

MINUTES OF THE House COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Denise Apt at
Chairperson

3:35 a.m./p.m. on January 21, 1987 in room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Rep. Bill Reardon
Rep. Joan Pottorff
Rep. Jim Lowther, all on excused absence

Committee staff present:

Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes' Office
Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Thelma Canaday, Secretary to the Committee

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Jim Clark, Kansas County & District Attorneys Association
Dr. Robert Harder, SRS
Brilla Scott, United School Administrators
Richard Funk, KASB
Craig Grant, K-NEA
Evelyn Gates, Judicial Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Apt who stated the purpose of the meeting to discuss the effectiveness of the truancy bill that was passed last session.

Jim Clark spoke first with the information that their personnel were instructed to leave the investigations to the sheriff's department and he had no incidents to report. So either the bill was being ignored or it was working.

Chairman Apt then gave a brief background of the truancy bill and gave recognition to the agency representatives who had served on the sub-committee when the bill was being prepared.

Dr. Robert Harder reported his agency was satisfied with the 1986 Truancy legislation and felt the families involved had benefited from the changes made. He cited four counties that had developed specific programs in this area. (See Attachment I).

Brilla Scott said their contacts with school administrators showed those who had the support of SRS and the county attorney felt the program was working but others were frustrated in obtaining assistance from these agencies. The position of USA is to continue the system. (Attachment II)

Richard Funk stated he felt little, if any, attention is being given to the truancy bill by the county attorney offices. According to school principals there is no follow up when truanancies are reported.

Craig Grant reported K-NEA supports the compromise changes made in the truancy law last year. (Attachment III)

Evelyn Gates said she'd done a quick survey of the four most populous counties and there seemed to be no great impact from the bill, but cases were being shuffled directly to the courts without investigation.

Chairman Apt asked for comments from those representing Wichita Schools, 501, Shawnee Mission Schools, and Quality Education. Kenneth Rogg responded that they were experiencing no problems in the rural areas.

Rep. David Miller requested the staff to prepare a memo giving background information on the truancy bill for the new members on the committee.

Chairman Apt adjourned the meeting at 4:48. The next meeting will be January 22, 1987.

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Robert C. Harder
Robert C. Barnum

DATE: 20 January 1987

FROM: Jan Waide

SUBJECT: 1986 Truancy Legislation

On July 1, 1986, statutes were amended related to the reporting of children not attending school as required by law. School districts were made responsible for sending a registered letter to the parents of children who are truant informing them that a referral will be made to SRS if the child is under 13 or to the county or district attorney for children 13 and over. The parents have five days to correct the attendance problem before the referral is sent to SRS or the county or district attorney.

During the first three months of the 1986 - 1987 school year SRS received 223 reports of non-attendance from school districts and 62 percent (140) cases were opened to provide social services to the family. For the same period in 1985 - 1986 school year, SRS received 1092 referrals and cases were opened in 436 cases (40%). These figures indicate that while fewer children have been referred, a greater percentage have been provided services. Reports received from the area offices support this.

The Chiefs of Social Services of the seventeen management areas were requested to report how they perceived the 1986 legislation to be working. Each area reported that from the SRS perspective, the 1986 change was beneficial. Because the number of referrals are significantly reduced, SRS has been able to provide services to a higher percentage of the referrals. Several areas commented that social service intervention with the younger age group is more successful and it is believed that services provided did result in improved family functioning.

No particular problems were reported in regard to the youth 13 and over though there seems to be a wide variation from county to county in the attention this population of truant receive.

In at least two counties, the county/district attorney has assigned investigative responsibilities to staff. In the counties where action is being taken by the prosecutors office, the court service officers are responsible for providing formal or informal supervision. This seems to be working well. At least two school administrators have stated that court service officers' intervention with this age group is more effective than SRS social worker intervention. In one county the judge talks to the child and family and this has been very effective.

It is not known how many Child in Need of Care petitions have been filed since July 1, 1986, for youth 13 and over but is known that very few (less than 10) resulted in custody to SRS.

Several counties have developed specific programs worth noting:

Johnson County - The district Attorney notifies SRS of referrals of youth over 13 and if SRS is providing services to that family, the follow up program is coordinated among the District Attorney's office, SRS and Court Services.

Seward County - An intervention program has been developed with cooperative funding from the school district, city and county.

Finney County - The County Attorney contracts with the Status Offender program.

Douglas County - A model program has existed since 1979. The school districts and the court developed a program utilizing volunteers. In 1983, modifications were made due to the passage of Kansas Code for the Care of Children which brought SRS into the process. SRS, the county attorney, the school district and the court have agreed to continue the program as it was modified in 1983, this SRS continues to receive referrals of all youth who are not attending school as required by law. Volunteers provide direct services to youth and family.

In summary, our staff have not identified any major problems with the 1986 amendments and they believe the changes have benefited SRS and the families we serve.

JW:SM:mo



1986 TRUANCY BILL

Testimony presented before the House Education Committee
by Brilla Highfill Scott, Associate Executive Director
United School Administrators of Kansas

January 21, 1987

Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the reactions of Kansas Administrators to the 1986 Truancy Bill.

Representative elementary and middle level administrators were contacted from both rural and urban areas. Without exception, those administrators receiving positive support from SRS and/or their county attorney felt the truancy procedures were working well. Other principals were frustrated in their attempts to obtain assistance from SRS and/or the court. Several administrators mentioned their concern about the case load of the SRS worker and the court which necessitates a low priority for the truancy cases.

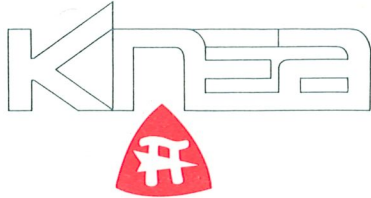
Since the reporting procedures have been changed three times in the previous five years, the position of United School Administrators would focus on continuing the present regulations. Administrators of Kansas recognize their responsibility in the prevention of truancy and are united in their request for continued assistance from SRS and/or the court in reducing truancy as a community problem.

Brilla Highfill Scott
Associate Executive Director

BHS:mfw

ATTACHMENT II

House Education Committee 1-21-87



Craig Grant Testimony Before The
House Education Committee
January 21, 1987

Thank you, Madame Chairman. I am Craig Grant and represent Kansas-NEA. I appreciate this opportunity to visit with the committee about our reactions to the changes in the truancy statutes.

Because many teachers do not have the administrative responsibility of handling school absences, we have not received a great deal of feedback from our membership. The concerns of our members were voiced last year. Our experience was that the younger student who was truant so often fit the other definitions of a "child in need of care." Getting the SRS case worker on top of this situation early could very well have been important in keeping further harm from happening to the child. The older child at times may need other intervention, but the percentage of time this occurs is not as great.

Kansas-NEA supports the compromise changes that were made last year. We also believe that no matter how the law is written, agencies must work together to solve any truancy problems which exist. We thank you for listening to our concerns.

ATTACHMENT III
House Education 1-21-87