

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Abrams at 1:30 pm on Thursday, March 12, 2015, 144-S of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Mark Savoy, Legislative Research Department
Lauren Douglass, Legislative Research Department
Erna Fabert, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant
Nick Myers, Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Dr. Randy Watson, Chairman, Coalition of Innovative School Districts (Coalition)
Bev Mortimer, Superintendent, Concordia
Dr. Tom Trigg, Blue Valley District
Dr. Cynthia Lane, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
Bill Mullins, Superintendent, Marysville Schools

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Presentation on:

Chairperson Abrams introduced Dr. Randy Watson, who reported that the Coalition was created mainly for the purpose of improving student performance and outcomes after high school, identifying barriers to achieving those goals and then functioning as a center of school innovation in Kansas. Currently there are six school districts in the Coalition and an additional 10% of school districts who meet requirements may apply. ([Attachment 1](#))

Dr. Watson reported that the McPherson district is moving away from achievement and toward student success, such as recognizing community service as being as important for students as a math course, and allowing courses taken either in middle school or high school to count toward college credits.

Superintendent Mortimer stated that since two-thirds of jobs will require some form of postsecondary education, it has been their priority to encourage students to obtain either one year of technical training or a certificate of training in other areas. To help them accomplish this goal, they are partnering with their local community college, seeking waivers on accreditation, helping students with payment of college tuition, and allowing credits for extracurricular activities.

Dr. Trigg indicated that Blue Valley is working to create and implement a system that will result in students being among the world's leaders in academic achievement, with a long-term goal of being the best in the world. Quality teachers is a key to achieving this goal and that translates to hiring outstanding instructors who have not necessarily had traditional education backgrounds.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Education at 1:30 pm on Thursday, March 12, 2015, 144-S of the Capitol.

Dr. Lane stated that achieving results that matter to life outcomes for their students is at the center of her district's work, and their Diploma Plus program where students are encouraged to complete at least one year of college, have an industry-recognized certificate or credential, and achieve at least a score of 21 on the ACT or college readiness assessment, is the tool they are using. Many of these goals are achieved by providing flexibility in teacher licensure requirements, tuition payments and transportation issues.

Superintendent Mullins indicated that the Marysville Schools are seeking exemptions from regulations that can sometimes get in the way of serving children in their communities. Some positive changes that have been implemented in their district are providing credit for students involved in mentoring and internship programs, relaxing requirements for teacher evaluation timelines, exploring different testing options and increasing mathematics and English Language Arts courses required for graduation.

Senator Tyson asked for a point of personal privilege and introduced guests from the Elizabeth Layton Center in Ottawa, Kansas.

Questions then followed from Committee members, focusing on a variety of topics such as the degree of difficulty small districts have in obtaining qualified licensed teachers in specialized areas and how that has led to seeking waivers from teacher licensure requirements and even training people in specialized areas to be teachers; teacher evaluation timelines; and what options in assessments are offered to students other than the standardized tests currently being used.

Senator Arpke then asked the presenters if they could explain to Committee members what it was like rolling out the Innovative Districts concept to parents, school boards, teachers and site councils. In otherwords, how did the process work?

The response was that first they had to begin to think differently, identifying factors that impeded maximum student success and then find more effective ways of achieving results. The whole process took great amounts of planning, giving presentations, answering questions, and then changing mindsets in their communities by achieving actual results.

Chairman Abrams asked if it is easier being an innovative district, to which the response was a resounding no, but even though there is more work involved, all the participants in the Coalition are committed to student success, so that makes it worth it.

Chairperson Abrams adjourned the meeting at 2:30 pm.

The next meeting of the Senate Education Committee will be Thursday, March 19, 2015 at 1:30 pm in Room 144-S of the Capitol.