

Approved: April 10, 1998
Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Michael R. O'Neal at 3:30 p.m. on March 17, 1998 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Cindy Wulfkuhle, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Cliff Franklin
Scott Hill, Kansas Board of Education
Michael Byington, Envision
Susan Chase, Kansas National Educational Association
Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators

Hearings on **HCR 6012 -resolution requesting the state board of education to develop standardized assessment programs for reading and mathematics** were opened.

Representative Cliff Franklin appeared before the committee to explain **HCR 6012**. He proceeded by stating that there are two reasons for requesting the concurrent resolution the first that a minimum standardized test score should be achieved in reading, writing, and mathematics before advancing to the next grade and that there should be a tiered system of scoring which addresses the disabled students. (Attachment 1)

Scott Hill, Kansas Board of Education, appeared before the committee and informed them that the State Board of Education is taking steps to improve the assessment program. (Attachment 2)

Susan Chase, Kansas National Educational Association, appeared before the committee as an opponent to the concurrent resolution. KNEA believes that the State Board is taking adequate steps to change the assessment tests and that testing at every grade level would be very expensive and not very useful. (Attachment 3)

Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators, appeared before the committee as an opponent to the concurrent resolution. He told the committee that the concurrent resolution would take away important decisions from parents about their children's education. He believes that the State Board is doing an adequate job at improving the assessment tests. (Attachment 4)

Michael Byington, Envision, appeared before the committee with a suggested amendment in pupils whose primary reading media is Braille. (Attachment 5)

Hearings on **HCR 6012** were closed.

The committee meeting adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 1998.

CLIFF FRANKLIN

REPRESENTATIVE, TWENTY-THIRD DISTRICT

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**HCR 6012: STUDY OF MINIMUM READING AND MATH COMPETENCY
FOR GRADE ADVANCEMENT IN K-12 EDUCATION**

March 17, 1998--Mr Chairman and fellow Education Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to present my position in support of HCR 6012. I'd like to explain some of the benefits of approving a study by the State Board of Education to determine minimum reading and math competency levels for K-12 grade advancement.

Two Goals

The resolution asks the state board to study and recommend to the legislature:
(1) the minimum standardized test scores each student should be expected to achieve in reading, writing, and mathematics before advancing to the next grade level; and (2) a tiered system of scoring which appropriately addresses developmentally disabled students.

Why the study is necessary

Every year students are falling through the cracks and graduating without the ability to read, add, or subtract at a level required to gain productive employment. Several years ago the KCCI were proponents of legislation which would have required that Kansas students take a competency test during their senior year of High School, and use the results as a factor in awarding high school diplomas. KCCI testified that GEDs meant more to Kansas employers than a Kansas high school diploma because the test required to receive a GED at least showed minimum competency in the critical skills of reading and math.

Kansas voters have spoken

This is a very high priority with Kansas voters. In an education survey done in my district, the issue of standardized testing ranked second, only behind more flexibility to discipline. Kansas voters want assurance that their children will not be ignored and allowed to continue through the system when they are not achieving a minimum level of proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

We have an obligation

As legislators we have an obligation to the students, parents, employers, and taxpayers of Kansas that we are concerned whether or not children in this state are achieving acceptable levels of competency in reading, writing, and arithmetic before being advanced to the next grade level.

All this resolution asks for is a study.

I don't pretend to know what that minimum competency should be and that is why I am asking the state board to study the matter. All this asks for is a simple study.

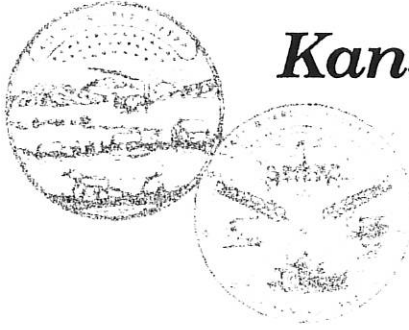
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Let's show we care about Kansas children.

In conclusion, we all care about the illiterate children falling through the cracks of our school system. Although the school lobby might be in opposition to this resolution because they favor delaying solutions, they also care about illiteracy. We can't wait any longer.

Dragging our feet on this important issue will mean more children who can't read, who can't add, and who can't write will be elevated into grades without the skills necessary to learn. Vote yes to get help for struggling children at the earliest possible grade. Vote yes to assure all children are prepared to learn. Vote yes because your district wants you to help these struggling students. Finally, vote yes on this resolution because you know that further procrastination on this issue is wrong and you can make a difference now. Thank you for your consideration.

Cliff



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District 10

March 17, 1998

TO: House Education Committee

FROM: Scott Hill, Legislative Liaison
Kansas State Board of Education

RE: Status of State Assessments

The Kansas State Board of Education took action last August to improve the state assessment program. The Board affirmed that the purposes for the state assessment program are to improve instruction and provide information for student accountability. The following highlights the steps the Board is taking to improve the assessment program.

- Academic standards committees composed of stakeholders from throughout the state are already working in mathematics, reading, and writing, and will begin working this summer in science and social studies to bring to the state's curriculum standards greater clarity and specificity to what teachers should teach and students should learn at the various grade levels, as well as reviewing current curricular standards, prioritizing the standards to be assessed by the state assessment, and providing advice regarding assessment methodologies.
- State assessments will measure state academic standards in an objective format in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies and through a performance measure in writing. Performance assessment in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies will be required at the local level as one of the local measure in the accreditation process but results will not be aggregated at the state level. State assessments will continue to be used by schools as a measure for school improvement and also be constructed to allow comparison between students, schools, and districts. Reports will be provided for a) schools, b) teachers, and c) students and parents.
- State academic standards will be reviewed at least once every three years as provided in current law by stakeholder groups within the state as well as by an external review committee.

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- The State Board will select two external, independent review committees, one for curricular standards and one for assessments. The external standards review committee will provide the in-state advisory committees and the State Board with an independent perspective on the clarity and specificity of state curricular standards. The external technical advising assessment review committee will review the process, methodologies, and assessments and to advise the contractor, department, and State Board about recommended changes and modifications.

New assessments in mathematics will be implemented during the 1998-99 school year. New assessment in reading will be implemented during the 1999-2000 school year. The state writing assessment will continue in its past form and will be administered in 1998-99. New assessment in science and social studies will be implemented in the 1999-2000 school year.



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

Susan Chase Testimony Before
House Education Committee
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am Susan Chase and I represent the Kansas National Education Association. I am here to speak in opposition to HR 6012.

KNEA opposes HR 6012 for a number of reasons. First, we believe that the state board is putting great effort into revising the state curricular standards and assessments and are doing a good job of addressing the weaknesses that have been identified. Benchmarks have been established at four levels with state assessments being suggested for administration at three. They have also identified which indicators are a priority for state assessment and which should be assessed at the local level. We believe that the work of the state board has merit and should be allowed to continue.

Secondly, we are concerned about the implication that one test would be used to determine a student's proficiency and ability to progress to the next level. While we believe that students need to reach a certain level of achievement prior to advancing to the next level, using one indicator to determine their proficiency is very risky.

Finally, we believe that a statewide testing system implemented at every grade level would be very expensive and may not be as useful as local measures. We think the best way to approach this is to have statewide assessments at appropriate intervals and allow local districts the flexibility to determine what other assessments are necessary for them to determine a student's progress toward the benchmarks and standards identified by the state.

We therefore request you not pass this resolution, but we hope this body will continue to monitor and facilitate the work of the state board in their progress toward improving the statewide student assessments.

Thank you for your consideration.

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HR 6012

Testimony presented before the House Committee on Education
by Gerald W. Henderson, Executive Director
United School Administrators of Kansas
March 17, 1998

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee:

At the request of my good friend, Mr. Tallman, I am being joined in my comments today by the Kansas Association of School Boards. We are again before this committee asking you to think carefully about a measure which advocates a state-designed, high-stakes assessment this time to be used to determine eligibility for grade advancement. In thinking about this issue, we would ask you to consider two important questions.

1. What are the purposes of educational assessment?
2. What do we believe about **all** children relative to assessment?

Assessment of educational performance serves two primary purposes. One, it provides valuable information for teachers in the design of programs for individual children or for groups of children. For example, a teacher who discovered in a student narrative the phrase, "Rose's - \$1.00", would need to consider re-teaching the apostrophe to at least that one student. If this advertisement for rose bushes appeared in more than one narrative a broader task is indicated.

The second common purpose for educational assessment is to provide information to the total community. Parents, other district patrons, legislators, school boards; all deserve reports on how well schools are doing relative to agreed upon learning objectives. School improvement or individual student improvement initiatives are based on the gathering of assessment data and then making decisions designed to improve performance. The problem arises when demonstrating that individual students or schools are improving is not enough. "Is my child doing better than my neighbor's child?" and "Is my school doing better than other schools?" become the operant questions.

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We in the school business know that we have to win in the “comparative assessments” ballpark. That is why nearly all schools still administer standardized, norm-referenced tests, though such tests do little to provide information usable in the design of specific instructional programs for children. That is why we are glad our state is now participating in the NAEP exams. Kansas kids will compare well to other states. They always do. We will most likely win in that game.

Our concern with **HR 6012** is that a vitally important decision about children and their educational progress is being taken away from the people who can best make that decision. Whether a child should be promoted will no longer be the result of a joint decision made by parents, teachers and school administrators, but rather by a state-designed, one-time, high-stakes, paper and pencil test. The purpose of educational assessment is thereby changed dramatically. In our judgement, policies for grade promotion in local schools ought to be drafted by local boards of education with input from local teachers and local school leaders.

The second item I asked you to think carefully about relative to this issue concerns your belief about **all** children. Standardized tests, either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced, tend to provide information used to sort and select children as a top priority. With the shift toward ensuring that all children learn and learn well, how much sorting and selection do we need or can we stand?

Finally, the State Department of Education is currently involved in two projects which involve the issues addressed by this resolution. The Graduation Requirements Review Commission has presented its report to the state board recommending high academic performance standards for all Kansas high school graduates. Blue-ribbon committees in the areas of mathematics and reading have reviewed standards, and state assessments are being revised to reflect those standards. These revised assessments will provide data on individual students and the data will be comparable. To design an assessment “matched to the essential skills in reading and mathematics,” the skills Kansans have agreed **all** children should be able to demonstrate, will be extremely expensive. To administer such

a test to every child, every year will be very expensive. We must at some point have the patience to allow school improvement initiatives to be completed. We have not yet demonstrated such patience. We don't yet fully know if we are indeed making a difference. Initial indications are positive. Perhaps the work now underway will provide what the sponsor of **HR 6012** wants. Only patience will provide the answer.

Choices & resources for people who are blind or low vision



EnvisionSM

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March 17, 1998

TO: House Education Committee

I rise in support of Resolution 6012. I particularly want to commend Representative Franklin for the addition of the "further resolved" clause regarding the inclusion of pupils who have disabilities and who have limited English proficiencies.

Envision is a State-wide not-for-profit agency which works with people who are blind, low vision, and multiply disabled blind. Our comments will regard not only concerns about declining literacy levels overall, but particularly declining literacy levels among graduating students who are blind.

While Representative Franklin's language is very good, I MIGHT SUGGEST ONE SMALL AMENDMENT. Between the words "disabilities" and "and" on line 35, add the words ", pupils whose primary reading media is Braille."

While Envision is concerned about literacy levels overall, we have seen an even sharper decline in literacy levels among blind and low vision students

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than is the case with non-disabled students. This is particularly true with regard to Braille literacy, and is particularly the case among those students who are in mainstreamed in total inclusion programs.

The Kansas Braille Bill, adopted in the early 1990s was intended to in part address this concern, but so far, it has not. The law has not been implemented or enforced.

This is why we requested introduction at the beginning of this Legislative Session of House Bill 2774 concerning testing for literacy levels among blind students. I realize that I am not here to speak regarding this bill, but Representative Franklin's resolution is relevant as it encourages looking at literacy levels as well as math competencies among all students, including those who have disabilities. This is a great idea! My proposed amendment simply insures that blind students who use specialized reading media are not left out.

We at Envision are in the business of developing good jobs for people who are blind and who have low vision. Although up to the present, many of our jobs have been in blue collar manufacturing, this is not the trend now. The jobs we are currently developing are more technical in nature, and the jobs of the next century are certainly going to require higher levels of literacy among our blind employees and among the blind people we place in integrated employment settings. With these types of jobs also comes greater security, better pay, and greater opportunities for advancement, but it all falls apart without a literate blind population. The development of new technologies now makes Braille literacy at high levels just as functional on many jobs as is standard print literacy. The technology is currently readily available to provide any text information most people get off of a computer screen in standard print also in paperless, refreshable Braille display. This opens some tremendous job potentialities for blind students now preparing to enter the world of work, but without literacy, unemployment among blind citizens in the United States is likely to remain around the same 74% which census data documents is the current

picture.

Making certain that blind students, including those who use Braille, are included in a proposed literacy and math survey or test does not have to exponentially raise the cost of the project. In documenting this fact, I must again refer to the fiscal note research done with regard to H.B. 2774. Again, I realize we are not debating this bill, but the data is nonetheless relevant to current proposals concerning Resolution 6012. Two fiscal notes were done on H.B. 2774. One was done by William Daugherty, Superintendent, Kansas State School for the Blind, and one was done by the Special Education Student Support Services Section of the Department of Education from up the street at 120 East 10th. Mr. Daugherty, who is an expert in the special teaching skills relevant to blindness and low vision, estimated the cost of a Braille literacy study would be around \$30,000.00. The more generalists special education professionals up the street here in Topeka estimated the cost at around \$900,000.00. This gap is the main reason I was not very aggressive about attempting to move 2774 along the process this year. I thought perhaps I had better take a year to resolve this fiscal note gap. Needless to say, Envision's estimate of costs are more in line with Superintendent Daugherty's. The emergence of Representative Franklin's fine resolution, however, necessitates visiting this subject this year. His concept is more global than was my original proposal, but we are both concerned about the same thing. His approach through the resolutions process may be more consistent with the Constitutional relationship between the Kansas State Board of Education and the legislative branch of Kansas Government than was mine, but we are both concerned about getting a handle on where we are with literacy and other academic competencies so that problems identified can be effectively and measurably addressed. I am simply asking that we make absolutely sure that the Board of Education is aware that blind students, including Braille users, are included in legislative intent for this resolution. I would thus close by asking you to adopt Representative Franklin's resolution, but to do so in a manner making sure that blind students will be included in the testing process. It is important for the future of blind children that this happen just as it is for sighted, non-disabled students, and if the right, specialized expertise is enlisted, this addition does not have to be a costly one.