

Testimony for SB 357

For: Senate Education Committee

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

By: Dr. Donald H. Fast & Amanda Fouts, Educational Design Solutions

Mr. Chair, members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to support the passage of SB 357. Secondly, I want to commend the chair and the Committee for the proposal contained within the Bill. You might find it interesting that the State of Utah has just passed similar legislation, and the State of Iowa has been following the impact of the Kansas Reading Initiative (KRI) and 6 of the 10 largest schools districts in that State have made a similar commitment to the efforts within KRI. The importance of 3rd grade reading proficiency cannot be overstated as some states use it to project the number of prison cells needed in the future.

We conducted a survey of Kansas schools through a very brief on-line instrument that went to various persons (administrators and teachers) at nearly all of the Kansas schools (See supporting documents). Over 1,900 surveys were sent electronically and approximately and slightly over 400 recipients opened the survey. Of that number, 190 completed the brief survey. One hundred seventy eight (178) expressed support for funding multiple reading programs for extended years (in keeping with SB 357). Sixty seven (67) also expressed a willingness to visit with Legislators and/or KSDE staff. Many also supplied comments in space provided and all of their comments in the attached support documents. I draw your attention to comment 22 as being representative of many of the comments.

The other support documents summarize the KRI results from the KRI program. There were 369 elementary schools (46% of all Kansas elementary schools) that participated in KRI, representing 176 Kansas school districts, and 85 preschools participating in KRI. At the present time, all stand-alone preschools are still active and approximately 340 of the elementary schools (the rolling start for schools and schools with previous licenses has allowed this continued participation). I believe there are several elements that were included in the Proviso of 2013 that somehow were left out of the Proviso of 2015 that were significant contributors to the results reflected in the two-year KRI analysis.

1. The fidelity of implementation that schools meet their recommended minutes of usage for at least 60% of the enrolled students. Research analysis has shown that when students meet their recommended minutes of participation for at least 20 weeks, they will make the progress reflected in the attached KRI report.
2. Each school was required to identify a school liaison to assist and oversee the coordination and implementation.
3. Require on-site training for ALL participating teachers so trainers can model and train how to utilize the data from their students in planning and modifying student instruction. This is absolutely critical.

4. The home portal was added and it does not add any value – the important element is that parents be provided progress data, reporting, suggestions for support and further intervention through a variety of mechanisms – a portal could be one way.
5. We also believe that KSDE should conduct an independent comparison of cost, success, and student outcomes so that only programs demonstrating success on independent measures be selected for future funding.

We recommend these elements be included in the legislation as the alternative allows programs to curtail fidelity in both training and implementation and support. Good programs require successful implementation to sustain results. As a Kansas educator and tax payer of 40+ years, just getting schools to sign up and enter their students will not lead to the desired outcomes we all seek. Let the data from successful programs rise to the top.

Thanks again for this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

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