

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on February 7, 2008, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members 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: Senator John Vratil
Stuart Little, Shawnee Mission School District 512
Val DeFever, Schools for Quality Education
Mark Tallmlan, Kansas Association of School Boards
Scott Frank, Legislative Division of Post Audit
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education

Introduction of bill

Senator Apple moved to introduce a conceptual bill concerning linear transition for high-density at-risk students, seconded by Senator Teichman. The motion carried.

SB 455 – School districts; high and low enrollment weightings; adjustments based on increases in the amount of base state aid per pupil

Senator John Vratil testified in support of **SB 455**. He explained the intent of the bill was to ensure fairness in the methods used to calculate low and high enrollment weightings through the school finance formula. He noted that currently low enrollment weighting is tied to base state aid per pupil. Whenever there is an increase in base state aid per pupil, the money available through low enrollment weighting increases. The bill is intended to tie high enrollment weighting to base state aid per pupil as well. The bill provides that, for every \$2.00 increase in base state aid per pupil, there would be one-pupil reduction in the dividing line between high enrollment weighting and low enrollment weighting. Currently, the dividing line is at 1,622 students. (Attachment 1)

Stuart Little testified in support of **SB 455** on behalf of Shawnee Mission School District 512. He informed the Committee that the Shawnee Mission School District platform for 2008 recommended changes to the funding formula, one of which was increasing the high enrollment weighting in proportion to the increase in the previous two years. For 2008, the new high enrollment threshold should be 1,592, or a decrease of 30 students. He noted that failure to make continued adjustments to high enrollment weighting maintains the inequity highlighted by the Legislative Division of Post Audit. (Attachment 2)

Senator Schodorf called attention to written testimony in support of **SB 455** submitted by Bob Vancrum on behalf of Blue Valley U.S. D. 229. (Attachment 3)

Val DeFever, Schools for Quality Education, testified in opposition to **SB 455**. The small districts which she represents are very concerned that the change in low enrollment weighting would mean less money for them. Ms. DeFever commented that, at a time when there are high expectations for all schools in Kansas, the change could be devastating for the smallest districts. She pointed out that small schools in rural Kansas experience the same increase in costs of delivering educational services as everyone else, but their dollars do not go any further than in metropolitan areas, and they are unable to pay more. (Attachment 4)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, testified in opposition to **SB 455**. He called attention to the legislative resolution regarding school finance adopted by the KASB assembly, which was attached to his written testimony. He pointed out that the resolution supports the idea of a multi-year funding plan,

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provided that the plan uses legislative cost studies as a minimum guideline. KASB is concerned that the bill would link increases in the base budget per pupil to increases in high enrollment weighting that would ultimately reduce the threshold for low enrollment weighting to 500 students. He noted that there was nothing in legislative cost studies which indicated low enrollment weighting should be reduced to that point. He noted that the cost of low enrollment weighting has already been substantially reduced. He further noted that the resolution reflects the goal that all districts will be able to provide adequate salaries for teachers and school leaders. In his opinion, providing greater funding increases to larger districts will make it harder for small districts to provide comparable salary increases, and the gap in salaries will continue to grow until the target is reached. (Attachment 5)

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 455** was closed.

SB 400 – School finance; bilingual weighting; calculation on head-count basis

For the Committee's information, Scott Frank, Legislative Division of Post Audit, distributed copies of excerpts from a 2006 Legislative Division of Post Audit cost study analysis on bilingual programs and services. He summarized the background information shown regarding the relationship between bilingual funding and services. (Attachment 6)

The hearing on **SB 400** was closed as there were no conferees wishing to testify.

Senator Schodorf opened a discussion on a previously heard bill, **SB 426** concerning the enrollment and general fund budget in certain districts affected by natural disasters. She recalled that committee members requested more information when the bill was discussed at the February 6 meeting.

In response to a request by Senator Vratil, Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, distributed copies of a table which compared **SB 426** with the current law, K.S.A. 72-6447. (Attachment 7)

Dale Dennis, Deputy Commission, Kansas Department of Education, distributed copies of an example of the computation of the adjusted weighting for areas affected by disasters under **SB 426** for years two, three and four. (Attachment 8)

Senator Teichmna moved to recommend **SB 426** favorably for passage, seconded by Senator Lee. The motion carried.

In preparation for the hearings scheduled for February 11 and 12 on two bills concerning early childhood education, **SB 407** and **SB 408**, Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department, distributed copies of background information relating to the bills. (Attachment 9)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2008.

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