

Approved: _____

Date

4/28/99

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on March 22, 1999 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman - Revisor
 Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
 Carolyn Rampey - Legislative Research
 Jackie Breymeyer - Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Scott Hill, Kansas State Board of Education

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and called on Ben Barrett, Legislative Research to give information on **SB 344 - declining enrollment** She reminded the committee the bill had a large fiscal note attached to it. It would be doubtful if it could make it through the legislative process.

Mr. Barrett stated that the current law allows the school district in a declining enrollment situation to use the preceding year enrollment for budget purposes. **SB 344** would allow these districts to pick up one earlier year if they fare better by doing that for purposes of computing enrollment. One of the proposals that will be presented in the House Education committee today deals with declining enrollment provisions in two respects. The first is that rather than allowing the district to go back to the preceding year and using that enrollment as an option, it provides the option of using a three-year average. The current, year, prior year as in existing law, or a three-year average if that would be beneficial to them. The fiscal note on this would be approximately \$3.1 million.

Mr. Barrett stated that the plan also includes the idea that districts whose enrollments are very small could have their enrollments computed for school finance purposes at a figure that would never be less than one hundred students. There are approximately five districts with enrollments of less than one hundred students. He reiterated that no district would be counted as having less than one hundred students.

Mr. Barrett was asked if he or the Department of Education had any idea of how many districts were teetering on the brink of one hundred students and how far down would the enrollment go to continue to give a district money for one hundred students.

Mr. Barrett reminded the committee that this is a concept and not a bill.

The Chairperson stated that the declining enrollment schools had made their case for their need of assistance. It is her thought, however, that these schools need merger of administration and things such as interactive television possibilities and so forth.

One of the committee stated that she thought Kathy Dale from Hugoton made a very good case when she said these districts should be run like businesses in terms of planning and organization.

Staff was asked to get some enrollment figures to bring to the committee.

Another committee member stated she wanted to speak for the larger schools that are having declining enrollment problems because percentage wise they are dealing with a far greater number of kids. She would like to see more of how this three-year averaging works.

The Chairperson stated the bill would be taken up tomorrow when more information will forthcoming from staff.

A general discussion began on **HB 2357** - postsecondary education savings plan

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 123-S Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 22, 1999.

The question was asked when is the first time that people can begin contributing to the account; the effective date of the statute or when the program is fully implemented which is July 1, 2000.

The answer was given as July 1, 2000. The statute book date is when it can start to be implemented so they can gear up for the program.

A question was asked about Section 11. The Revisor stated that page 14, lines 17 through 25 contained the peanut of the bill.

The Revisor also stated that the donor never pays taxes; the interest is taxed to the beneficiary at the time the money is withdrawn for college, the presumption being that at that time the beneficiary will be in such a low income tax bracket, the tax consequences would not be that great.

The committee took up **SB 53 - core academic areas subject to assessment under the school performance accreditation system** and told the committee that this was an issue that was very important to a constituent of hers who has been involved in teaching social studies at the high school level. The bill strikes the words 'social studies' and inserts 'United States government and civics, United States history, United States geography, world history, world geography, and economics.' These will all be under the purview of what we call social studies.

Scott Hill, Kansas State Board of Education, was present to give some information on what the State board is currently doing on what would fall under the whole category of social studies. The Board is now in the process of rewriting curricular standards in all the core academic areas. Under social studies they have divided the standards for Kansas history, geography and economics. It doesn't exactly match the wording in the bill. This points out the dilemma when there are two different bodies trying to put labels on core academic areas. What has been developed is what the State Board believes are the core academic areas and they don't exactly match what is in statute right now. It would exactly match what would be in statute if this bill passed either. The State Board has under the guise of general oversight of education determined which areas it believes are core academic areas so as to establish standards, benchmarks and assessments. It hasn't always looked at the statutes and said that this is exactly what will be followed; it has looked at them more from what they think is right. He stated that the academic areas of Kansas history, economics and geography will be included on one assessment and tested at three different grade levels.

The Chairperson asked Mr. Hill if he would agree that this does not guarantee consistency in teaching these fields.

Mr. Hill responded that it is his personal feeling that the only reason anyone in the field in Kansas pays any attention to the standards is because of the assessments. With the rewrite of the curricular standards, the focus and identification has been on those areas that as a State Board they feel are important enough to be included on the assessments. Those specific indicators that will be included on the state assessments will be taught.

The Chairperson stated that some schools do an excellent job of teaching these varied social studies, but some of them do not. This is what concerns some of the people, that not all Kansas children are getting this education.

Mr. Hill commented that one of the debates that goes on nationwide has to do with curriculum differences. The states of Texas and California have essentially mandated state curriculums. Other states are reluctant to put state standards in place. In Kansas we have the approach that there are essential ingredients that should be included in a child's academic education.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Mr. Hill was asked to explain what he meant when he said that what the State Board is doing doesn't necessarily match up with the definition of social studies.

He responded that it doesn't match up with the definition included in this bill, nor does it necessarily match up exactly with what's currently in statute because currently they have separated disciplines and have standards written on individual disciplines such as Kansas history, geography, world history, and economics.

Mr. Hill was asked if the State Board had a definition of social studies. He responded that a lot of people would define social studies as a grouping of those specific disciplines he has been discussing. The standards that the State Board has developed for specific disciplines that would fit under the general category of social studies do not necessarily match current statutes because current statutes say social studies. It does not necessarily match the proposed legislation either because the State Board does not have the exact wording on its standards that are in the legislation.

One of the committee commented that he is opposed to the legislation because it constrains the Board more than it is now.

Mr. Hill said that what would probably be easier or more workable for the State Board would be to say the State Board will test in core curricular areas. He has no problem with the legislature giving broad parameters. The Board does not have a position on the bill. It has generally taken the position that they do not have the flexibility under the Board's broad constitutional powers. They do not like to get into conflicts with the legislature over specific wording.

The Chairperson called attention to a letter from Diane Ravitch ([Attachment 1](#)) that had been distributed to the committee stating definite concerns about what is being taught around the country. Major surveys and national tests have disclosed the fact that our kids are not that well versed in geography, American history or Kansas history. Our state history is not well taught throughout the state. There are legitimate concerns that what comes under the heading of social studies is not always interpreted as we think. Many textbooks are very weak and poorly organized as far as teaching history is concerned. To minimize the seriousness of this is not what we should be doing. We should encourage the State Board to consider these areas that are listed very carefully.

Mr. Hill will get the current draft of the proposed Social Studies or what would fit under the parameters. He thinks some of the concerns addressed in Ms. Ravitch's letter have probably been addressed by the Board. The current social studies standards that are being developed are much more content rich than previously.

The chairperson thanked Mr. Hill and adjourned the meeting.

From: GardenD@aol.com
Subject: Re: History vs. Social Studies
Date: 03/03/99 01:36 PM

Senator Barbara Lawrence
Chairwoman, Kansas Senate Education Committee

By Fax

Dear Senator Lawrence,

I am writing to encourage you to make explicit in the state's education law that students in Kansas are expected to study history, geography, civics, and economics. The move to merge all of these important subjects under a single name--social studies--has tended to cause them to be downgraded, ignored, and neglected. Today, only a handful of states--California, Texas, Virginia, and Massachusetts--have strong standards for the study of U.S. and world history. In most other states, including Kansas, American history is mentioned only in vague terms, and it is clear that these states do not think it important for students to know the history of their country and of the ideas that provided the underpinnings of our Constitution and our political and legal systems.

I urge you to think about what students need to know to be well-prepared for citizenship in our society in the future. In my view, students need a firm knowledge of history, geography, civics, and economics. Unless these subjects are not specified, they may well be absent from the curriculum. Yet no young person who wants to understand the world that he or she lives in can afford to be ignorant of the past (history), of the influence of place (geography), of the requirements of civic involvement in a democracy (civics), or of basic economic principles (economics).

Diane Ravitch

*Senate Education
Attachment 1
3-22-99*

Critique of Kansas & Wichita Social Studies Standards

by Diane Ravitch

July 14, 1997

Diane Ravitch is Adjunct Professor of History and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She is author of numerous publications including "The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980;" "The Schools We Deserve;" "The Great School Wars;" and "What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know? A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature." She served in the U.S. Department of Education.

The Kansas and Wichita social studies standards are fairly typical of social studies "standards," reflective of the influence of the National Council of Social Studies. That is to say, long on process and grand but vague concepts, short on content and knowledge.

For many years, history was considered the core of the social studies curriculum; that has not been the case for many years, unfortunately.

The Kansas and Wichita documents reflect this same disdain for history, which is referred to only in passing until the high school courses in world and U.S. history. Even there, the idea of chronology--so central to the study of history--is frequently missing from the parade of concepts. Pity the poor student who tries to understand the world with the slight grasp of history that the state of Kansas intends to impart.

I noticed that both documents refer to various national studies, including the report of the Bradley Commission and the National Standards for History. Unfortunately, neither document reflects the strong demand of both of these reports for chronologically organized history. Nor does Kansas or Wichita include any of the rich historical and biographical materials recommended by the Bradley Commission (or the National Standards) for the early grades.

I would advise you, as a parent, to see that your children read biographies of people like Washington, Jefferson, Ben Franklin, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Jane Adams, and dozens of other exemplary Americans. This will give them the background knowledge of American history and culture that they will not get in schools that adhere to these guidelines.

~Diane~

Diane Ravitch

Biographical Summary

- Diane Ravitch is Senior Research Scholar at New York University, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and Senior Fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute.
- In 1993-94, she was a Visiting Fellow in Governmental Studies at Brookings. From 1991 to 1993, she served as Assistant Secretary of Education and Counselor to the Secretary of Education and was responsible for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education.
- Before entering government service, she was Adjunct Professor of History and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.
- She is a member of the New York State Council for the Humanities, a member of PEN International, and an honorary life trustee of the New York Public Library. She is a trustee of the New York Historical Society. She was elected to membership in National Academy of Education (1979), the Society of American Historians (1984), and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1985).
- She was awarded an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, by the following institutions: Williams College; Reed College; Amherst College; the State University of New York; Ramapo College; and St. Joseph's College of New York.
- A native of Houston, she is a graduate of the Houston public schools. She received a B.A. from Wellesley College in 1960 and a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1975.