

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 123-S Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on February 8, 1999.

Dr. Poggio was asked if the higher order skills are in conflict with the essential skills or do they augment each other.

Dr. Poggio replied there is a bit of a tug of war over what venue of assessment or sets of skills gets the attention. He thinks the balance is better now, but as the Chairperson asked, is there too much given up in terms of the world class perspective. He believes that there is now a better focus on advanced higher order thinking skills than there has been in the past; there is now greater specificity. Specificity help to better understand exactly what outcomes to look at in the higher order thinking skills. For example, in the area of communications arts, with respect to reading and writing. Kansas standards from about 1990 - '96 placed a premium on one form of reading and one form of writing, the narrative mode; the kind of reading one does in one's leisure time. Communications standards have been expanded to bring to the table a certainty that students will read expository material and comprehend it, which is the kind of material one finds in newspapers, periodicals, journals and so forth. That students can read technical material and read persuasive text that is intended to inform while changing an opinion. Standards are higher and, in some cases, have expanded. The question is what stands before us. Has a course of action been taken that is so distinct from where we have been. He believes it has been healthy. The state has managed to serve itself well by allowing the higher order thinking skills to advance in some places, but putting some things on the table as expectations that weren't there before and offering some retrenchment to some essential skills to come into play, as well. The advisory committees of educators who build these curriculum standards are very responsible.

How is Kansas doing on those kinds of skills in comparison with others; have we become too shallow in some areas; have we let too much go? The old models said let school districts rely on some off-the-shelf products to inform them about the basic skills. There is nothing to compare when districts are using different skills. The Board said it needed some common evaluation of essential skills.

The Chairperson stated she thinks it would be more advantageous to put the emphasis in the lower grades on the basic skills. Do they grasp what they need to build on in order to develop the higher order of thinking skills.

Dr. Poggio responded in the affirmative and stated that over the next few days, reports are going to the Board; the Board will be taking action in mathematics, and eventually in science and social studies and the pattern that can be expected is very close what you have described. At the entry level there will be more of a emphasis on essential skills. Moving into the junior high and high school level, there will be a shift, almost inverting itself; essential skills and moving into the higher order skills at the high school level.

One of the concerns expressed by a member of the committee is that while we are waiting to monitor what this lessening or relaxation on the emphasis of performance assessment, while we get into place a test that is easy to evaluate and is very specific in what the teaching requirements are, there will be over compensation; then in another round in five years these same critics will be back with problems.

Dr. Poggio said to view this as a series of modulated successive approximations. It is not violent mood shifts that are being looked at. The compromise that came to the Board was just that; they were clearly on one side of the ledger and it was conscientious decision to make the shift. Then a return to the center. The proposal by the State Board of Education suggested a lot of the changes that are seen today. It was not suggested that performance assessments be dropped. It was time to make a shift; the question of having gone too far in one direction.

Dr. Poggio stated that when the Board invited in six external consultants, people of very different beliefs about the role of assessment in state programs, and school programs, and put to them the question, 'should there be a performance assessment piece regardless of its weaknesses to keep a focus on instruction a particular way', all six said yes. Today, in the education arena, the vast majority of individuals say there is a place for performance assessment. Another agency has been brought in to do the test review. He does not know if they were charged to evaluate the standards as world class.

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Dr. Poggio responded to a question on performance based assessment by stating that in the communications arts area, the writing assessment is 100% of the performance-based assessment. What it will say in grade 5 is, the student must write in the narrative mode. Where integrity is maintained and world class standards is at the middle level for evaluating writing, students are to write in an expository or explaining mode. In the old days, two years ago, they also wrote in the narrative mode, which is very restrictive. At the 11th grade they will write in the persuasive mode. The strength of the writing curriculum in this state is going to improve. It is also to be more responsible with respect to accountability. While the content focus of specificity has improved in writing and expanded, it will become more rigid than it was in the past. One of the strengths of the program is its flexibility.

A member of the committee commented to Dr. Poggio that in a former meeting, he had assured the committee that Kansas teachers had developed these tests and that they were the best tests in the nation or close to the best. How can we move this dramatically from tests that Kansas teachers designed to be the best anywhere to the new model and not gotten better or gotten worse; the goal seems so different.

The response was that the goal has changed. The goal, while still focusing on world class, has changed to expanding the measurement of the base. There was a need to demand greater accountability from the system, that meant backing off some of the performance assessment issues. The focus has been changed. There are more essential skills being described in the standards with some attenuation of the higher order skills.

The comment was made that teachers had input into this process, but in speaking with several teachers, they had no input into the process.

Dr. Poggio responded that there are 30,000 educators in the state. Twelve to twenty teachers were invited this year to go over grade level/content area. Another half-dozen will then participate. Others will participate in a sensitivity review and pilot testing. There are to a great degree using the old tests until time to go forward with the new ones.

The Chairperson stated that the committee also needs to hear from the Department and Board at further hearings to give them an opportunity to speak.

She thanked Dr. Poggio and adjourned the meeting.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: February 8, 1999

| NAME | REPRESENTING |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Denise Ayt | U.S.A |
| Harold Voth | K S D E |
| Doug GLASNAPP | CETE, U. of Ks |
| Bruce Scott | USA |
| Andy Jungblut | K S D E |
| Diane Gjerstad | USD 259 |
| Hanson Fadden | K S D E |
| Steve Adams | K S D E |
| Artie Conroy | Student Wash Un. |
| Holly Parker | student Wash Univ. |
| Fauna Wilson | Student Wash Univ. |
| Courtney A. Groves | MSW Student - Washburn Univ. |
| Val de Fever | St. Bd of Ed. |
| Linda Holloway | K S B E |
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