

MINUTES

AT-RISK EDUCATION COUNCIL

May 30, 2006
Room 123-S—Statehouse

Members Present

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

Staff

Kathie Sparks, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education
Mary Shaw, Committee Secretary

Conferees

Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, State Department of Education

Tuesday, May 30 Morning Session

Chairman Andy Tompkins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reviewed the statutory charge and duties of the Council.

Chairman Tompkins welcomed Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education, who presented a summary of the At-Risk Programs contained in SB 549, the new school finance plan enacted by the 2006 Legislature (Attachment 1).

As a result of the new school finance law, Mr. Dennis explained that the At-Risk Program for FY 2007 will include three funding programs. The funding programs are:

- At-Risk;
- High Density At-Risk; and
- Non-Proficient At-Risk.

Mr. Dennis noted that the new law requires school districts to conduct a needs' assessment for each attendance center prior to developing their budgets. He also included in his handout the items the school districts will be required to provide in an annual report at the end of the year. Written details of the At-Risk, High Density At-Risk, and Non-Proficient At-Risk also are found in the testimony provided by Mr. Dennis.

Mr. Dennis mentioned that the Non-Proficient At-Risk Program is a one-year program at a cost of \$10,000,000. In addition, it was explained that At-Risk funds can be used for all-day kindergarten for any portion not funded by the State. He also noted that any dollars spent must be paid out of the correct fund. Staff noted that the figures shown on the information provided by Mr. Dennis are new funds only. Council questions and discussion followed.

The Council discussed making a recommendation that the formulas for the High Density At-Risk be amended to a linear transaction, or based upon prior year information where the school districts would know where they stand.

Chairman Tompkins opened the meeting to general discussion, reactions and suggestions regarding 2006 Senate Bill 549. Concerns expressed were:

- Schools with few highly qualified teachers are not able to teach successfully at-risk students and as a consequence the children are not performing.
- The suggestion was made that teachers' salaries needed to be increased in order to keep or find highly qualified teachers for at-risk students so that these students can be successful in school.
- The suggestion was made that incentives need to be made available to school districts with a large concentration of at-risk students so that the best teachers are retained or hired to teach at-risk students.
- The suggestion was made that professional development for teachers should include behavioral training in order to address some of the needs of at-risk students and the most effective manner for the teachers to deal with at-risk behaviors.
- The suggestion was made to address the lack of highly qualified teachers, the legislature and the school districts need to look into the possibility of hiring retired teachers.

The Chairman turned the Council's attention to discussion of recommendations for the final Committee report.

The Council discussed the Non-Proficient At-Risk. *Mr. Corkins moved, with a second by Mr. Cushinberry, to recommend eliminating the non-proficient weighting factor and put the funding back into regular at-risk for school year 2007-2008 and thereafter. Discussion followed.* Chairman Tompkins recognized Representative Pat Colloton who explained that this weighting was an attempt to provide funding for those districts that have very low poverty but still have children not performing and needing at-risk services. *A vote was taken on the Corkins motion and it failed.*

A motion was made by Mr. Corkins, with a second by Mr. Self, to recommend earmarking Non-Proficient At-Risk funds for the purpose intended. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Self, with a second by Ms. McKee, that the Council recommend, if the Non-Proficient At-Risk policy continues, that the 2010 Commission review it after it has been in place for a year or two. Motion carried.

Chairman Tompkins moved, with a second by Mr. Cushinberry, to recommend adjusting the High Density At-Risk formula to be based on prior year data. Motion carried.

The Council discussed, but did not recommend, expanding the definition of at-risk to include free and reduced lunch.

The Council discussed the use of external factors such as free lunch and internal factors as non-proficiency on tests. The consensus of the Council was that the best factor for a school finance weighting should be based upon external factors rather than internal factors which can be manipulated by the district. It was noted that, by far, the most predictable external factors affecting at-risk criteria are poverty and Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The Council discussed charter schools. Commissioner Corkins expressed the desire to set in place the policy that the money should follow the child when the child attends a charter school. The Council also discussed this policy for alternative and magnet schools. Chairman Tompkins asked Commissioner Corkins to provide additional information regarding charter schools. No recommendation was made at this time.

In regard to conditions and circumstances contributing to poverty, the Council discussed work that is already being done by the State Board of Education. *A motion was made by Mr. Self, with a second by Mr. Cushinberry, that the Council recommends affirmation of the work already being done by the State Board of Education, and the State Board is the appropriate entity to comply and report on the data about at-risk programs. In addition, the State Board should begin to comply and make available to each school district the information about the programs that are research based and successful in dealing with at-risk students. Motion carried.*

The Council addressed the needs of at-risk students and the characteristics of successful programs for the needs of at-risk students. The members discussed early intervention, teacher mentoring, and the fact that all children that walk into the schools are the school's responsibility. No recommendation was made at this time. Chairman Tompkins mentioned that this item can be discussed at the next meeting of the Council.

The Council discussed tools to assess the value of at-risk programs. The concerns were:

- The Council believes that a single tool, such as state assessment scores, is too narrow to determine if a child is at-risk.
- The Council points out that the state assessment scores have improved considerably on the elementary and middle school level over the past few years; however, high school scores have not increased and in some cases decreased.
- The Council believes that school districts also should examine dropout rates and school attendance to see where children are succeeding or failing.
- The Council would like to know or have a study done to see what factors are contributing to the gap in the high school population.
- The Council would like better follow-up or exit interviews done when teachers leave each district to try and determine the cause for the loss of these individuals.

- The Council believes the State Board of Education database should be used for information on demographics, teacher information, and student information.

The Council recommended that a periodic assessment on effective at-risk programs be done at the recommendation of the 2010 Commission to the school audit teams with the assistance of the State Board of Education.

Chairman Tompkins explained that the Committee report from the At-Risk Council is due to the 2010 Commission by September 2006. He will work with staff to prepare a draft report for the next Council meeting. The Chairman suggested that all members of the At-Risk Council try to be present at the 2010 Commission meeting when the report is presented.

The next meeting of the At-Risk Council is scheduled for Friday, August 4, 2006.

A motion was made by Mr. Cushinberry, with a second by Ms. McKee, to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2006 meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Tompkins thanked everyone for their time and diligence in the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 Noon.

Prepared by Mary Shaw
Edited by Kathie Sparks

Approved by Council on:

August 7, 2006

(date)