

Approved: 3/29/00

Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Representative Ralph Tanner at 9:00 a.m. on February 16, 2000 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: A quorum was present.

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research Department  
Renaë Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes  
Linda Taylor, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. Bill Hefner, Kansas Optometric Association  
Representative Kent Glasscock  
Jeannie Hendrix, Ottawa, KS teacher  
Bill Leggett, Supt. Mankato USD 278  
Perry Perkins, Assoc. Supt. Auburn-Washburn USD  
Teri Howard, Ottawa, USD  
Marceta Reilly

Others attending: See Attached List

Representative Tanner introduced Dr. Gary Robbins of the Kansas Optometric Association who introduced Dr. Bill Heffner of the same organization.

Dr. Heffner appeared before the committee to present a report on a state-funded vision therapy reading performance research project. (Attachment 1)

Carolyn Rampey of the Legislative Research Department appeared before the committee to present an explanation of the Four-Year-Old At-Risk program and **HB 2631**. (Attachment 2)

Hearings on **HB 2794 - State board of education, mastery of basic skills program** and **HB 2796 - school districts, early childhood education programs** were opened.

Representative Kent Glasscock appeared before the committee as a proponent of the two bills. (Attachment 3) Representative Glasscock offered an overview of **HB 2794**. He stated that the key to a successful educational experience is increasing student literacy in math and reading. Representative Glasscock also stated that the only way to assure that all children master the basic skills is to provide early intervention.

Jeannie Hendrix appeared before the committee as a proponent of **HB 2796**. (Attachment 4) She stated that she was appearing as a field representative, not an expert. As a teacher with experience in early childhood education she recognizes the importance of reaching at-risk children early in order to ensure that they will not fall behind in school. She believes that full day kindergarten programs are an important step toward this goal.

Bill Leggett appeared before the committee as a proponent of **HB 2796** and **HB 2794**. He stated that full day programs are much better than half day programs, but the key question is how to fund them. He further stated that what happens at the primary level effects a child's entire school career. In support of **HB 2794**, he stated that data shows that if a child is not reading by the end of third grade, he probably will not be able to read without extensive remedial intervention.

Hearings on **HB 2796** and **HB 2794** were closed.

Hearings on **HB 2899 - Kansas pupils reading improvement program** were opened.

Teri Howard, a reading specialist in the Ottawa schools, appeared before the committee as a proponent for the bill. (Attachment 5) Ms. Howard stated that professional development is the key to improving the reading skills of Kansas students. She urged the committee to consider **HB 2899** favorably.

Marceta Reilly, Superintendent of Schools at Royal, Kansas appeared before the committee as a proponent of **HB 2899**. Ms. Reilly also represented the Kansas Learning First Alliance before the committee. (Attachments 6 and 7) She stated that reading is not just a school issue, but also a community issue. She believes that the additional resources outside the normal funding process are a key element in improving the reading skills of all Kansas school children.

Hearings on **HB 2899** were closed.

Hearings on **HB 2811 - Kansas competency in basic skills program** were opened.

Marceta Reilly also offered comments on **HB 2811** to the committee. She stated that this bill takes a punitive approach, and believes that decisions about promotions need to be handled at the local level.

Perry Perkins, Associate Superintendent in the Auburn-Washburn School District spoke on behalf of United School Administrators of Kansas about **HB 2811**. (Attachment8) He expressed concerns that a Basic Skills Test could set up artificially low levels of basic achievement.

Hearings on **HB 2811** were closed.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 17,2000.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**GUEST LIST**

**DATE: February 16, 2000**

NAME	REPRESENTING
Candy Deaton	Budget
Denise Ayst	USA / KCR
Bill Brady	KS Gov't Consulting
Kelly Kuitala	City of Overland Park
Harry Anderson	Kan. Assoc. of Sec. Principals
Sheron Freden	KSDE
ERIC Sexton	WSU
Kim Larson	
Brenda Larson	
Sarah Gill	
Diane Gjerstad	Wichita Public Schools
Craig Grant	KNEA
MARK DEBETTI	KNEA
Kaysie Rowson	Salina South Middle School
Kelli Noonan	South Middle School - Salina
Rachael Hax	South Middle School - Salina
Lucretia Helms	South Middle School - " "
Ingrid Claassen	South Middle School - Salina
Mark Tallman	KAB

## TESTIMONY FOR THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 16, 2000

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the House Education Committee. I am Dr. Bill Hefner. I practice optometry in Topeka with Drs. Reynolds, Kohake and Associates. In 1998, the Kansas Legislature asked the Kansas Optometric Association to conduct research on the value of vision therapy on elementary school students experiencing reading problems.

Research indicates that 20% of children entering kindergarten will have some form of vision problem, with this percentage doubling to 40% by high school. Vision, not eyesight, accounts for more than 80% of our learning experiences. Vision is the all-encompassing process of two-eyed coordination allowing one to derive meaningful information from what is seen. Eyesight, on the other hand, is simply formation of images clearly on the retina.

We recently completed a state-funded vision therapy reading performance research project. In our research, we limited it to children with convergence insufficiency or a difficulty teaming the eyes. This causes an inability to turn the eyes in and aim at near objects. I am passing around several flippers, which illustrate how this condition limits a child's ability to read. These children will easily pass a traditional school screening and can see a blackboard clearly, for example, but have little chance of success in reading. More importantly, these problems are not amenable to treatment with glasses or contact lenses. These difficulties require intervention and treatment aimed at re-training the visual system.

More than 500 third-grade students experiencing reading problems were screened by optometrists and their staff in cooperation with elementary principals, school nurses and teachers between the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999. Serious vision problems that could hinder learning were identified in more than half of the students screened. Unfortunately, many had conditions which weren't included in this study. Students selected for the treatment group received 4 months of vision therapy treatment. By the end of the vision therapy treatment, the students nearly doubled their ability to converge their eyes. More importantly, reading skills for students in the treatment group improved dramatically. Reading improved one entire grade level from pre-treatment to post-treatment for those receiving treatment. There were less than 60 students who finished the study so it is premature to extrapolate the data to a larger population, but the findings are extremely promising.

I want to thank you for your time and attention.

To: House Education Committee

From: Carolyn Rampey

Re: Four-Year-Old At-Risk Program and H.B. 2631

Beginning in FY 1999, the state has funded a four-year-old at-risk program as part of the school finance act. The program began with the 1998-99 school year when \$3.0 million was added to school finance funding in order to allow school districts to count four-year-old at-risk children as 0.5 pupil for school funding purposes. The program was limited to 1,350 pupils. The 1999 Legislature appropriated an additional \$1.0 million for FY 2000 to expand the program to 1,794 students, an increase of 444 children.

H.B. 2631, which is a proposal by Senator Bond, would expand the program from 1,794 children to 2,194 (page 2, line 27), an increase of 400 children. The cost of the addition would be \$1.0 million.

The existing four-year-old at-risk program bases eligibility to participate on federal Head Start guidelines, which include the requirement that at least 90 percent of the children enrolled in each Head Start program must be from low-income families. The State Board of Education administers the program as a competitive grant and accepts grant applications each year. These applications are reviewed by a review committee which ranks the applications. The first year of the program, 44 school districts received funding from an applicant pool of 51 districts. In the current year, several more districts have been added. In some cases, the grants have been prorated and a district is not able to count all children in a program for reimbursement under the school finance formula because the statewide cap of 1,794 children has been reached.

The State Department of Education estimates that there are 5,500 four-year-olds in Kansas who are at-risk. In its budget request for FY 2001, the State Board requested additional funding of \$2,764,152 to expand the at-risk four-year-old program from 1,794 children to 3,000, an increase of 1,206 children. In his recommendation to the Legislature, the Governor recommends that the program be expanded by 400 children, the same increase as that contained in H.B. 2631. The Governor funds his proposed expansion with \$1.0 million from the Children's Initiatives Fund (tobacco money).

H.B. 2796 also concerns four-year-old at-risk programs. This proposal by Representatives Tanner and Glasscock would require school district boards of education to provide early childhood education programs for at-risk four-year-old children. Participation in the program would be optional with the child's parent or guardian. An at-risk child is considered to be a child who is eligible for free meals under the National School Lunch Act. The bill would establish a grant program whereby a school district would be eligible to receive an amount of money equal to half the current year's Base State Aid Per Pupil, although the funding would not be part of the school finance formula. The fiscal impact of the legislation is estimated to be \$5.8 million in FY 2001.

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Attachment 2

KENT GLASSCOCK



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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Testimony  
Submitted by  
House Majority Leader Kent Glasscock  
to the House Education Committee**

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chair, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in support of HB 2794. This bill creates the Mastery of Basic Skills program in the Glasscock-Tanner education plan.

When I first considered developing an education reform package, I sat down with Kansas Department of Education to ask what would make a significant difference for students. Their answer was increasing student literacy in reading and math during the early elementary school years. After looking at the statistics in Kansas, I am become convinced too many Kansas children are not making the grade. In 1998, Kansas fourth graders took the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test – only 34% achieved the performance standard, and that's higher than the national average. In the statewide math assessment, only 52% of fourth graders performed math proficiently or better. For writing, only 48% of fifth graders wrote at least proficiently.

How to address the challenge of improving basic skills was another question all together. A look at the research showed that between Kindergarten and the end of third grade, children must learn to read or they stumble with the other basic skills of writing and math. In fact, studies show successful students must read by the time they reach fourth grade, or they start down a path of falling further and further behind. In short, children depend upon using basic skills in order to learn once they reach the fourth grade. A child without math skills can't complete a science project, and a child without good reading and writing skills can't complete a social studies report. Without the basics, students simply do not have the skills to succeed. The only way to assure that all children master the basic skills is to provide early intervention. Between the ages of 5 and 9, there is a window of opportunity for developing reading, writing and math skills. Without early intervention, the window shuts on many Kansas children.

A 1998 article in *American Educator* stated "it is a tragedy of the first order that while we know clearly the costs of waiting too long (to identify students failing to read), few school districts have in place a mechanism to identify and help children before failure takes hold." This bill creates such a mechanism in Kansas.

The Carnegie Corporation task force on education recommends immediate interventions with additional time and varied instruction for any child who falls behind in the basic skills. It also calls for states to help create effective elementary schools and school systems. The Carnegie report asks states to "play a leading role in developing and adopting high-quality standards that specify what each elementary school student should

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know and be able to do across all subject areas” with rigorous performance standards. And, it suggests elementary schools should monitor each child’s progress toward the fourth-grade, with districts monitoring schools and states monitoring districts to provide additional support.

HB 2794 is modeled on these recommendations. The bill creates a system to identify children who fall behind in reading, writing or math, and to provide interventions as soon as possible, before children find themselves drastically behind in school. Setting a goal for 95% of Kansas students to be proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic by the end of third grade, HB 2794 calls on the State Board of Education to set standards and outcomes in each of the basic skill areas for Kindergarten and first through third grades in fiscal year 2001.

In turn, the bill places control with local school districts to determine how to help students reach those standards. Schools will develop a process to certify that students meet the standards at each grade level. As a part of this plan, schools will determine procedures to assist students who may fall behind in one of the subject areas through alternative education programs such as summer school, and after school instruction. The school will work with parents to prepare a plan to improve the individual child’s progress.

If these interventions are not successful, the Mastery of Basic Skills program prohibits social promotion of the child. It is important to note that we do not anticipate a child will arrive at the midnight hour facing the question of retention. Instead, we expect school districts to design and implement interventions to check in on students and provide the remedies of greatest success. It is only as a last resort that students should be held back a grade.

As an incentive, we offer schools that reach the standard of excellence on fifth grade reading and fourth grade math statewide assessments a financial reward to be utilized at the local school’s discretion. The successful elementary school will receive \$10 for every pupil enrolled. In addition, schools which successfully reach the 95% goal will receive a Basic Skills Achievement Award. Underlying all of this, the state board of education will develop a professional development sequence to support teachers in basic skills instruction methods.

By 2006, the state board will review the program to determine if the state has met the 95% goal. If the goal is not reached, the state board will create a statewide plan to reach the goal. Some will say we have set too ambitious of a goal. But here, we defer to the Carnegie Corporation’s insight that schools often fail in their task “because of the low expectations they hold out for many students.” This bill asks for that each child be challenged to meet high expectations for learning and achievement. Low expectations are often a self-fulfilling prophecy. This bill establishes a reasoned approach, backed by research, to develop goals and strategies to insure Kansas children do not slip through the cracks.

As we all know, in the 2000 legislative session, the first question of any bill is how much does it cost and where is the money coming from. Our fiscal note accounts for \$100,000 in the first year to pay for the development of the standards and outcomes. Beginning in the second year when the program is implemented in schools, there is a \$650,000 cost for the incentive feature. This cost will remain the same in succeeding years. As for the implementation of the plan, the state recently received an \$8 million federal reading excellence grant for under-performing schools. This money will support needed changes in the schools which will most benefit from help. We ask the remaining schools to refocus their priorities on the basic skills and to shift resources accordingly. The answer is not more money; it is in using our money more wisely.

Jeannie Hendrix  
Eisenhower School  
1404 S. Ash  
Ottawa, Kansas 66067

## **Glasscock-Tanner Education Plan Testimony: Early Childhood Education**

### **Educational Background**

I received my Bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas. My Master's Degree in Early Childhood and Administration are both from Emporia State University.

My teaching experience includes teaching third grade, teaching an Early Childhood Program at the East Central Vocational Coop, and teaching Kindergarten since 1982. I have also served on numerous district committees concerning professional development, QPA, teacher evaluation and curriculum.

In 1985, I was a member of a committee that developed a Pre-Kindergarten Program for At-Risk students. I was the teacher for this class from 1986-93.

### **Four-Year-Old Preschool**

Ralph Tanner and Kent Glasscock have provided you with research that outlines the benefits of Early Childhood Education; such as 4-year-old programs. Early Childhood education substantially improves the cognitive development, academic success, and lives of children in poverty while benefiting the nation as a whole. (W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D.)

In Kansas, 1,200 children are offered a glimpse at what could be accomplished by reaching out to preschool children. (Sherrill Martinez; Kansas Department of Education) These children were assessed in seven areas; personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts and physical development. When evaluated in the fall of 1998, 28% of the students were proficient in any category. When examined in the spring of 1999, at least half of the students were proficient in all areas. (Lawrence Journal World article; Dec. '99)

The second Executive Summary highlights the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study. This study revealed the long term benefits for high-quality, active learning preschool programs. (refer to Figure 1) It also emphasizes the elements that are necessary to develop and maintain widespread preschool programs:

- Provide for all 3 and 4 year olds living in poverty a classroom program operating at least 12 ½ hours per week
- Use developmentally; appropriate practices that encourage child-initiated learning activities
- Have a high level of outreach to parents as partners
- Maintain a child-staff ratio of no more than 10 children per adult
- Employ staff who are well trained in early childhood education
- Provides consistent staff supervision and staff training in the developmentally appropriate curriculum approach used

I list these elements to emphasize their importance. Parental involvement is a key element. In addition, we must not over look programs such as Parents As Teachers, and Even Start that emphasizes parental involvement.

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## **Full-Day Kindergarten**

The two research articles that have been presented to you for review illustrate again, the growth made by children in a full-day kindergarten program. The findings indicate that oral language development, early mathematics concepts, emergent literacy skills, and overall behavior all made significant gains in favor of the full-day kindergarten program.

The guiding principles that reflect a developmentally appropriate program are:

- Young Children learn and construct knowledge as a result of meaningful experiences.
- Optimal development in young children takes place in an environment where collaboration with others, discussing analyzing, and developing personal meaning through application of what is being learned is encouraged and facilitated.
- Young children reach different levels of learning and development at different times.
- Learning is both individual and social and takes place within a social/cultural context.
- Play is an integral part of quality programs serving young children
- Skills and concepts are developed and enhanced through child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities.
- Programs for young children must provide opportunities for individual activities and flexible groupings.
- Young children should be involved with the teacher in planning, implementing and evaluating their learning experiences.
- The dignity of young children and their personal circumstances and diversity must be respected and affirmed
- Families of young children are essential partners in the educational process.
- Children are best served in a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment
- Developmentally appropriate assessment of young children's learning is essential for planning and implementing appropriate curriculum and celebrating children's learning
- Program practices for young children must reflect sound research and findings about young children and learning.

Assistance from the State is necessary to implement these new programs. I personally encouraged my own district to pilot a full-day kindergarten program, but this cannot take place until funding is available.

Another area that the State Legislators can address is the attendance policy for Kindergarten children.

HB 2631  
READING IMPROVEMENT

These remarks will reflect the best way to improve reading. In the last ten years exciting brain research has shed light on how the brain works when one learns to read. In one study it was estimated that 15 to 33% of a population did not process print in the most effective manner. This meant that because of the lack of certain "language pathways" for the brain to use to process some children used other pathways that made learning to read more difficult. What does this mean for an educator? It was surmised that a few of these children were learning disabled but many were language deprived. They simply did not understand the structures of language because of lack of exposure. These children need early intervention and quality instruction. Instruction based on the best reading research. It is my hope you do not join on the bandwagon and disregard current research by mandating a methodology teachers must use. As you can see it is many methodologies integrated into an effective reading program. With this research comes responsibility - responsibility to impart this knowledge to the ones in the trenches.

What does outstanding reading instruction look like from the back of the room? From the READING TEACHER "Reading Lesson Observation Framework for elementary teachers, principals, and literary supervisors " these criteria are listed:

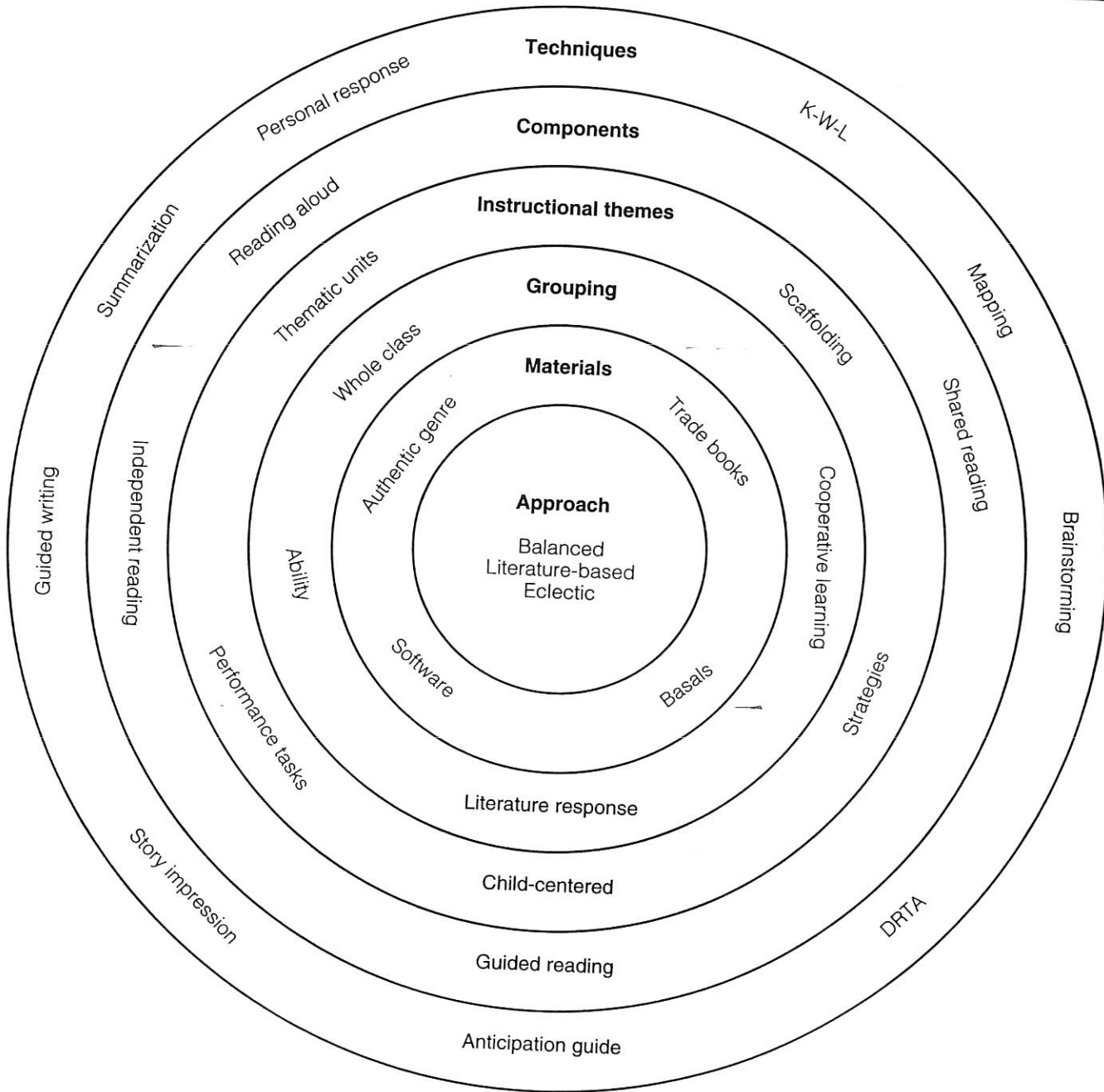
1. quality of classroom literacy climate
2. basic lesson execution explicit skill and strategy instruction
3. the selection of reading materials and tasks
4. adherence to generally accepted principals of a balanced reading program.
5. teacher planning and collaboration time

Not a simple answer. Universities must be up to the challenge of imparting this training to new teacher candidates. Time and resources must be expended to relay this message to the givers of the lessons. Professional development impacts instruction in the most competent and dramatic fashion. We must have resources set aside for professional growth.

Teri Howard, Title One Reading Specialist  
USD #290  
Ottawa, Kansas

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**Figure 2**  
**Contemporary Reading Instruction Organizer**



Note: From a presentation given in October, 1997 by William Henk and Jesse Moore entitled "Contemporary Reading Instruction," for the Central Dauphin School District in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.



# Kansas Learning First Alliance

*Kansas Learning First Alliance: Committed to making Kansas first in the nation in teaching and learning*

## Kansas Learning First Alliance Members:

Kansas Association for Colleges of Teacher Education

Kansas Association of Elementary School Principals

Kansas Association for Middle School Administrators

Kansas School Public Relations Association

Kansas Association for Gifted, Talented, & Creative

Kansas Association of School Administrators

Kansas Association of School Boards

Kansas Association of School Business Officials

Kansas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators

Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals

Kansas Commission - Teaching and America's Future

Kansas Council of Vocational Administrators

Kansas North Central Association-Commission on Schools

Kansas National Education Association

Kansas Congress of Parents and Teachers

Kansas Reading Association

Kansas Staff Development Council

Kansas State Department of Education

United School Administrators of Kansas

## READING POSITION PAPER

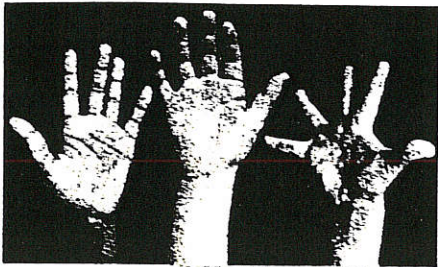
Reading is the cornerstone on which all further education is built. Research indicates that students who are not readers by the end of third grade struggle to be successful in school and in life. Studies show that reading is a key to future success in both education and society in general.

While most Kansas students typically perform very well on national and state assessments, in 1999 from 38 to 41 percent of third, seventh and tenth grade students taking the Kansas Reading Assessment scored below the proficient level. Further, test results have remained stagnant over the years. Also, economically disadvantaged and some racial/ethnic groups of students score considerably below their peers. A focus on improving the reading skills of all Kansas students is important for the future of the state. To that end, a total state-wide effort in support of improving reading instruction is needed.

Member associations of the Kansas Learning First Alliance agree that the following actions must be taken:

- Teachers must continue to improve teaching skills in the area of reading. Reading must be a part of every subject in every classroom.
- Building administrators must ensure teachers' continued professional development to improve teaching skills. They must provide the leadership to assure a total building focus on student learning.
- District administrators must provide leadership for the focus on student learning and especially on the improvement of reading instruction and learning in all district schools.
- Local Boards of Education must give clear direction to all district staff about their focus on improved student learning. Local boards must also allocate adequate resources to support professional development and appropriate materials to improve reading instruction.
- Parents must provide experiences that promote language and literacy skills for young children, especially during the preschool ages, to equip them to succeed in school and in reading.
- Local communities, including parent organizations and day care providers, must support the efforts of the school to increase reading levels of all students, and they must provide support for community-based programs, such as tutoring, to assist students who need extra help in the area of reading.

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## The Learning First Alliance

### *Every Child Reading: An Action Plan*

#### Tips for Schools

1. **Work in your communities.** Form family literacy programs for new parents and care-givers so that all children will develop a strong language base and love for books before they attend preschool or kindergarten.
2. **Provide strong early education.** Set up high-quality preschool and kindergarten programs that not only introduce language skills and concepts of print, but also include diagnostic tests for early intervention.
3. **Give teachers the most help possible.** Provide teachers with new materials, tools, and strategies and extensive, ongoing, and meaningful professional development to use them.
4. **Keep the size of class for reading instruction in the primary grades low.** Studies show that elementary-age children do better when classes are 15 children to one teacher. Some schools reduce class size by providing additional certified teachers—tutors, librarians, special education teachers—during reading periods only.
5. **Make first grade count.** First grade is a very important year in a student's schooling because it's when children usually define themselves then as good or poor readers.
6. **Base reading instruction and text selection on solid research, using evidence, not ideology.** Then provide explicit and systematic instruction in phonics and exposure to rich literature, both fiction and non fiction.
7. **Write and read together.** Creative and interpretive writing instruction that begins in kindergarten will help build reading competence and practice.
8. **Test often on what the child is taught in class.** Continuous assessment is the only way teachers will know how fast children learn and what individual needs must be met. Informal assessments can be daily, with regular testing every six to 10 weeks.
9. **Step in immediately if there's a problem.** For those children who experience problems, one-to-one tutoring with certified teachers or well-trained paraprofessionals is best.
10. **Expect families to help.** Children should spend additional time reading—aloud and silently—beyond what time permits during the school day. Ask parents to have children read aloud to them for 20 to 30 minutes daily in first grade. Help families choose materials that interest their child and that match his or her reading level.
11. **Pull out all the stops in second grade and beyond.** Give special attention to children who are not reading well at the end of first grade so that you can strengthen their language skills and reading ability.

Tips are reproduced from the Learning First Alliance's *Every Child Reading: An Action Plan*. For more information, please contact the Learning First Alliance at (202) 296-5220.

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Attachment 7

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2811

*Representing:*

*United School Administrators of Kansas  
Auburn-Washburn School District (USD 437)*

February 16, 2000

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Perry Perkins, Associate Superintendent in the Auburn-Washburn School District located in Topeka and Shawnee County. I am here today on behalf of United School Administrators of Kansas. Thank you for this opportunity to visit with you briefly about House Bill 2811.

The passage of this bill and the adoption of a "Basic Skills Test" which would act as a prerequisite for promotion raises several questions for our district. Would the test be created to reflect the high expectations we already hold for all of our students and thus be similar to the form of the already adopted State Assessments in the areas of Reading, Writing, and Math or would it be a lower level Basic Skills Test for which we could be relatively certain large number of students would pass? We are concerned if the test will be setting up artificially low levels of basic achievement. Our district is firmly committed to Effective Schools Research. Larry Lezotte of the Effective Schools Movement stated in his book, *Sustainable School Reform*, that in the first generation of effective schools "the focus was on mastery of mostly low-level skills." In the second generation "the focus will shift toward a more appropriate balance between higher level learning and those more basic skills that are truly prerequisite to their mastery." The Auburn-Washburn School District firmly believes that all children can learn and should be held accountable to high

levels of academic expectations. Our outcome-driven curriculum reflects both high level state standards AND the basic skills which are prerequisites for those standards.

Our school district also believes in the Total Quality principle of “continuous improvement” in everything we do. Although we take the time to celebrate our accomplishments, we are never satisfied with the status quo; we know we can always improve. For example, we are not satisfied with the results of our state tests. In reading, approximately fifteen percent of our students across all the grade levels scored in the unsatisfactory range. Our performance on other state tests is not where we believe it should be either. As an attempt to address these issues and concerns we have organized six focus groups over the past year composed of approximately 120 parents, teachers, and administrators across all grade levels and across the subject areas of reading, writing, and math. These focus groups investigated and reported back on how to deal with the promotion/retention issue in our district. They have researched and discussed these issues at length and have submitted reports outlining their findings. We are still in process of analyzing these reports but there are some constant themes among all of them. All of the committees have reported back that neither social promotion nor retention are acceptable as stand alone policies or practices.

Another general theme is that all children can meet the high expectations we set for them but not in the same amount of time or in the same way. This requires us to make systemic changes in such areas as adding or expanding early learning programs such as full-day

kindergarten and preschool programs, lower class sizes, and alternative year scheduling including intersessions within the school year to assist students immediately instead of waiting until it is too late or more difficult to correct the deficiencies. Other interventions which we are considering include multiage programming and an even more focused and expanded summer school.

Along with these proposed programs would come an emphasis on results, results that would be measured with a variety of assessment tools including national, state, and locally developed assessments. We currently have such assessment tools, and the results of these tests are driving our curriculum development and teaching strategies in our classrooms. A checklist has been prepared to identify our students who do not meet the criteria on these assessments and is connected to a QPA requirement that a plan be made to deal with individual student academic problems. Eventually, we believe every student should have an Individual Learning Plan which will follow him or her throughout the school years. But for right now, we have a Student Success Plan which allows us to systematically identify students needing assistance. Retention may still be considered as a possibility but only after all other options have been tried. Most of these decisions and interventions are best considered and implemented by those people, educators and parents, who are closest to the students.

Accountability for results must be established but don't we already have a system in place through QPA to insure this takes place? The staff members of the Auburn-Washburn



School District feel quite accountable for achieving its Teaching and Learning Mission. We pay attention to the Quality Performance Assessments and the joint accreditation processes of QPA and the North Central Association. I do not believe we need another state test to make us feel more accountable, or to work harder. In fact, working smarter, not harder, may be the answer. Perhaps what we need is to continuously improve the current QPA system, especially its monitoring and accountability functions.

Sustainable school improvement cannot take place on the basis of a single test. It requires a systemic approach with an interconnectivity of the systems that are delivering services to children. If we set the bar for achievement too low we also lower the ceiling on children's potential. If we set the bar for achievement too high we may set up many students and the system for failure. The best approach is to set the bar for achievement high enough to challenge children but not to overwhelm them and the system which serves them. This can best be accomplished by maintaining local control of the means of promoting or retaining children. Who knows the children better than the people who work with them on a daily basis?

Ladies and Gentlemen: We are not afraid of being held accountable, in fact, we should welcome it. The Teaching and Learning Mission is of such importance to the students, parents, educators, and the State of Kansas that discussions and considerations such as these today in this room need and must occur. In my district, and I believe in most districts across this state, educators and community members, coupled with state-level leadership,

are striving to continuously improve the achievement of students. We want RESULTS just like you do. The question is - what is the best way to achieve those results? A focus on results, a commitment to appropriate interventions for students needing assistance, early learning and alternative programming, an emphasis upon high expectations for students and educators, providing training to educators, involving the local community, and yes, accountability of local school districts by the Kansas State Department of Education through its already established accreditation and student assessment system should help answer that question.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak; I welcome your questions and comments.

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