

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:30 p.m. on January 22, 2008, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Anthony Hensley- absent

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Carol Toland, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office
Matt Todd, Revisor of Statutes Office
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Reginald L. Robinson, President and CEO, Kansas Board of Regents
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education

Introduction of bills

Senator John Vratil requested the introduction of a bill dealing with a second count date for school districts. He noted that the bill was very similar to 2007 **HB 2123**, which passed the Senate by a vote of 34-6 in 2007 and subsequently remained in a conference committee. He explained that the bill would provide a second count day on February 20. If the school district's enrollment increased on February 20 by at least 25 students or by 1 percent, the district would receive 50 percent of the increased state aid.

Senator Vratil moved to introduce the bill, seconded by Senator Steineger. The motion carried.

Senator Vratil requested the introduction of a bill dealing with high enrollment and low enrollment weighting. He explained that, under current law, low enrollment weighting goes up if the base state aid per pupil goes up. The bill would tie high enrollment weighting to base state aid per pupil and would provide that, for every \$2.00 increase in base state aid, there would be a one-student reduction in high enrollment weighting.

Senator Vratil moved to introduce the bill, seconded by Senator Schodorf. The motion carried.

Overview of Governor's recommended budget for postsecondary education for Fy 2009

Reginald L. Robinson, President and CEO, Kansas Board of Regents, summarized the enhancements relating to higher education included in the Governor's recent budget message. In this regard, he called attention to copies of a memorandum to the Board of Regents from Diane Duffy, Finance and Administration, which described the key components of the Governor's recommendations for postsecondary education. He went on to discuss the \$20.1 million priority "investment package" which was included in the Board's FY 2009 budget request. He outlined possible outcomes if certain projects were ultimately funded. In conclusion, he summarized the Board's 2008 policy initiatives. (Attachment 1)

Kansas Teacher of the Year Team

Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education, distributed copies of an informational sheet regarding the 2008 Kansas Teacher of the Year, Jeri Powers, and the following 2008 Kansas Regional Teachers of the Year: Anton F. Ahrens, Karen Bristow, Erin C. Capettini, Elaine S. Corder, Linda I. Johnson, Stacie Valdez, and Shelbie Witte. (Attachment 2)

Jeri Powers, a reading specialist, noted that statistics she recently saw showed that 50 percent of all teachers leave the profession the first three years. She explained that left the teaching profession after her first three years in the classroom because she was exhausted, disappointed, and discouraged. She returned to teaching 12 years later. Over time, she realized that teaching is a difficult and extremely complex job, and she came to the conclusion that "scientific nurturing" is needed in every classroom for every child. She explained that "scientific nurturing" referred to the need for teachers who understand different forms of data and know how to use the data to drive their instruction for different children and different subject areas. Teachers also

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:30 p.m. on January 22, 2008, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

should be scientific in reading research and determining how to apply strategies in a way which results in children performing at a high level. She explained further that she felt that strong professional development and mentoring are required to develop “scientific nurturing.”

Anton F. Ahrens, a chemistry teacher, said he believed that education was all about making investments. He noted that many teachers in U.S.D. 501 invested in him over the years. He explained that, when he began teaching at Highland Park High School in 1980, he was fortunate to work with a group of science teachers who valued mentoring young teachers. Because of their influence, he has been able to make investments in several students in his 25 years of teaching. In his view, investment in education up front yields interest, and the interest eventually serves the state.

Karen Bristow, a first grade teacher, said she believed that the state should wisely invest in Kansas children through recruiting and retaining teachers. She noted that an increasing number of college students do not choose teaching as a career option because they have noticed that the salaries of beginning teachers do not compare with other career choices. She suggested that the Legislature support the teaching profession by providing funding for competitive teacher salaries, fringe benefits, and the Kansas Teachers’ Service Scholarship Program.

Stacie Valdez, an English teacher, noted that over 50 percent of the students in her school are in a minority group, and over 70 percent live at the poverty level. Therefore, the school struggles to provide the same quality of education and opportunities at school. In 2002-03, only 8 percent of the advanced placement enrollment was minority. She pointed out that disadvantaged students can achieve a rigorous curriculum; however, they need both academic and social support to insure success. Her school invested in those students. The advanced placement enrollment grew from 106 to 342 students over the past five years, and 47 percent are minority students. Additionally, the graduation rate nearly doubled. Noting that the school implemented a program that gives all students the opportunity to choose college as an option after high school, she commented that, unfortunately, too many schools struggle to find the resources to provide this equity.

Linda Johnson, a third grade teacher, noted that, while her school district started the school year with only one teaching vacancy, there were 477 teaching vacancies across the state. Most of the vacancies were in math, science, and special education. She went on to say that the most significant factor in student achievement is the teacher. She noted that 25 percent of the current teaching staff in Kansas is eligible to retire in the next five years, and the number of teachers eligible to retire far exceeds the projected number of teachers who will graduate from the state’s colleges and universities. She commented that teaching takes extraordinary commitment and energy, and a teacher must be steady, fair, and consistent, especially when it comes to the increasing number of disabled and disadvantaged students. She emphasized that the state must invest more time and money on nurturing and producing new teachers.

Elaine Coder, a high school teacher, noted that between 54 and 58 percent of high school graduates begin college, but more than 50 percent do not finish. She explained that the students who do not finish had high expectations, but they were unable to achieve their goals. She said that part of the problem relates to testing requirements which have narrowed what is taught; therefore, there is no time to teach non-cognitive academic skills such as problem solving, interpersonal communication, and task analysis. In her opinion, the state needs to invest in Kansas kids by investing resources and time in the development of problem solving, study skills, good work habits, and coping skills.

Erin Capettini, an elementary school teacher, commented that she assumed that she could change the world when she became a first grade teacher 15 years ago. From her perspective as a classroom teacher, her greatest challenge was finding the delicate balance between meeting the stakeholders demands and the children’s needs. The conflict between what is required of students and what teachers cannot provide challenged her to build bridges and make those connections. She noted that her greatest impact on Kansas kids over the years occurred beyond the classroom in community activities. To continue her dedication to Kansas kids and to find an opportunity to stay in education, she made career placement changes seven times, and not once did she expect monetary promotion or recognition. Somewhere along the way, she realized that her influence as a teacher affected only a minute population. Therefore, she began working on her masters degree in administration four years ago. She felt that, as an administrator, perhaps someone would listen to her. She

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:30 p.m. on January 22, 2008, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

commented, “What children really need transpires outside of the required curriculum. Investing in Kansas kids should be able to occur in every classroom and every district across the state. Help quality teachers find opportunities to stay in education.”

Shelbie Witte, a seventh and eighth grade teacher, discussed how students are affected when a parent is deployed to Iraq. She asked that legislators think about the teachers who are dealing with students who did not choose to have a military lifestyle but carry the baggage of their parents’ choice to school.

Each teacher then responded to questions from the Committee regarding the most important needs for Kansas school children and the teacher shortage in Kansas.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2008.