

MINUTES

AT-RISK EDUCATION COUNCIL

February 27, 2006
Room 423-S—Statehouse

Members Present

Dr. Andy Tompkins, Chariman
Mr. Bob Corkins, Commissioner of Education
Mr. Dale Cushinberry
Ms. Deloyce McKee
Mr. Bud Moore
Mr. Dave Self

Staff Present

Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office
Mary Shaw, Committee Secretary

Kansas State Board of Education Staff

Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas State Board of Education

Conferees

Dr. Tom Foster, Kansas State Department of Education
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas State Department of Education
Barb Hinton, Legislative Post Auditor, Legislative Division of Post Audit
Dr. Alexa Posney, Assistant Commissioner, State Department of Education

Morning Session

Chairman Andy Tompkins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Chairman Tompkins welcomed Dr. Tom Foster, who provided copies of the Kansas Charter School Annual Report, December 2005, and presented a briefing on the report ([Attachment 1](#)). Dr. Foster noted that this report was for the 2004-2005 school year. There were 27 charter schools in Kansas during the 2004-2005 school year that were fairly well distributed throughout the state, primarily in rural areas. Programs were varied. Dr. Foster explained that two of these schools will cease operating as

charters. Two new charter schools were approved by the Board in March of 2005, but only one began operation, so 26 charter schools will operate in 2005-2006.

In his written testimony, Dr. Foster addressed demographics, educational programs, and charter high schools. He noted that approximately 83 percent of charter high schools are alternative or credit recovery programs. Mobility/late enrollment is higher for charter high schools. It was noted that most of this mobility is between school districts. A request was made for information regarding the percent improvement in charter schools. Dr. Foster also discussed the Board suggestions regarding regulatory flexibility, appeals process, allocation of resources, and encouragement of growth.

Chairman Tompkins welcomed Barbara Hinton, Legislative Post Auditor, Office of Legislative Division of Post Audit, who presented detailed information found in the report entitled, "Cost Study Analysis Elementary and Secondary Education in Kansas: Estimating the Costs of K-12 Education Using Two Approaches." The audit addressed the three questions as follows:

- What are the estimated costs for K-12 public education in Kansas, and how do those estimates compare with current state funding levels?
- Which special-needs students receive services, and what services are available to them?
- What does the educational research show about the correlation between the amount of money spent on K-12 education and educational outcomes?

Copies of the audit are available in the Office of Legislative Division of Post Audit and are on file in the Kansas Legislative Research Department.

Ms. Hinton introduced Scott Frank, who was the Audit Manager who dealt with the outcomes-based approach and Laurel Murdie, who was the supervisor for the at-risk and bilingual sections of the report. She noted that the free lunch students were approximately 30 percent of the entire student population in the state. The largest growth in students is in Hispanics.

Ms. Hinton addressed the estimated cost for bilingual and at-risk students to achieve the same levels of performance as regular students without special needs. On page 37 of the audit, this was done as part of a cost-function analysis done by consultants. The Legislative Division of Post Audit did additional work with the information that the consultants gave them. Page 37 lists the results of what Legislative Division of Post Audit found on estimated poverty and bilingual weighting. It was noted that urban poverty is very different from rural poverty in terms of cost. Also the density of poverty areas may be understated if the school district boundaries cover a large area but poverty is concentrated in a small part of the district. Ms. Hinton distributed copies of information entitled, "Comparisons of Student Proficiency in Urban and Rural Districts with High Levels of Free-Lunch Students," dated January 11, 2006, because a number of legislators had requested some information regarding urban and rural poverty ([Attachment 2](#)).

In response to discussion and questions regarding district boundaries, Scott Frank responded that the district that really stood out was Hutchinson, regarding urban poverty and where the boundaries are drawn. Because the boundaries of the district are compact, it appears that Hutchinson is a high-poverty school district when, in fact, this is not the case. One suggestion regarding the rural and urban poverty situation was to let the rural areas count their most densely populated areas to capture poverty within their cities. Also, a suggestion was to go through an identification process similar to that for special education students to determine if a student is at risk or not. The possibility was discussed to give more flexibility to the school districts.

The Council recessed at 11:45 a.m.

Afternoon Session

The Council reconvened at 12:45 p.m. Chairman Tompkins welcomed Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Fiscal and Administrative Services, Kansas State Department of Education, who presented and explained information/background regarding free and reduced price meals ([Attachment 3](#)).

The Chairman welcomed Dr. Alexa Posny, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas State Department of Education, who provided information entitled, "2003-2004 State of Kansas At-Risk Students," ([Attachment 4](#)). Information also was distributed entitled "Kansas At-Risk Pupil Assistance Program, 2006-2007, Final Guidelines" ([Attachment 5](#)).

Dr. Posny explained in her handout that the definition of an at-risk student can include one or more criteria. Predominately, a student who is not working on grade level in either reading or mathematics is the major criteria. Dr. Posny explained that the greatest amount of money spent is for hiring para-professionals and hiring teachers. Copies of information entitled "Closing the Gap for At-Risk Students", by Dr. Alexa Posny, Deputy Commissioner, were distributed ([Attachment 6](#)). Mr. Dennis mentioned that one of the things that the House Select Committee on School Finance discussed was that the amount of money would be determined on the basis of the at-risk weighting, but the board can choose to spend it however it chooses, as long as it reports where the money is spent. Chairman Tompkins mentioned that an accountability measure is needed for results. Also, a blanket program cannot take care of individual student needs.

Dale Dennis provided copies of a summary prepared by the Education Commission of the States, which provides information on how other states determine funding for at-risk students ([Attachment 7](#)). Mr. Dennis noted that many of the states have their at-risk funding tied to student performance or poverty.

Chairman Tompkins noted that time needs to be set aside for people to come to the At-Risk Council meeting for suggestions and advice regarding what to report to the 2010 Commission. Dr. Tompkins said that the At-Risk Council needs to have a thorough discussion regarding what should be included in that report and possibly may not need to meet for two years. It was noted that it is very important to look at long-term needs for kids in Kansas.

Chairman Tompkins called the Council's attention to suggestions of what to discuss and consider in its report to the 2010 Commission. The following items were mentioned:

- School districts need more flexibility.
- Further accountability is needed in tracking student improvement longitudinally.
- An opportunity should be provided for school districts to manage according to their local needs and to assure that proper services are provided.
- As systems are put into place by 2010, there will probably be a need for additional audits.
- Policymakers need to look at results to be sure that the dollars go where they should.

- We must identify ways to reach achievement goals.
- It is important not to pit urban school districts against rural school districts.
- We must encourage good teachers to teach in schools where children are not performing (bonuses, incentives, possible restructuring of classes, and other tactics to make it more attractive to teach in these situations).
- Regarding charter schools, it is necessary to hire specialized teachers to meet the needs of at-risk students, and to generate necessary funding for programs which are more expensive to provide.
- Concerning small geographic schools, we must identify ways to serve them in the best interest of all Kansas children.
- We need to change the way of thinking and consider restructuring the school or the system. We want children to function in society, and we must identify how to get this done and how to pay for it.
- We must identify just who is at risk.
- Many children are served well in Kansas and are productive, but there are students who are not productive. There is a need to address this group of students.
- We may need to consider a separate formula for charter school funding.
- We must recognize that high-quality teachers are difficult to recruit in math in the rural areas. We may want to look into professional people teaching, or professionals making teaching a second career.

The Chairman asked for advice from the conferees who will be coming to the next meeting. He then turned the Council's attention to discussion of future meeting dates. The Council decided to meet on Thursday, April 13, 2006, and again on Tuesday, May 30, 2006. The meeting will involve conferees coming before the Council with information, advice, and suggestions.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Prepared by Mary Shaw
Edited by Carolyn Rampey

Approved by Committee on:

_____ April 13, 2006 _____
(date)