  
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Joyce Harralson, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators

Others attending: See attached list

Gerry Henderson addressed the committee regarding the Restructuring Report. He regretted not having written testimony but will provide it as soon as possible. (Attachment #1).

United School Administrators (USA) purpose is to provide a presence in Topeka and to design and deliver professional development opportunities to administrators. There are 1400 school administrators who are members statewide.

His organization had suggested to the Kansas School Board four years ago, the following:

1. School accreditation should be based on what kids know and are able to do (outcomes), rather than counting library books and teachers credentials which is what was happening then (inputs).
2. Agreements are necessary between all concerned regarding what kids know and are able to do.
3. Assessments need to be developed to prove that schools are making progress toward what is agreed upon.

This resulted in the Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) which is a system of making judgements about what kids know and are able to do. USA supports QPA.

Three things ought to happen and are happening in some form currently:

1. Agree on what you want. (What we want is improvement in the performance of our kids.)
2. Take a careful look at where you are. (Look at everything.)
3. Design a plan that will bridge that gap and take you from where you are to where you want to go.

He said there are people who do not believe that all children can learn, and learn well over time. Some people feel we ought to "*educate the best and drown the rest.*"

On occasion, in their zeal to get this thing going, the state has been dabbling in the "how". The "how" needs to be developed, implemented and designed by the people who are going to do the work.. The state should, instead, be involved in the "what". The only time the legislature should be involved in the "how" is in an advisory position, never in an implementation or advisory capacity.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, Room 519-S Statehouse, at 3:30 p.m. on January 21, 1993.

If a school can demonstrate the "what" for all their kids, then you shouldn't care about the how.

Frequently school administrators will ask the state board "just show me how to do this and I'll do it." The response from the State Board ought to be, "Hey school folks, that's your job."

The community should develop the "how" because only the community can solve the problems.

The best argument for QPA is, "Do you want to guess if you're making a difference or do you want to know?" QPA will allow educators to know that they made a difference.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for 3:30 pm Monday, January 25, 1993, in Room 519-S.

GUEST LIST

COMMITTEE: House Ed

DATE: 1-21-93

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**QPA Review**  
**January 21, 1993**

**Testimony presented before the House Committee on Education**  
**by Gerald W. Henderson, Executive Director**  
**United School Administrators of Kansas**

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Gerry Henderson, Executive Director of United School Administrators of Kansas (USA). I appreciate this opportunity to share some thoughts with the committee concerning the restructuring commission's report and on QPA. I apologize for not having written testimony and will prepare such testimony as soon as possible.

I will concentrate my comments in answering three questions: 1) Who is, or who are, USA? 2) What is the USA history with QPA? 3) What is the USA position related to these two issues?

First of all, what is USA or who are we? United School Administrators of Kansas began in 1971 when four of our, now nine, member associations united so that we might do two things a little bit better. One goal is to maintain a presence here in Topeka, both with the legislature and with the State Board of Education. The second goal, and one not any less important than the first, is to design and to deliver professional development opportunities for school administrators in Kansas. USA sponsored seminars and workshops are designed to help administrators be better at what we do.

USA is composed of approximately 1400 public and some private school administrators all over our state. The ribs of the USA umbrella are the nine separate and somewhat autonomous member associations. Under the umbrella are associations for superintendents, building principals at all levels, assistant principals, special education directors, vocational-technical school directors, curriculum coordinators, school business officials, and school public relations directors. Each of the nine member associations under the USA umbrella has its own separate governance structure. The USA Board of Directors, my boss, is composed of selected members from each of these nine member associations.

**USA History with QPA**

Nearly four years ago we approached the state board of education and suggested that the state board needed to take a close look at how we were making judgments about schools. Our suggestion was that we needed to start accrediting schools based what kids know and are able to do rather than via the input system then being used. It was our further suggestion at that time that the state board simply had to assume the leadership in two specific areas. One, the state board needed to facilitate agreements amongst all the



players in school accreditation--teachers, administrators, state board members, patrons, business people, legislators, whomever--on what we want kids to know and be able to do. The second task the state board needed to provide leadership on, was to facilitate agreements on what assessments would be needed to demonstrate that Kansas students were making progress towards whatever was agreed upon. While these two tasks appear to be very simple on the surface, let me assure you they are not.

The state board did assume a leadership role in the discussion of school accreditation based on outcomes by creating the task force on outcomes-based accreditation. The report that was generated by that task force provided the foundation document for the Quality Performance Accreditation document that is now taking shape. QPA, very simply, is a system for making judgments about schools based on what kids know and are able to do. Under the QPA accreditation system, no longer would we make judgments about schools based on things such as the number of books in the library or the number of credit hours on a teacher's transcript. Judgments under the QPA system are made solely on what students know, are able to do, and in fact, are like.

While we have not agreed with everything that has come out of the state board during this process of changing from accreditation based on inputs to accreditation based on outcomes, we believe that the state board has indeed assumed the leadership role and has provided an essential focus on where we ought to be going.

#### **What has been the USA position related to QPA?**

From the outset USA has been involved in the process, and through our committee structure and my board of directors, has taken a formal position in support of Quality Performance Accreditation. We believe the new system will work. Indeed, we believe that it must work.

Working together with all of the essential players to make sure that the new system works, has caused some of the problems and much of the controversy in the new program. For QPA, or any other system of improvement, to work, we believe there are three things that need to happen. First of all we have to agree on what we want. Secondly, we have to take a careful look at where we are right now. Thirdly, after agreeing on what we want and carefully determining where we are, we have to design a plan to bridge to gap. This all sounds very simple, but again it is not. Let's review all three for just a moment. First we must agree on what we want from our public schools. What do we want all Kansas kids to know and be able to do? If I were to ask you to say in three or four sentences, "What do we want?", could you do it? Simply stated, what we want is improvement in the performance of Kansas students. The QPA document as it now exists, is grounded totally in the idea of school improvement--getting better. The question then arises--What do we want improvement in? The QPA document is very specific in that first, we want improved student performance in the essential or basic skills. While the definition of essential or basic in itself causes some problems, the system does call for demonstrated improvement in mathematics, communications,



science, and social studies.

Is there anything else that we want beyond mastery of essential or basic skills? Some Kansans would say no. Some believe that's where the accreditation system ought to stop. QPA, however, does not stop at this point. It talks about higher level thinking skills as being important in Kansas schools. These higher level skills include such things as being able to work collaboratively to solve problems. Many critics of QPA question the wisdom of including these higher level skills in school accreditation. But research by such organizations as the US labor department which produced the SCANS report, suggest that these higher level skills are essential to a productive life in the 21st century. A survey taken of business people in the midwest recently said exactly the same thing. The state board of education has, thereby, expanded the scope of the word "what". The "what" we want Kansas kids to know and be able to do goes beyond reading, writing and arithmetic.

An essential element in agreeing upon what we want lies in developing our basic belief system. After we have agreed upon what we want, we have to decide what we really believe about those agreements. For example, an idea basic to the effective schools research now driving much of our thinking, is that "all children can learn and learn well over time." What do we believe "all children" means? What do you as members of this committee believe about "all children" learning? If you really believe that all children can learn and learn well, you will behave one way. If you do not believe that all children can learn, you will behave in yet another way. There are still a lot of elitist things happening in our state. There are some people who still believe and act on those beliefs. They would have us "educate the best and drown the rest." If you truly believe that all children can learn and learn well, there are some things that you are going to have to do in that second step in determining where you are at any particular point. No longer will you be concerned with just average test scores. The name most often used in describing this phenomenon is the disaggregation of data. This means that instead of looking at an entire group and taking average test scores, you split the data down into several groups, such as social/economic status, or race, or gender. What you learn then is simply are all children learning, or are there certain groups that are not learning as well as others. When you have such information, teaching strategies can be specifically targeted to specific problem areas. The bottom line is that in the short time that Kansas schools have been involved in school improvement models and have been disaggregating data, we have learned that Kansas kids are failing to learn for all kinds of reasons. Again, I challenge you to decide on what you want. And if you want to ensure that all Kansas kids learn and learn well over time, and if you discover that not all are, you have to be prepared to take some action. If you find that poor kids are not learning, and that poverty translates into hungry or ill-clothed children, than you have to solve those two problems before those children can learn. There are many other examples.

This brings us to the final step in the process. Once you have decided what you want and have taken a careful look at where you are, a plan must be developed to bridge the



gap. It is in this area that we, as a state, have, in our judgment, made the most errors. All of the research that I know anything about says that **how** one closes that gap needs to be developed, designed and implemented by the people who are going to do the work. That's what Peg Dunlap was talking about yesterday. That's why we have site councils and on-site decision-making in this process. Simply stated, the state has every reason and right to be involved with the "what" of school improvement. The state, as a whole, has every right to be involved in reaching those agreements on "what" we want all Kansas kids to know and be able to do. But the "how" we reach those goals must be left to individual schools. I understand why the state board of education has been involved in a bit of the "how" of this process. Many of my members have consistently asked the state board to simply "tell us how to do this." In my judgment, the response of the state board and the state department ought to be, "the **how** of the process is your job, Mr. Educator." Again, simply stated, once the agreements have been made as to what Kansas kids should know and be able to do, how they got there should not be the state's business. Within reason, the "how" should be determined by the local school.

There is a very important reason why the "how" of school improvement must be left to local communities. To get back to the social problems we talked about earlier. If in the process it is determined that certain social problems must be solved before all kids can learn and learn well, it is only the local community that can solve the problems. There is no other way. If a child is hungry, if a child is homeless, or cold, or has no stability, or has no advocate, the local community must address those problems or all children will not learn and learn well. There are communities in this state, and some of them represented by members on this committee, who are doing a tremendous job of involving the entire community in the solution of children's problems. Entire communities must be involved because schools simply cannot do the job alone. In many cases, schools can indeed be the focal point of solving the social problems for children, but schools can't do it all.

In summary, QPA is a system of making judgments about schools based on results. What ought kids know and what ought they be able to do when they finish the process. That's as simply as I know how to state it. That's what QPA is. To implement QPA successfully we must do three things, and we can't leave any of them out. We have to agree on (and that's an important concept) what we want. You as a legislature and the state board have every right to be involved in reaching those agreements, the "what" of QPA. Secondly, we have to take a careful look at where we are, and schools have been doing that for the two years that QPA has been in existence. Finally, we have to develop a plan to bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to be. That "how" must be done in local communities.

If you will remember what happened in this committee room last Tuesday, I think you will have a pretty good idea of the status of QPA in Kansas. Last Tuesday you heard from eight of Kansas' best. Those eight Kansas teachers were excited to be a part of a system wherein they didn't have to guess anymore about whether they were making a



difference for kids. When we reach a point where we really believe that all Kansas kids can learn and learn well given time and have collected the data necessary to know where we are at any particular point in the process, we will know that we are making a difference.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I'll be happy to respond to any questions.