

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2532 as AMENDED

It is Finally Time to Require a Course in Personal Financial Literacy

by
Dr. Walt Chappell

“He who pays the piper calls the tune!!” It is parents, taxpayers and their elected representatives in the Legislature who are responsible for deciding what our children are taught. They pay the bills. The Supreme Court has ruled in multiple cases that the Legislature has the Constitutional responsibility to fund our schools.

Time and again, parents and teachers all across Kansas have said that the one course every student should complete before graduating from high school is personal financial literacy (PFL). The State Legislature has enacted statutes such as K.S.A. 72-1101, 72-1103, 72-1117 and 72-1126 requiring specific courses to be taught to each Kansas student. It is time that K.S.A. 72-7535 clearly state that a stand-alone course in personal financial literacy be completed by each high school student as a graduation requirement. (See course requirement statutes in Dropbox.)

Since 2003, the Legislature has inserted words into 72-7535 such as “authorize & assist”, “develop curriculum”, “encourage school districts” and “include questions” on the state assessment to try to persuade schools to teach this course. Yet, in 2011, a survey was done by the KSDE staff which showed that only 14% of the districts had taken the legislature seriously by requiring the completion of a PFL course prior to graduation. (See the August 10th, 2011 State Board of Education Minutes in Dropbox.)

Then in May 2015, the House Education Committee Chairman and the Chair of the State Board of Education sent a letter to all Kansas school districts stating “we strongly encourage” some vague concepts of PFL be taught. The KSDE was to provide a “progress report” during the 2016 Legislative Session. (See the 2015 letter to districts in the Dropbox.)

Unfortunately, as of February 9th, 2016, no new survey has been completed by KSDE staff to verify how many high school students have been required to take a PFL course and no PFL curriculum is posted on the KSDE website—as required by K.S.A. 72-7535(b) & (c). Obviously, the importance of teaching students how to manage their money is not being done or taken seriously in the vast majority of Kansas high schools.

Inserting the word “financial” into the Rose capacities in K.S.A. 72-1127 will not accomplish anything. The KSDE and school districts will continue to claim they are doing “something” but most students will still graduate without knowing how to make informed financial decisions. They will be deep in debt before they are 21.

Therefore, please work and pass HB2475 from the 2014 Legislative Session instead of HB2532 so that each Kansas high school student will have completed a stand-alone PFL course prior to graduation. (See HB2475 in the Dropbox.)

It is time to protect our students!! They must learn how to survive financially. Here is why!!

- 1) It is clear that there is very strong support from parents, students, teachers, bankers, business owners and statewide financial organizations to require that every high school student take a stand-alone course to learn how to manage their money before they graduate. Both Republican and Democrat leaders have been trying for years to make this happen.
- 2) Data from the State Banking Commission in 2014 showed that even though the Legislature enacted K.S.A. 72-7535 in 2003—eleven years later—there were only 5,316 students in 99 schools learning financial literacy from their free Everfi program. They are joined by the State Securities Commission and the State Treasurer’s office in providing free PFL teaching materials.

- 3) The Kansas Council on Economic Education has also been providing free personal finance curriculum materials for over 30 years. In addition, they offer free summer workshops for Kansas teachers and pay for their room and board to attend.
- 4) **The current statute only “encourages” local districts to teach some PFL concepts** in math or social studies courses. There are very few PFL questions on the State assessments. A small number of students are lucky enough to take a PFL course as an elective. So, it is clear that the law passed in 2003 then amended in 2009 and 2015 is not working. If a course is not required or tested, it is **NOT** taught!!
- 5) By preventing thousands of Kansas students from learning how to manage the money they earn, the Legislature is setting them up to be in debt as soon as they graduate from high school.
- 6) Making PFL a graduation requirement is no different than any other course which the State Legislature has mandated that students need to be successful adults. However, in this case, PFL skills are relevant whereas many of the other required courses a high school student must take will be forgotten as soon as they finish the final exam.
- 7) It is time to let every high school student have an opportunity to learn basic PFL concepts—not just leave it to chance as to which high school they attend.
- 8) The State legislature has used its Constitutional authority to mandate that each Kansas student take a minimum number of courses in English, Math, Science, and other courses to graduate. But, in 2010, with the support of the KASB and KNEA, the untested and unfunded Common Core Standards were adopted by the State Board without either the State Legislature or local school boards having any input or votes.
- 9) To implement the CCS is costing Kansas school districts between \$60 and \$185 million dollars. How much will local boards need to raise taxes or which programs will they have to cut to comply with this unconstitutional takeover of every school in Kansas?
- 10) For the KASB and KNEA to now testify against requiring PFL as a graduation requirement is very sad. They claim that it should be left to local districts because they know best. If that is the case, then why impose the CCS on every school without any flexibility by local school boards, plus bypass the Legislature’s authority to decide what is to be taught.
- 11) The PFL curriculum materials to teach our students are being provided for free. The course can be taught as a math substitute or as a CTE pathway funded by Perkins grants at minimal expense to the local school districts.
- 12) A stand-alone course in PFL is applied math which each high school student will use to make decisions every day. It is best taught as “blended, project-based learning”.
- 13) If they have been taught these skills by their parents, then they can “test out” without repeating the course. In my opinion, every student should be allowed to test out of any course based on their performance—not how long they sat in a classroom.
- 14) Please vote to pass HB2475 instead of HB2532 this session. Thousands of Kansas parents and students will thank you for years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

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