

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Abrams at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 144-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Anthony Hensley – Excused

Committee staff present:

Lauren Douglass, Legislative Research Department

Mark Savoy, Legislative Research Department

Erna Fabert, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Jason Long, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Larry Isaak, President, Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB)

Dave Trabert, Kansas Policy Institute

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Possible bill introductions

Chairperson Abrams asked if there were any bills to be introduced to the Education Committee. There were none.

Presentation and update:

He then introduced Larry Isaak who gave a brief overview and update on MHEC, which is a statutorily mandated compact of 12 states that voluntarily share resources among member universities in the Midwest. Since 1991, the year Kansas joined the compact, some of the cost savings received by education institutions, school districts, state and local governments and students are in the area of property insurance, technology initiatives, student health insurance programs, assistance with military credits, and distance education courses. Athletic insurance is a new program, and a program on cyber liability and other IT programs are being developed. ([Attachment 1](#)) ([Attachment 2](#)) ([Attachment 3](#))

Mr. Isaak pointed out that the overriding concern of MHEC is to create policies that can increase student success and he feels it is imperative that students be encouraged to attend college right after high school graduation, as college numbers decrease each year a student stays out of school. In order to be competitive in a global economy, states need an educated citizenry. Statistics currently show that there are fourteen countries that lead the United States in the category of college degrees for citizens between the ages of 25 to 34.

Questions included whether member states are compelled to give tuition breaks to other compact members; what is the fee Kansas pays to belong to MHEC; and whether more information can be provided on affordability gap (the percentage of family income needed to pay for college).

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Chairperson Abrams thanked Mr. Isaak for his presentation.

Hearing on:

Chairperson Abrams then opened the hearing on **SB32 - Requiring school district and state department of education audits; creating the efficient operation of schools task force.**

Jason Long, staff revisor, reviewed the bill for the Committee. Mr. Long responded to questions from committee members, and clarified information concerning a technical amendment that would need to be made.

Chairman Abrams then introduced Mark Tallman, who noted that Dick Short from Goodland, who was in attendance on behalf of MHEC, is also a former KASB president. Mr. Tallman then spoke in support of **SB32**, pointing out that efficiency should be defined and measured by the results states and districts receive for the money they spend, not by how they spend money, regardless of results. ([Attachment 4](#))

Chairperson Abrams then introduced Dave Trabert, who testified in support, stating that because of a lack of efficiency guidelines, operational practices vary greatly among school districts, resulting in money being unnecessarily spent, thereby diverting resources that would have been available for instruction. ([Attachment 5](#))

Questions followed in regard to frequency of audits, cost of audits, and mandatory compliance of audit recommendations.

Chairperson Abrams asked if there were additional proponents, opponents or persons who wished to present neutral testimony. There being no further conferees, the hearing on **SB32** was closed.

Hearing on:

Chairman Abrams then opened the hearing on **SB33 - Creating the Kansas education standards study commission.** He asked Jason Long, staff revisor, to review the bill. No questions were asked by committee members.

He then called upon Mark Tallman who testified in support, stating that since the Kansas Supreme Court decision in the *Gannon* case, the KASB has worked to inform and involve educational leaders in developing a common definition of the *Rose* standards by hosting various summits. A definition for helping define successful students included Career Interest Development Programs; Student Expectations; and Financial Education. ([Attachment 6](#))

The Chairman then called on Dave Trabert, who testified in support, indicating that this bill came from the K-12 Commission because they felt that school districts and the Kansas Department of Education did not understand how to apply the *Rose* standards. He further testified that since the legislature is constitutionally obligated to provide adequate funding for meeting the *Rose* standards, KPI would

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encourage the legislature to take an active role in determining how the *Rose* standards should be interpreted and measured. If districts cannot define or measure those standards, it seems that they have no basis for claiming to not have adequate funding to meet them. ([Attachment 7](#))

Most of the questions from committee members dealt with how the *Rose* standards can be mandated by the courts when no one seems to be able to define how those standards might be met, or even what those standards should include. It was suggested that higher education institutions and even the business community will have to become involved in this discussion.

Senator Pettey noted that the primary benchmark used by KASB for the *Rose* standards was students who were college and career ready, but she feels the *Rose* standards are much broader, incorporating health and wellness, arts, civic issues, etc. She suggested that the State could define core minimum standards and the local districts can then look at finer points, with all students ultimately demonstrating that they have a career path; not just diplomas - but practical experience. Senator Pettey pointed out that Kansas is ranked as number eight in education on the chart provided by Mr. Tallman.

The Chairperson then asked if there were any other proponents, opponents or neutral testimony. There being no further conferees, the hearing on **SB33** was closed.

Chairperson Abrams adjourned the meeting at 2:30 pm.

The next meeting of the Senate Education Committee will be Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 1:30 pm in Room 144-S of the Capitol.