

Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
on
HB 2504 – School District Realignment
by
Rob Reynolds, Superintendent of Schools
On Behalf of Unified School District 396
February 3, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2504, School District Realignment. I am here to testify against HB 2504 due to the adverse effects that it would cause for our school district and community.

The Douglass school district is a PreK-12 school district with a current head count of 732 students. Our 3A classification identifies us as a medium-sized school district. The size of the Douglass district causes our schools to have a unique personality. The district is extremely efficient as a result of support and guidance from the local board of education, and the schools are the center of the community.

Douglass is a one-of-a-kind district because of its size and offerings:

- 10 approved Career/Tech Pathways
- Senior Projects required for graduation with exit interviews by panels made up of community members
- Required community service for all high school students
- Job Shadowing
- Personal Plans of Study for all middle school and high school students
- Teacher mentors for every student at the high school
- Early college academies
- Early childhood programs
- All-Day Kindergarten
- Curriculum aligned to meet the needs of learners
- Community Partnerships
- One of the first schools in Kansas to have a comprehensive, all-hazards Emergency Operating Plan

Through the guidance of the locally-elected board of education, the district has strived to be fiscally responsible while still meeting the needs and wishes of the local community. The district's master plan has been implemented to take care of the district's aging facilities, staffing needs, and technology. Reacting to reductions in state aid, the board has responded over the past eight years by taking the following efficiency measures:

- Reduced administrative costs by over \$75,000 by creating a 6-12 administrative team and reducing one administrator

- Moved to a managed food service company, which will allow a cost savings of over \$63,000
- Contracted with a regional education service center for professional development and curriculum support
- Joined purchasing cooperative for fuel, natural gas, teaching supplies, and paper
- Hired an in-house HVAC person, saving approximately \$40,000 per year

The Douglass school district has a proud tradition of offering an excellent education for the children of the community. Our school district is the largest employer in the community, and our schools are a source of pride for our patrons. People move to our community, and many come back home to our community to raise their children in our schools. Our district is the focal point and extension of the community, as evidenced by our vision: We are Family, We are Community, We are Bulldogs. It is through this vision that we work with our community and Board of Education to ensure that we are embracing the expectations of our district patrons.

This bill as written would erode the relationships and local control that has allowed our school district to flourish. This erosion would impact the community and would limit the impact of elected board members that represent the wishes of our community. Further, by limiting the number of school administration and supervisory service employees, you take away the best tool we have to focus on classroom instruction. You see, administrators are not just managers; we are instructional leaders that ensure the quality of instruction, programs, and opportunities for our children. I highly encourage you to consider the importance of keeping the focus where it belongs, on our kids, and supporting the hundreds of local communities that represent this state. Thank You!

I will be happy to stand for questions when appropriate.