

Proponent HB 2081 Future KTOY Scholarship Program

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HB 2081 Future KTOY Scholarship Program
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To the House Education Committee:

My name is Samantha Neill and I am the 2018 Kansas Teacher of the Year and a 20-year teaching veteran; most importantly I am the mom of two school-aged boys who attend Buhler USD 313 and one college son who is considering a career as a public school teacher.

I am writing in support of HB 2018. This is an amazing opportunity to pour back into the teaching community. It will allow Kansas Teachers of the Year and the Commissioner of Education to collaboratively select 8 individuals who they believe show great promise as educators in the future.

Becoming an effective teacher is not something just anyone can do. It requires years of training, mentoring, and continued learning. We know that students learn best when they have highly qualified educators who utilize proven strategies to engage students in learning. We know these educators, if valued, remain in the profession and provide great contributions to the communities they serve.

Having been recognized for my teaching as a “Teacher of the Year”, I cannot tell you how much it has meant that others see the hard work I do each day, how much I want kids to learn, and the effectiveness of techniques I use to teach content. This validation of work continues to be a driving force in what keeps me in the teaching profession. It has created a network that has become an “educator family”, with which I can share ideas, brainstorm solutions, and plan for the future.

Student teachers already start out with a disadvantage because their “internships” are not paid. On the contrary, student teachers pay for a semester of college so that they can work a full time job which we call “student teaching”. This scholarship opportunity allows 40 teachers to begin their careers without so much debt. What a gift for them to receive such a vote of confidence from other award-winning educators.

The state has an opportunity to lead others in this front. With the state leadership, it would allow local districts to encourage businesses to invest in future teachers as well. I see this as a cornerstone in recruiting highly trained educators. I think that local educational leaders and legislative leaders could really build something special with this.

Sincerely,
Samantha Neill
2018 Kansas Teacher of the Year
2021 Lowell Milken Fellow
20-year Public School Educator, Buhler USD 313