

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*B. Lawrence*

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 1997 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Wendy McFarland, American Civil Liberties Union  
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards  
Sue Chase, Kansas National Education Association  
Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools  
Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators

Others attending: See attached list

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and stated the agenda was the continuation of the hearing on: HB 2285--school districts; curriculum, accreditation, pupil assessment, school site councils, American history documents

Wendy McFarland, American Civil Liberties Union, provided testimony on the bill (Attachment 1) and stated the amendment that her organization would like to see on the bill that would appear on page 5, following line 17 (c) "Any authorization to read and post any of the writings, documents and records described in subsection (a) will be accompanied by a stipulation that they not be used to proselytize about religion to students."

Ms. McFarland stated that it is no coincidence that this particular legislation in one form or another is now appearing in 48 states according to Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. In listening to the conferees yesterday, she believes the reason behind this legislation is an effort to bring religion into public schools, a place where it has no business being. Her organization would probably support the defeat of the bill in its entirety rather than add the amendment, but if the Committee does see fit to pass the bill, her organization would like to see the amendment added.

Ms. McFarland stated that if anyone had read the Federalist papers or any of the papers on the primary documents list, he or she would understand there are many references to religion and, more importantly, not just references to religion, but promotion of a particular religion over another.

Ms. McFarland was asked if she was suggesting these documents not be studied in the classroom.

She replied that the idea of discussing philosophically religion in the classroom is not what her organization is opposed to, but there is a fine line between discussing philosophically as opposed to proselytizing or promoting one religion over another. All of these documents are currently acceptable in any classroom in the United States. There is no reason to introduce this kind of legislation unless it is an attempt to promote the use of certain documents historically that do make more than just a reference to religion, but appear to promote one religion over another. Clearly there should be no religion in public schools. The Constitution makes the separation of church and state perfectly clear.

Ms. McFarland was asked which documents promote one religion over another.

She stated she had downloaded the Federalist papers off the computer and attempted to see what would cause such concern for a number of organizations interested in keeping religion out of the schools. The Federalist papers made so many references to God and to Christianity, the concern was not that these documents be made available to children, but that these could be interpreted in different ways. She stated that by the amendment she has offered it will always be remembered that the First Amendment of the Constitution is something that must always be adhered to and that means there cannot be the promotion of one religion over another, or any religion, as there are those who do not choose to believe in any higher power or religion. Historically it is very clear that religion is precarious in that it can be misused by persons who wish to promote one religion over another or promote religion over no religion at all. There is nothing in the statutes that would prohibit any teacher from using any of this information at this time.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ROOM 123-S-Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 1997.

Ms. McFarland stated that this legislation is not a local effort, but the prior conferees were espousing the position of lobbyists from all over the United States who are introducing similar bills. It is a concerted effort. The list of documents is verbatim from almost every state in the United States. Her organization sees it as promoting the addition of religion into public classrooms and is a cause for great concern.

The Chairperson stated that there is a real decline in the teaching of government and history in the schools. People are very alerted to the problem and feel that we as a people are in danger of losing our historical perspective. It goes far beyond any movement that may be seen. The people are from very disparate groups and are concerned that our country's history is not going to be passed along to our children. Someone once said that once you don't know your history, you are doomed to repeat it.

Ms. McFarland commented that religion has played a very important part in history, but caution should be exercised when we venture into an area that might be promoting religion in a public classroom where it has no business being taught. Every private school in America has that right because they accept no tax dollars.

Ms. McFarland sees no problem with the posting of documents and the teaching of the documents. The concern would be with a teacher or school board taking the position of promoting Christianity over Judaism for example - giving autonomy to local school boards should be accompanied by a statement reminding them that in fact they are held accountable to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and the establishing clause that prohibits proselytizing of religion in the public school room.

Ms. McFarland was asked if the first amendment specifically mentions separation of church and state.

She responded that interpretation of the first amendment by the Supreme Court for the last 170 years has made it very clear that its interpretation is such that there is an establishment clause that prohibits religion from being involved in public classrooms.

The comment was made that the first amendment is interpreted by some to be freedom of religion and not constraint of religion.

Ms. McFarland replied that this is the free exercise clause of the first amendment. She would equally protect the right of anyone to believe or support any religion they wish, as well as argue that there is no place for it in a public classroom.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. McFarland for her testimony and called attention to written testimony submitted by Rep. Thimesch in support of the bill. (Attachment 2)

Mark Tallman, KASB, an opponent of the bill (Attachment 3) stated he would go through the sections of the bill, as it addresses a number of topics.

Section 1(a) of the bill simply restates the current quality performance-accreditation system. A real concern of KASB is with Section 1(b) - State Assessments. The bill requires the State Board of Education to select a nationally normed test for administration. It lists commercially developed tests, but also includes the National Assessment of Education Progress test which is a different type of test. One test may give a reference to a nationally norming group, but not other states. Another will give comparisons to another state, but not for every school and every district. The concern is that this bill treats these tests as though they are equivalent, but they are not. The result of State Board action would have very different consequences in addressing what the sponsors of the bill want to have happen.

KASB has no objection to participation in NAEP. An appropriation could accomplish this and the Commissioner has indicated that there is an interest on the part of the State Board in doing this. There is concern in requiring a single nationally normed test for all districts and to continue doing the state assessments that are now in place. KASB supports the idea of a statewide testing program. KASB is generally supportive of the program embarked on. They like the fact that the districts are also able to choose a nationally normed test on their own that they believe reflects their unique curriculum to complement the state assessments. If the State Board is going to require a single nationally normed test, unless the district is lucky enough to already be using what the State Board selects, they will either have to change what they are doing or add another test to what they are already doing. It would require all districts to have the state dictating the vast majority of their local testing.

Mr. Tallman commented that he thinks that sometimes there is the perception that if a nationally normed test is selected, that will tell us how we are doing against the rest of the nation. It is his understanding that how well a district really does on a test is based on their curriculums and how it appears to be doing changes as a result of that. How well Kansas may look depends a great deal on what test the State Board would choose.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ROOM 123-S-Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 1997.

The Post Audit study of the Kansas assessment program indicated that 300 of the 304 school districts are using a nationally normed test which is available already to their patrons to see how well they are doing.

Section 1(c); KASB strongly supports efforts to increase parent and community involvement. KASB specifically endorses the idea of site councils being a part of the educational system. The concern is that the bill calls for the Site Board to develop "simple indices" of parent and community involvement. Parents as Teachers and other programs cost money to initiate. Some districts are not initiating these programs, not because they don't support them, but because money is tight. KASB questions whether a simple indicator of parent and community involvement is going to be applicable across the state.

Section 1(f); Reporting has just begun under the state report card program. Before expanding the scope of reporting, an evaluation of how well the state is doing should be done. The caution is that at some level such a point is reached that so much information is being put out that it is not of the benefit intended. KASB is also very concerned about any definition that would broaden the definition of administrative personnel beyond those people who administer.

Section 2(a); With regard to historical documents, school boards already have the authority to authorize the posting of documents. The issue of religious exclusion or liability will not turn on the passage of the bill. It is a first amendment issue and is somewhat controlled by the Kansas Constitution, which has similar language.

Section 3 of the act does not make clear whether this act is supposed to refer to the entire bill or only to the historical documents portion. It is not clear on distribution or how to enforce.

In closing, Mr. Tallman stated he does not mean to minimize the legitimate concerns the sponsors of this legislation have brought forth. He suggested two ways the Legislature could have more impact in addressing these concerns. One is to understand that the State Board of Education is already embarking on a study of the state assessment program. With regard to the concern regarding historical documents, it might be more appropriate for the Legislature to pass a resolution encouraging the State Board in the development of social studies standards that are required to make sure that use of original text documents are included in the curriculum standards. This is what drives instruction in the state and, in Mr. Tallman's opinion, would have a far greater impact on spotlighting the issue than in tucking it in this bill.

Sue Chase, KNEA, appeared in opposition to the bill and distributed her testimony. (Attachment 4) The first concern Ms. Chase addressed was the issue of testing. She does not think that an adequate job has been done on coming to a consensus on what the state wants the mandated testing to accomplish. Unfortunately, everyone has a different idea on what information he or she wants from the tests. Testimony has made it clear that what is wanted is a test to compare Kansas with other states and Kansas school districts with other districts around the country. Neither of these goals can be accomplished with one nationally normed test. KNEA believes state mandated testing needs further study in order to address the above issues.

The second issue Ms. Chase addressed was the directive for the state board to monitor and develop ways to measure parental involvement. While parent involvement is a key to a good educational system, trying to define, measure, and monitor parent involvement on the state level is almost impossible.

The third area of concern addressed by Ms. Chase dealt with the reading and posting of certain historical documents. Teachers currently have the right to post and use any historical documents they believe are important to their teaching. There have been no complaints or cases surrounding the use of historical documents. There is an inherent danger in setting out a limited set of documents in statute for use. That may bring into question whether documents not listed can be used.

Ms. Chase closed by stating that if the Committee decides to pass the bill, KNEA would ask for the insertion of the following language in place of subsection (b):

"All historical documents, writings and records shall be used exclusively for academic purposes and shall not be used for religious or devotional purposes. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the power of school boards and administrators to safeguard the establishment clause of the state and federal governments".

KNEA does not believe this bill is necessary and could be detrimental to education in the state of Kansas. It recommends the issues of state mandated testing and parent and community involvement be further studied.

Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools, appeared next on the bill. (Attachment 5) She stated that mandating another statewide test without considering local curriculum and goals would not supply lawmakers with new information. Another state mandated report to measure parental involvement detracts from the focus of getting and keeping parents involved.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ROOM 123-S-Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 1997.

Ms. Gjerstad said that on Thursday over 100 principals in Wichita Schools will be meeting to self-assess each building. Good programs will look different in each site. Each building will build on what it needs for that individual building's success. The determination of how to effect student achievement is made first and then the decision is made on how to focus the appropriate resources. Establishment of "simple indices" will blur the focus. The tendency will be that once that rigid expectation is set it then becomes the goal. Within the district's 58 elementary buildings it is not appropriate to compare parental involvement using a fixed measuring stick.

Ms. Gjerstad addressed curriculum standards and stated that Wichita has developed standards - what it believes students should know and be able to do. These standards represent clear targets for instruction and learning. These have been established for all grade levels and courses and in all subject areas.

Ms. Gjerstad's testimony had attached a Site Council Opinion Survey which she asked the Committee to view. They know by this what is going on out in the community. Some buildings have great difficulty in keeping a site council active. Ms. Gjerstad gave two examples of how site councils work and stated that parental and business involvement will vary by building, student age level and community.

With regard to norm referenced test, Ms. Gjerstad stated USD 259 has a long history of using normed reference test. Over time these tests have done little to drive instruction. Although performance assessment is not as exact and may not measure up to tightly developed normed tests, they have at least driven the way instruction is being delivered and assessed in classrooms across the district. Normed reference tests have not done that. The district has voted to adopt the MAT short form test and have about \$40,000 invested in it. It fits into what their board has decided works for their graduation assessment.

Ms. Gjerstad commented on the final item of the posting of certain documents. She stated that authorizing teachers to use materials which they can already use would not seem appropriate for statute. She also mentioned a cost associated with the mandated distribution.

Ms. Gjerstad stood for questions.

Seeing none, the Chairperson called on Gerry Henderson, USA, to speak to the bill. (Attachment 6) Mr. Henderson stated that he appreciated the sponsor's motivation for the bill. It comes down to answering the question, are teachers doing a good job. The use of a nationally norm test will not answer this question. The use of any one test in isolation is extremely dangerous. The nationally norm test ought to be used in conjunction with something else. NAEP does provide national comparative data, but is expensive and based on samples rather than total populations. Any test used in isolation has the potential for grievous error. As the new accreditation system was being developed, business told them that they ought to be looking for some indication that you are doing better. We need to establish very high standards and get about making progress towards that.

Mr. Henderson addressed the parental involvement question and stated that there is no argument with the bill's attempt to get at the extent of parental and community involvement in a school. It will do absolutely no good just to demonstrate there is more parental involvement in the schools. What ought to be looked at is are our students learning. If they are not, the problem may well be lack of parental involvement. At this time we should be looking at are we getting better, not parental involvement.

Mr. Henderson pointed out that schools can now use primary source documents. We cannot understand how this country works unless we understand the religious heritage of this country. Original source documents are the best source. Any teacher that is not using them is not doing the best job, but he sees that this bill does nothing toward making that better.

Mr. Henderson was asked when there will be a state test that will judge whether the kids are doing better because the tests keep changing.

Mr. Henderson's response was that they should not be changed for awhile to determine whether we are making progress and getting better. The math and writing tests we have had for awhile, indicate that there is progress. He understands the frustrations with the infant assessment program that we can't demonstrate that we are doing what we want the schools to do. He believes schools are getting there.

Senator Umbarger asked Wendy McFarland asked for more documentation on her statements of 170 years of consistent endorsement of separation of church and state.

Ms. McFarland replied that she will provide some information, but cannot provide all. The Chairperson concluded the hearing on **HB 2285** and adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 1997.



# AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

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Wendy McFarland/Lobbyist (913) 575-5749

## REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO HB2285 PRESENTED 3/19/97 TO THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

We respectfully request the following amendment be inserted on Page 5, following line 17.

**(c) Any authorization to read and post any of the writings, documents and records described in subsection (a) will be accompanied by a stipulation that they not be used to proselytize about religion to students.**

The addition of this amendment will more closely insure that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which guarantees the separation of religion from the government, and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from interfering with the individuals' right to worship as they choose, will be followed by those who choose to post the items referred to in this bill.

Together, these principles protect our freedom to practice any religion or no religion at all.

*Senate Education  
3-20-97  
Attachment 1*

STATE OF KANSAS

DAN THIMESCH  
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(DURING SESSION)



TOPEKA

HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

AGRICULTURE  
EDUCATION  
TRANSPORTATION

Thank you Chairman Lawrence and the Senate Education Committee.

I support HB 2285 for a number of reasons.

Our State Assessments Tests have become very controversial over the last number of years. We have listened to concerns expressed by professionals about their reliability, valuability, and usability. Our own Post Audit study reveals that 60% of the teachers surveyed in the public schools did not like the tests.

The association of non-government schools which represent about 10% of our children in accredited schools are strongly looking to other accreditation because of their concerns of these tests.

Mostly I am concerned about how I believe our tests are being misused. The designers of these tests explain emphatically how they are supposed to be used. Under Quality Performance Accreditation in determining school improvement, these tests are not supposed to be the only indicator. There also has to be included other local required indicators, such as norm-referenced tests, teacher-developed tests, classroom grades, portfolios of student work, attendance rate, drop out rate, graduation rate, student completion of advanced math and science courses, student follow-up surveys, number of disciplinary actions, and number of violent acts by students against students or faculty.

Superintendents, principals, teachers, KSAB media and even the new commissioner have also misused the tests as showing improvement solely on the State assessment tests.

Also our report card of school districts heavily used the results of our state assessment.

I believe we need to mandate a norm test along with the state assessment test to get a true evaluation of student and school improvement. I urge your support of HB 2285.

*Senate Education  
3-20-97  
Attachment 2*



TO: Senate Committee on Education  
FROM: Mark Tallman, Director of Governmental Relations  
DATE: March 19, 1997

RE: **Testimony on H.B. 2285**

Madam Chair, Members of the committee:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on H.B. 2285. Because it contains a number of subjects, I will direct my remarks to each section or subsection.

**Section 1 (a) - School accreditation system.**

We have no objection to this section. We believe it simply restates the current quality performance accreditation system.

**Section 1 (b) - State Assessments.**

KASB supports a statewide student assessment program. However, we have not specifically endorsed all aspects of the current state assessment program, and would not necessarily oppose a reduction or modification in the current program. We do have several serious concerns about this bill, even as amended by the House Committee.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to select a nationally normed test for administration. It then lists examples of several common nationally normed test, but also includes the National Assessment of Education Progress, which is a very different type of national test. Most nationally normed tests measure student performance, both individually and school or district, against the performance of a sample population. They do **not** allow comparisons with other states. NAEP is given only to a sample of students in each participating state: it allows **only** a statewide comparison with other states or the nation as a whole.

KASB does not object to having Kansas participate in NAEP. However, that could be accomplished by a simple appropriation. However, we are very concerned about the prospect of requiring all districts to use the same nationally normed test. Most districts already use a nationally normed test in addition to the state assessments, which allows parents and patrons of each district to compare student performance with national norms. Moreover, those tests have been selected by districts because they reflect the unique curriculum and circumstances of the district.

*Senate Education  
3-20-97  
Attachment 3*



Unless a district is lucky enough to have the State Board select the test it is using, H.B. 2285 would require those districts to either spend time administering yet another assessment, or replace their current test with the State Board's choice. Many people would like to reduce the scope of testing. This bill could actually increase the time and cost of testing. If the Legislature wants a statewide national comparison, the least disruptive course would be to participate in the NAEP.

### **Section 1 (c) - Site Councils and Parent/Community Involvement**

We strongly support efforts to increase parent and community involvement, but we question whether "simple indices" can be developed. Look at the list proposed. Parents as Teachers programs cost money to initiate - money not available to spend in the regular classroom. The ability to develop mentor programs and school-business partnerships is probably much easier in urban areas than rural areas, and both efforts require "non-instructional" resources. Schools where most parents are well-educated professionals with high incomes will have a much easier time organizing active parent groups than schools serving economically disadvantaged populations. In short, these indicators may be unfair and have little meaning.

### **Section 1 (f) - Performance and Expenditure Reports**

Before Kansas expands the school reporting it requires, we believe there should be a more systematic study of the impact of the new school report card program. Is it accomplishing what the Legislature intended? If so, how much more data can be usefully included? If not, will additional reporting make any difference?

We also strongly object to the section of the bill dealing with the reporting of "administrative costs." If school districts must report administrative costs and trends, this report should also include a listing of all state and federal mandates which increase a district's administrative responsibilities. Furthermore, it would be deeply misleading to include the cost of librarians, counselors, nurses, food service employees and bus drivers in "administrative costs."

### **Section 2 (a) - Historical Documents**

School boards and employees may already read and post these documents, and frequently do so. If the Legislature wants to pass a law saying that these documents are important, why not do so directly?

### **Section 2 (b) - Revision Based on Religious References**

We are not aware of any "discriminatory revision" occurring in Kansas. We fail to see how this subsection could be enforced if there is.

### **Section 3 - Distribution of this act.**

Interestingly, this section creates another administrative mandate.

Thank you for your consideration.



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 W. 10TH STREET / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Susan Chase Testimony before  
Senate Education Committee on HB 2285  
Wednesday, March 19, 1997

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee for allowing me to speak. I am Susan Chase and I represent the Kansas National Education Association. I am appearing in opposition to HB 2285.

Although KNEA is opposed to HB 2285, we believe that the intent of the sponsors of the bill is meritorious. We, too, believe that we need to take a serious look at our state assessments to decide whether they are meeting our needs. We also believe it is important to ensure our teachers and local communities have the right to make curriculum decisions they believe are necessary, and that the parents and community are highly involved in schools. KNEA does, however, have great concern over the provisions of HB 2285.

The first concern I will address is the issue of testing. I do not think we have done an adequate job of coming to a consensus on what we want state mandated tests to accomplish. Every time we get into a discussion on state mandated tests, the discussion always centers on the idea that the tests are not doing what we want them to do. Unfortunately, everyone in the discussion has a different idea of what information they want from the tests. A strong example is what is contained in the bill. The bill mandates a nationally normed test besides the state assessments. The list of examples contains two totally different types of tests with different abilities to provide information.

Tests such as the ITBS, CAT or MAT provide information on how a Kansas student is doing compared to a group of students from around the country who take the tests. Using these tests to compare schools or the State of Kansas to those outside the state is impossible since we have no control over who or how many take the tests in other states. These tests also do not give any information on how students are doing according to the standards that have been set by the state.

On the other hand, the NAEP will give you a fairly reliable comparison with other states. The test will not give you internal comparisons between schools or provide any information on individual students. This is due to the fact that the test is administered to only a representative sample of students in a representative number of districts.

HB 2285 asks for a report generated by the state board to each district comparing the district to the state average, which can be done by the current state assessments or a mandated nationally normed test. Testimony has made it clear that what is wanted is a test to compare Kansas with other states and Kansas school districts with other districts around the country. Neither of these goals can be accomplished with one nationally normed

Therefore, KNEA believes state mandated testing needs further study in order to address the above issues. If we are going to make a thoughtful decision on what types of tests our students should be taking, we need to make sure we know what information we want from those tests.

The second issue we are concerned about is the directive for the state board to monitor and develop ways to measure parental involvement. While we believe that parent involvement is a key to a good educational system, we also know that trying to define, measure, and monitor parent involvement on the state level is almost impossible. This issue is best defined on the local level. We also have a concern that in section 1 (a) the state board is required to monitor the parent and community involvement as part of the accreditation system, but in section 1 (d) the measurement of the parent and community involvement cannot be used to measure the boards ability to engender such involvement.

KNEA feels that there may be ways to encourage boards to work with their parents and community members to increase involvement in schools. We hope that before this committee recommends any action in this area that they study what other states have done to facilitate the process.

The third issue that we are concerned about is new section 2 which deals with the reading and posting of certain historical documents. ~~We continue to believe that teachers currently have the right to post and use any~~ historical documents they believe are important to their teaching. We have had no complaints or cases surrounding the use of historical documents. We do believe there is an inherent danger in setting out a limited set of documents in statute for use. We believe that may bring into question whether documents not listed can be used.

We are also concerned with subsection (b) which states "there shall be no revision of American history or heritage based on religious references in the writings, documents and records described in subsection (a)". We believe that this leaves teachers and school districts open to numerous complaints any time they choose to include or not include something in the curriculum.

If this body decides to pass this bill out favorably, we would ask that you insert the following language in place of subsection (b):

"All historical documents, writings and records shall be used exclusively for academic purposes and shall not be used for religious or devotional purposes. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the power of school boards and administrators to safeguard the establishment clause of the state and federal governments".

KNEA does not believe that this bill is necessary and could be detrimental to education in the state of Kansas. We do believe this bill does highlight issues that need to be studied. Therefore, we recommend that you not pass this bill out favorably and recommend the issues of state mandated testing and parent and community involvement for further study.

Senate Education Committee  
Senator Barbara Lawrence, chair

Testimony on H.B. 2285

March 12, 1997

Submitted by: Diane Gjerstad  
Wichita Public Schools

Madam Chair, members of the committee:

I rise not in opposition to the ideals expressed in this bill and by the sponsor, but rather the method. Mandating yet another statewide test without considering local curriculum and goals would not supply lawmakers with new information. Yet another state mandated report to measure parental involvement detracts from the focus of getting *and keeping* parents involved.

Thursday over 100 principals in Wichita schools respond to a rubric, measurement tool, roughed out by the Parent Involvement Support Team. The finished product will be a self assessment for each building. The basic question posed will be: *how do we measure success. . . increase involvement in areas which are successful. What mechanism is needed to measure growth. . . how will we know when parental involvement is happening and effecting student achievement?*

Research shows that:

- Affluent communities currently have more positive family involvement, on average, *unless* schools and teachers in economically distressed communities work to build positive partnership with their students' families
- Schools in more economically depressed communities make more contacts with families about the problems and difficulties their children are having, *unless* they work at developing balanced partnership programs that include contacts about positive accomplishments of students.
- Single parents, parents who are employed outside the home, parents who live far from the school, and fathers are less involved, on average, at the school building, *unless* the school organizes opportunities for families to volunteer at various times and in various places to support the schools and their children.

*Phi Delta Kappan, May 1995, School/Family/Community Partnerships by Joyce L. Epstein*

Research also shows that just about all families care about their children and want them to succeed; just about all teachers and administrators want to encourage greater family involvement; and just about all students are willing to take active roles in communicating between home and school.

This is important because this indicates that caring communities can be built; and this is a purposeful exercise.

Good programs will look different in each site. Each building will build on what it needs for that individual building's success. The determination of how to effect student achievement is made first and then you decided how to focus the appropriate resources.

The establishment of "simple indices" will blur the focus. The tendency will be that once that rigid expectation is set *it then becomes the goal*. Within our district's 58 elementary buildings it is not appropriate to compare parental involvement using a fixed measuring stick.

Again, how each of our 98 buildings increases parental/community involvement, uses those resources and works to improve upon that experience will have 98 different faces.

### **Curriculum Standards**

Page 2, line 11 states that the State Board shall establish curriculum standards for the core academic area. Wichita has developed standards—what we believe students should know and be able to do. These standards represent clear targets for instruction and learning. They have been established for all grade levels and courses and in all subject areas. These standards will be the basis for evaluating individual student performance and progress. All tests developed by the district will be based on the district standards.

The Board of Education for USD 259 has adopted this comprehensive assessments and graduation plan. The district has invested over two years of work to realign the curriculum, develop standards for every classroom, piloting the benchmark tests for math this month; and training teachers.

### **Strategic Plan**

Action plan number 6.2 states: *Increase "people power" in the Wichita Public Schools by increasing adult presence in schools and improving interaction between schools, homes, and the community.*

A few of the activities supporting this strategy include:

- Partnership Team Training—59 buildings, 187 participants; phase two in March will provide training on development of action plans designed to increase the level and quality of parental and community involvement, and business partnership.
- Parent/Teacher Resource Center—412 S. Main, a one stop resource for parents and teachers for make-it-take-it activities; parenting classes; site council training; staff development; Parents as Teachers; literacy services; and Communities in Schools.
- Annual site council training conference
- Volunteer training—in the 95-96 school year 7462 parent and community volunteers contributes over 250,000 valuable hours
- Monthly site council forums—participants receive handouts to take back to the entire site council.

### **Site Councils**

Participation breakdown: 798 parents, 560 staff, 65 business, 33 students and 141 community members. Average membership 16.9 people per council meeting an average of 6.9 times per year.

We conduct an annual survey (attached); range of topics discussed; training/information sessions available.

Some buildings have great difficulty in keeping a site council active. Levy Special Education Center and the Arkansas Avenue Gateway School are two examples of buildings which have a non-traditional population—Levy kids can be severely physically handicapped, it is a great burden on their parents to attend a meeting. Gateway students have been suspended or expelled from their regular building and may be enrolled for two weeks to 186 days. Both of these buildings have a site council, Gateway's includes community police officer, but they will have limited appeal to community/business people.

Two quick examples of how our site councils work. One elementary's site council drafted the entire campus improvement plan; meet monthly, a split day/evening meeting; monthly topics include progress report on plan implementation, curriculum, goals, personnel and budget. The site council has piece of all decisions. Two examples of the council's contribution include an Animated Phonics program and Spanish for intermediate students. (The principal was very surprised that the community wanted this.)

A high school's council makes the expenditure decisions on the building budget allocation. Teachers present programs before the council, who decides funding priorities and which programs meet the goals of the building. The council also interviews candidates for positions then making recommendations to the board.

The point being that parental and business involvement will vary by building, student age level and community. Placing more requirements in the statute and membership quotes could cast a chilling effect on the development and growth councils are experiencing. Current law is working quite well.

### **Mandated norm referenced test**

Returning the emphasis on norm referenced tests is not consistent with philosophy of continuous improvement. Comparing Kansas schools with each other rather than identifying growth and improvement within schools is not consistent with a philosophy that all schools should improve. Schools which serve high income communities will have little incentive to improve and schools which serve low income communities will find the process very discouraging.

USD 259 has a long history of using normed reference test. Over time these tests have done little to drive instruction. Basically, these tests measure what we know as drill and practice type teaching activities. They do little to measure application of skills, i.e. writing coherently, solving math problems.

Large populations shift the mean or average very slowly. Smaller populations of students' scores tend to fluctuate more dramatically. In such situations, schools that appear to do very well one year can do just as poorly the next based on just a few different students in the mix at a given grade level. We see this often in Title I schools where a school's scores would appear to go through the ceiling one year only to be down the next.

Although performance assessment is not as exact and may not measure up to tightly developed normed tests, they have at least driven the way instruction is being delivered and assessed in classrooms across the district. Normed reference tests have not done that.

What needs to be decided is what is the purpose of testing students in Kansas. Is it so they can do well at answering multiple choice questions? Or, is it help students develop skills and apply that knowledge in real work situations. Teachers using formative assessment based on curriculum standards will teach and test to the standards, the results will be improved student achievement.

### **Posting of certain documents**

Authorizing teachers to use materials which they can already use would not seem appropriate for statute. Proponents of this clause did not site any problems within our state where teachers were confused that using historical documents as source material was acceptable and indeed good a teaching technique. Mandated distribution cost of this act:

5000 certificated personal approximately \$450 copying plus \$1600 postage.

Thank you, Madam Chair, I would stand for questions.

*Wichita Public Schools USD 259*  
**SITE COUNCIL OPINION SURVEY 1996**

QUESTION	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	1. Our school site council participates in making decisions for our school.	15	2.2	35	5.2	57	8.5	281	42.1	279
2. Our site council has influence (indirect or direct) on the way money is spent in our school.	19	2.9	84	12.8	167	25.5	258	39.3	128	19.5
3. Our site council has influence (indirect or direct) on hiring decisions in our school.	56	8.5	145	22.1	209	31.9	169	25.8	76	11.6
4. Our site council has influence (indirect or direct) on curriculum decisions in our school.	23	3.5	94	14.2	158	23.9	282	42.7	103	15.6
5. Our site council has influence (indirect or direct) on goal setting in our school.	17	2.6	33	5.0	49	7.4	352	53.2	211	31.9
6. Site council decisions are based on a concern for improving student performance.	15	2.3	9	1.4	28	4.2	289	43.6	322	48.6
7. We have the skills to work effectively as a group to solve school problems.	12	1.8	28	4.2	65	9.7	301	45.1	262	39.2
8. We feel good about the way decisions are made in this school.	17	2.6	29	4.4	93	14.0	281	42.2	246	36.9
9. People involved with our school are aware of our school site council.	18	2.7	69	10.4	127	19.1	321	48.3	130	19.5
10. Involvement of community members on our site council improves the school.	14	2.1	19	2.9	78	11.8	270	40.7	282	42.5
11. Our school site council offers recommendations that influence the operation of the school.	15	2.3	28	4.2	56	8.5	363	54.8	200	30.2
12. Our school site council meets regularly.	13	2.0	16	2.4	9	1.4	203	30.5	424	63.8
13. We inform the school community of the school site council's actions.	13	2.0	68	10.3	122	18.5	265	40.3	190	28.9
14. Our site council understands the school's mission.	12	1.8	8	1.2	24	3.6	285	42.9	336	50.5
15. Our school continues to improve.	17	2.6	12	1.8	43	6.5	251	38.0	358	51.1
16. Information requested by site council members is provided in a timely manner.	9	1.3	19	2.8	72	10.8	301	45.1	266	39.9
17. Site council members participate in the development of the agenda.	9	1.4	38	5.7	122	18.5	321	48.6	171	25.9
18. Site council members have received adequate training.	16	2.4	65	9.9	233	35.4	276	41.9	69	10.5
	Almost Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Almost Always	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
19. Teachers participate in school decision-making at our building.	5	0.8	8	1.2	69	10.6	261	40.1	308	47.3
20. Other school employees participate in school decision-making at our building.	6	0.9	38	6.0	167	26.2	244	38.3	182	28.6
21. Parents/community participate in school decision-making at our building.	10	1.5	45	6.9	180	27.8	271	41.8	142	21.9
22. Students participate in school decision-making at our building.	41	6.5	118	18.8	248	39.5	165	26.3	56	8.9
23. Central Office Administration participates in school decision-making at our building.	22	3.5	50	8.0	189	30.2	245	39.2	119	19.0
24. Building Administration participates in school decision-making at our building.	9	1.4	12	1.9	67	10.7	191	30.4	349	55.6

5-4

# SITE COUNCIL FORUM

## A Nuts and Bolts Look at

### THE BUDGET \$

November 14  
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Instructional Support Center

Presenters:

**LINDA JONES**

Executive Director, Financial Services

and

**BILL REAGAN**

Division Director, Business Support Services



#### Decisions, Decisions...

Site Councils are called upon to participate in making decisions that have great educational impact. To facilitate this process, a series of Site Council Forums will focus on these major areas:

- \* Budget
- \* Personnel
- \* Curriculum and Instruction
- \* Organization
- \* Planning

All school sites are encouraged to send at least one site council member to every forum. Participants will receive overheads, outlines, and other information to share with their school site councils.

### FUTURE FORUMS:

January 9



**Components of Campus Improvement Plan:  
Using data for Decisions**

February 6



**Working Together:  
Tools for Consensus Building**

March 6



**Curriculum:  
Standards, Instruction, Assessment, and Alignment**

April 10



**Personnel Issues**

May 1



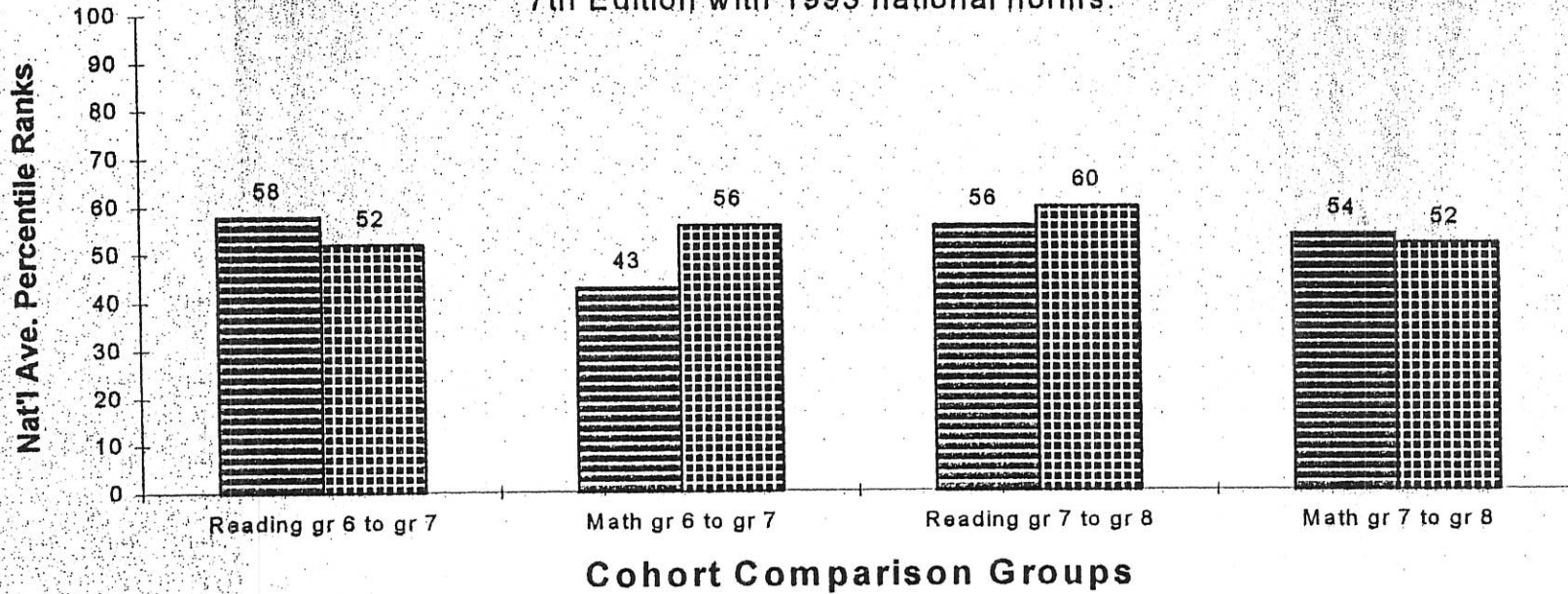
**Orientation for New Site Council Members.**



# Middle School Cohort Comparison

## Wichita Public Schools: Two Year Cohort Group Comparison for MAT7 Reading and Math Scores

MAT7 is the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition with 1993 national norms.



▨ 95 MAT7

▣ 96 MAT7

5-6



## HB 2285

Testimony presented before the Senate Committee on Education  
by Gerald W. Henderson, Executive Director  
United School Administrators of Kansas  
March 19, 1997

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

United School Administrators of Kansas opposes the provisions of **HB 2285** because we quite honestly do not believe they do what the authors want done. First of all, a nationally normed test does not provide comparative data against an agreed upon standard, world class or otherwise. Students who take any of the tests mentioned in the bill with the exception of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are compared with the group who set the norms. Inferences are made toward other comparisons, but such inferences are potential dangerous, especially when made in isolation from other data. NAEP does provide national comparative data, but is expensive and is based on samples rather than total populations. Frankly, we would welcome a chance for Kansas kids to participate in NAEP. As on all other nationally normed tests, we have confidence that Kansas children would do well. Nationally normed tests are valuable when used as a part of the information available for making judgements on student performance and program efficacy. Any test used in isolation has the potential for grievous error.

We have no argument with the bill's attempt to get at the extent of parental and community involvement in a school. Those who have participated in a site visit for Quality Performance Accreditation understand the importance of patron involvement in the accreditation process. We question, however, what the report directed by the second half of sub-section (f) on page 3 of the bill would provide to local boards that is not now available. If a board wanted to define administrative costs as the bill does, it could. We believe that a definition which lumps transportation, maintenance, food service, and all other non-teaching personnel costs together will not provide data on which sound decisions can be made.

*Senate Education  
3-20-97  
Attachment 6*

Finally, we have no problem with the provision of New Section 2. on page 4 of the bill, but we question that it provides any change to current circumstances in our schools. The use of these documents may be authorized now, and in all schools that I know about these documents are authorized now. I know of no school district in Kansas which prohibits such use. These "Religious Heritage" bills have surfaced in all parts of the country over the past two or three years, and while we support the premise that to understand the foundation of this country, one must understand its religious heritage, we believe that the potential debate over the teaching of heritage versus the teaching of religion belongs in local communities. We believe current law allows that to happen or not happen as each case dictates.

For these reasons we encourage the committee to report **HB 2285** unfavorably.