



Testimony to Senate Education Committee

SB 33 Creating the Education Standards Study Commission

January 21, 2015

Dave Trabert, President

Chairman Abrams and members of the Committee,

We appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of SB 33, which would create the Education Standards Study Commission to recommend how to define and measure the Rose standards as established in K.S.A 72-1127(c) and amendments thereto. This legislation was recommended by the K-12 Commission on Student Achievement and Efficiency, on which I served as a member.

It was very apparent to Commission members that schools districts and the Kansas Department of Education do not know how to define and measure the Rose standards. Individual school districts, United School Administrators (USA) and the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) presented testimony to the K-12 Student Achievement and Efficiency Commission that acknowledged their inability to measure and define the Rose standards and asked for assistance in doing so. The following quotes are taken from their written testimony.

On August 19, KASB asked the K-12 Commission to “Encourage the development of a system to define and measure the Rose student capacities....” KASB representative Mark Tallman emphasized that this is the position of their member districts and not just a position taken by the organization.

Dr. Cynthia Lane, superintendent of the Kansas City district testified on August 19 on behalf of USA, saying. “Once we define what it means to be a well-educated student in Kansas, we must determine how best to measure toward that goal.” She said being a well-educated student is the end target and that the Rose standards “provide some guidance” but acknowledged that there is uncertainty on how to measure success.

On September 3, Olathe Superintendent Marlin Berry said “...the Rose standards need to be well-defined so that school districts know what they mean.” He went on to say, “We need to better define the Rose standard capacities.”

Dodge City superintendent Alan Cunningham also testified on September 3, objecting to state intervention on “efficiencies” and said that the local school board and community should set public school priorities “...until such time as there is agreement on indicators for assessing a school’s, district’s or state’s performance relative to the Rose standards.”

Other districts expressed similar concerns and we learned that the Department of Education is conducting a series of discussions over the next six months to gather input on what the Rose standards mean and how they should be measured.

As the Legislature is constitutionally obligated to provide adequate funding for meeting the Rose standards, we encourage the Legislature to take an active role in determining how the Rose standards should be interpreted and measured.

As noted in the K-12 Commission minority report, we do not see how any court can measure whether or not the Rose standards are being met when all interested parties agree there is no established measurement criteria. We also note the districts' inability to define and measure the Rose standards calls into question claims that schools are not adequately funded. The Supreme Court ruling on Gannon says the primary determination of adequate funding is whether students are meeting or exceeding the Rose standards. 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.

Kansas Policy Institute strongly supports SB 33 and encourages the Committee to support it.