

Unified School District 351

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Home of the Mustangs and Colts

Date: February 1, 2016

To: House Education Committee

Re: HB 2504

USD 351, Macksville is a small rural school whose enrollment fluctuates between a 1a-2a according to KSHSAA's classification. We are located 60 miles west of Hutchinson, Kansas on highway 50 in Stafford County. Other schools in our county include St. John-USD 350, and Stafford-USD 349. All three schools are similar in terms of enrollment. As I read articles and comments concerning HB 2504 (USD Realignment) I feel it is imperative that you understand this is not a plea on my behalf to "save" my job as some have referred in recent editorials. I have thirty-seven years of experience in the Kansas Public Education System, and have been both an administrator at both large schools and small schools (1a-5a). Therefore, this decision will have little if any financial impact on me personally as my career comes to an end. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to both large and small schools.

Not only am I the superintendent of this school, but also the elementary principal. Other employees who work at USD 351 at the district level also assume other duties. The Board Clerk, Treasurer, and Secretary for example also perform multiple duties including everything from answering the phones, dispensing medicines, retrieving mail, monitoring lunch and recess, and monitoring an In School Suspension when needed.

Parents live in Macksville by choice, not because they have to, but rather because they want to. Regardless if the decision is based on careers, family, or educational preferences; it is not by random chance. Just as one learning strategy is not effective for all learners, neither does a one county, one school, fit all Kansas students. Macksville school district is not limited to just Stafford County. USD 351 boundaries cross county lines and is comprised of students from Edwards, Pawnee, Barton, Stafford and, Pratt Counties. Also, USD 501-Lewis maintains an elementary school, but our two schools contract together and their 7-12 students attend the Macksville School, which adds an additional 50-60 students to Macksville not included in your study. The Lewis school district is in Edwards County, not Stafford. HB 2504 would eliminate the desire of both of our districts. A one county, one school district would also lengthen the time students ride a bus. We have students now who ride each day for an hour.

Research has proven that administrator presence in the school is one of the key factors determining successful students and schools. Eliminating this local control would have a negative impact on both students and teachers. I learned a long time ago as a beginning administrator that what gets monitored does improve.

Without local control of our school, Macksville would lose its identity, as would all other small schools across our state. Small schools would cease to exist and so will our community. I truly believe some parents would not only leave the community, but possibly also leave our state. This would create even more problems to address.

A vote to implement HB 2504 is not in the best interest of our state. More importantly, it is not in the best interest of our most prized possession, our kids!

Respectfully,

Greg Rinehart
USD 351 Superintendent/Elementary Principal

Honesty Loyalty Forgiveness Commitment Communication Responsibility

Integrity Dependable Flexibility Positive Attitude Encouragement FUN