

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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

3:30 ~~am~~/p.m. on February 25, 1987 in room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representatives James Lowther and Robert D. Miller, who were excused.

Committee staff present:

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

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Sandy Duncan
Kay Coles, Kansas National Education Association
Richard Funk, Kansas Association of School Boards
Jim Copple, Wichita Federation of Teachers
Brilla Scott, United School Administrators

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Apt who opened hearings on HB 2121 concerning increasing compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18 years of age.

Representative Sandy Duncan gave background on HB 2121 saying only 81.7 percent of students graduate from high school in Kansas. He quoted from a study done in 1981 that there was a loss of \$228 billion in lost earnings from dropouts in the nation. This would be \$68.4 billion in Kansas. He suggests there needs to be a change in policy of allowing minors to make the decision to leave school before graduation. In conjunction with this there needs to be a plan to provide incentive funding for alternative education. Representative Duncan asked that HB 2121 not be passed but attention be given to the concepts stated in the bill, and that he plans to introduce the bill in the 1988 session.

Hearings on HB 2121 were closed temporarily and hearings on HB 2160 were opened concerning school districts, driver training and motorcycle safety courses, authorization of fees.

Representative Kerry Patrick spoke for the bill saying the tight times economically warranted authorizing fees for courses in driver training and motorcycle safety. He suggested statistics show students having driver education are not necessarily safer drivers which was the rationale for establishing the classes originally. He stated it was a costly program and the money required could better be used in funding school programs that were more essential to education.

Kay Coles spoke in support of HB 2160 saying it would allow districts greater flexibility in meeting the demands of the general fund. (Attachment I)

Richard Funk went on record to support HB 2160.

After a lengthy discussion hearings on HB 2160 were declared closed.

Chairman Apt reopened hearings on HB 2121.

Kay Coles spoke in opposition to HB 2121, stating it does not address the issues fully because potential drop-outs must be identified at an early age. (Attachment II)

Jim Copple, opposed HB 2121 saying it was an example of mechanical reform and does not answer the problem of truancy of other educational problems. (Attachment III)

Brilla Scott said administrators of Kansas would support incentive funding which would encourage early identification of at-risk students but opposes HB 2121. (Attachment IV)

Richard Funk stated he initially supports the concepts in HB 2121 and urged the committee to consider the alternative school concepts as developed by Representative Duncan in his presentation.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
room 519-S, Statehouse, at 3:30 a.m./p.m. on February 25, 1987.

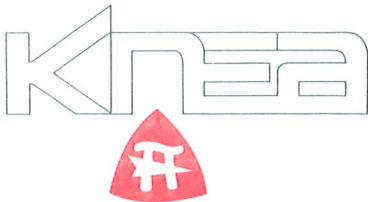
Jim Clark spoke against HB 2121 opposing raising the age of compulsory education from 16 to 18 as it will not solve the problems.

Hearings for HB 2121 were declared closed.

Meeting was adjourned by the chair at 4:22.

The next meeting will be February 26, 1987 at 3:30 in Room 519-S.

Kay Coles Testimony Before The
House Education Committee
February 25, 1987

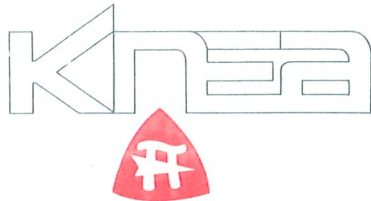


Thank you, Madame Chairman. Members of the Committee, my name is Kay Coles and I represent Kansas-NEA. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with the committee in support of HB 2160.

Kansas-NEA supports the concepts in HB 2160. I was under the impression that districts could already charge a fee for driver training. If this clarifies or allows the practice in our district, we certainly support the language change. By allowing--and it is permissive--districts to charge a fee for driver training, the district could free some funds within the general fund which has been transferred to the special driver training fund to pay for the program. This amount has not been a large one in most districts; however, each little bit more flexibility will assist districts in meeting the demands of the general fund.

Kansas-NEA supports HB 2160 and hopes that the committee will allow districts greater flexibility by passing this bill favorably. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Attachment I
House Education 2/25/87



Kay Coles testimony before the
House Education Committee
February 25, 1987

Thank you Madame Chairman. Members of the committee, my name is Kay Coles and I am here today representing the 20,000 members of Kansas-NEA. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about HB 2121.

We believe the author of this legislation has demonstrated a commitment to addressing issues of concern and for that, we commend him. We have reservations, however, that raising the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18 will address those concerns.

One concern the author has cited is the truancy problem. This committee has heard about the difficulties currently faced by school districts in dealing with truant youngsters. As you know, the current system of dealing with truancy is not working particularly well. HB 2121 does not offer a fresh way to deal with truants, it merely requires them to stay in school for two more years -- potentially adding to the problems districts face with truancy.

A chief concern of Kansas-NEA and NEA is the dropout problem and although the author has not directly addressed that issue, it is a side issue of HB 2121. The NEA has devoted \$1.7 million through its "Operation Rescue" to deal with the dropout problem and one notable fact has emerged from this effort. Potential dropouts must be identified at an early age -- preferably in grade school -- so that programs can be developed that will encourage these "at risk" children to stay in school. HB 2121, we believe, does not offer a means by which these children can be identified and encouraged to stay in school. Age 16 to 18 is often too late to begin efforts to keep young people in school.

(more)

While we believe this legislation raises important issues that should be faced, Kansas-NEA does not believe HB 2121 addresses those issues as completely as they need to be addressed.

Thank you. I would be glad to answer any questions.

Wichita Federation of Teachers

Local 725, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL NO. 2121

James E. Copple
Legislative Director
Wichita Federation of Teachers

Madame Chairman, members of the House Education Committee, House Bill No. 2121, changing compulsory education from 16 to age 18 will find few advocates from those seeking to reform our nation's schools. While the intent of HB. 2121 may be to keep potential dropouts in school longer, it does not guarantee that those students will truly engage in the educational process. Current writers in educational policy, supported by extensive research, have long concluded that simply receiving more for a longer period of time is not the answer to truancy, dropouts or any of our educational problems. Theodore Sizer of Brown University and co-founder of the Coalition for Essential Schools, has argued, that "we must be cautious as we implement reform. Many reforms are simply mechanical reforms." Mechanical reform seeks to produce change by adding more requirements to the current structures. These reform efforts rarely succeed. I fear that HB. 2121 is an example of mechanical reform.

The problems this legislation seeks to address are systemic and it will require systemic solutions to correct them. I know the author is a proponent of alternative education as a means to keep students interested and involved in the learning process. Before we require students to be in school until the age of 18, we should require districts (with appropriate funding) to put in place alternative education programs that will address the diverse learning styles of their population. Alternative education provides students with learning experiences that reflect that student's learning style. These programs have succeeded in lowering the dropout rates of individual districts and have actually been a factor in assisting a variety of students in their educational program.

Attachment III
House Education 2/25/87

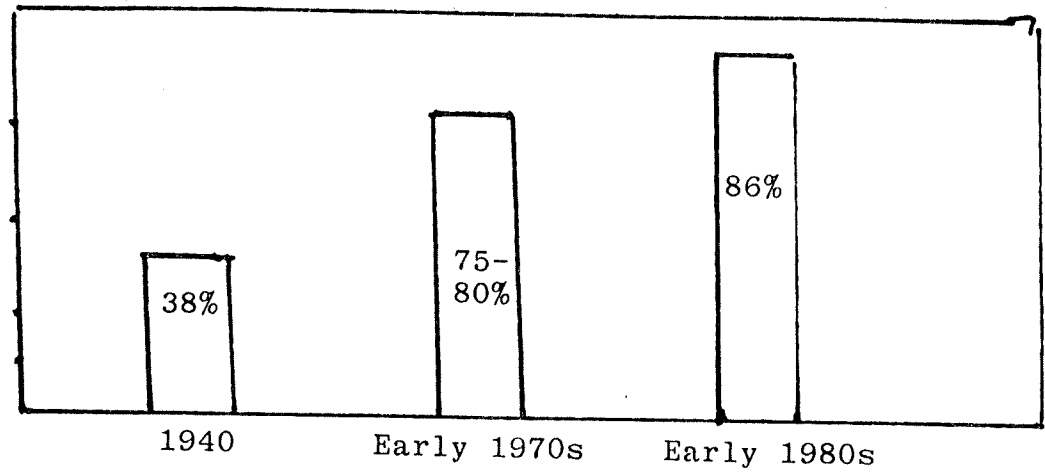
Most, who dropout after the age of 16, leave for a variety of reasons. You cannot identify a single cause. Requiring students to be there two years longer, without providing them alternative educational experiences, will compound problems of classroom discipline and management. Quite simply, this bill places the cart before the horse.

Two years ago, the Garden City Federation of Teachers, contributed to a study related to the district's high dropout rate. At that time the district reported a 25 percent dropout rate against a national average of 14 percent. The study concluded that it is possible to make early identification, as early as kindergarten, of students who were potential candidates for dropping out of school. Alternative programs, addressing those problems in the child's early education, would eliminate the need for this legislation. A student's maturity is not the issue. The issue is related to our willingness as an educational community to make necessary adjustments in curriculum and program that will truly serve all students.

John Goodlad, author of the work A Place Called Schools, has demonstrated through research of over 3,000 school districts, that placing these kind of requirements on the educational community, jeopardizes the mission of the schools. Mr. Goodlad was speaking of compulsory education after the age of 15. Nobody would deny the importance of compulsory education. What we must resist, however, is compulsory education that is long on requirements and short on resources.

- The proportion of young people (25-29 years old) who have completed at least high school has increased from 38% in 1940 to 75-80% in the early 1970s and to approximately 86% in the early 1980s. The greatest change was for blacks (rising from 45% in 1964 to 79% in 1984).*

PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL



* Source: GAO Briefing Report, School Dropouts: The Extent and Nature of the Problem, Washington, D.C., June 1986.



HOUSE BILL 2121

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

February 25, 1987

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

United School Administrators of Kansas appreciates this opportunity to speak in opposition to House Bill 2121.

We do believe the author of this bill made a sincere attempt to find a solution for reducing the student dropout rate in our state. However, the administrators in Kansas question the actual results of this bill and suggest that its enactment will create additional problems for our schools.

Adult-size students, who are required, but do not want to attend school can and do impede the learning of other students. This hostile student can endanger the safety of both students and teachers.

Madam Chairman, you will recall the difficulty you and the committee experienced last year in reaching a compromise in obtaining assistance from other agencies in helping educators reduce trancies. Is it then appropriate to add more cases to an already overburdened caseload of a county or district attorney? Schools are presently facing the problem of the slow response time of the courts to truancy reports and continue to deal with the "sentencing of students" who are ordered back to school after extended absences.

Many school districts in Kansas are identifying at-risk students and providing appropriate counseling with both parents and these students. United School Administrators of Kansas would support incentive funding which would encourage early identification of these at-risk students. Further, our association would be supportive of programs which would assist citizens of any age in returning to school to complete their graduation requirements.

The U.S. Department of Education recently reported that Kansas ranks ninth in the listing of states with the highest percentage of students graduating from high school. This is a statistic of which legislators, parents, and educators can be proud. We ask that you report HB 2121 unfavorably.

Brilla Highfill Scott
Brilla Highfill Scott
Associate Executive Director

BHS:mfw

Attachment IV
House Education 2/25/87