

**MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION.**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on March 15, 2000 in Room 123S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research  
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Representative Thimesch  
Michelle Nichols, St Joe, Ost USD 267  
Dr. David Pendleton, Basehor-Linwood

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting and explained that the charter school piece was amended into the juvenile justice centers bill sent over to the House by the Senate. The Senate took it out and put it into **Senate Substitute for HB 2357**. The Chairperson has been a proponent of true charter schools for many years. It is an idea that did not take place until federal funds became available to fund startup costs. Now there are 15 charter schools, which is the limit. The bill will expand the number of charters that Kansas can have. She has some reservations, however, because the charter schools are not in the strictest sense charter schools, but alternative schools which can be done within the law now. There were very few waivers asked for any of the schools started with few exceptions. National trends in charter schools show they are a growing phenomenon. She is hoping to see more innovation than there has been in the past. She called on Representation Thimesch to introduce the first conferee.

Representative Thimesch stated the subcommittee of which he was a member studying charter schools worked very hard. He visited Basehor-Linwood, as well as the school in Yoder, Kansas. He was greatly impressed by what he saw. He believes that attitudes toward charter schools have greatly changed. This is a good opportunity to look at the issue and bring it to the attention of the State of Kansas. He introduced Michelle Nichols, who was present to testify to the bill.

Ms. Nichols introduced Arlen and Mary Ann Freund, George Marson, Byron and Dorothy Bergkamp and their daughter, Victoria. They have the smallest school in Renwick School District, which is west of Wichita. They have worked diligently to keep their small school open; the people in the community are very close. She read from testimony her husband had presented in the House Education Committee. (Attachment 1) She closed her remarks by stating that with a charter atmosphere the school could obtain the adequate funds to maintain and improve its facility and educate its children without the threat of closure.

Ms. Nichols was questioned about the scores at the back of the testimony. There was close alignment between all scores but reading. Ms. Nichols responded that in a small class, if one student has a bad day, it will pull the score down.

The Chairperson asked Ms. Nichols what she thought of the chances of the school board approving a charter for St. Joe. Ms. Nichols responded that it would probably be hard for them to obtain a charter and would like to see some type of appeals process written into the bill.

Ms. Nichols made further comments, answered questions from members of the committee, and thanked the committee for allowing her to testify on the bill.

Dr. David Pendleton, Basehor-Linwood, appeared on the bill. Dr. Pendleton stated when the charter school was started in the school district, they wanted to do something significantly different. He believes that is what the concept of the charter is all about. He informed the committee that he does not have a single student who is in public education in his program unless the superintendent of the school district approves it. The charter school chose not to be in competition with public schools. A responsibility is assumed when a grant is received and the charter is obtained. When a local problem is fixed, that potential solution is taken and creates the opportunity for other school districts to learn from the charter.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 123S Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 15, 2000.

Chairperson Lawrence stopped Dr. Pendleton and stated that she was not sure that everyone understood the concept of the virtual district.

Dr. Pendleton continued with an explanation of the concept under which the school operates. He stated that it is a virtual school. There are no bricks and mortar; it is all on the internet. The intent was to see if the charter could provide a sound program to students, particularly home school students; second, to provide education for alternative students, and third, enrichment programs for regular school students through the electronic learning process. The school started with 68 students and currently there are over 300 students. Next year they are projecting around 450 students. Curriculums are provided for parents home schooling their children. A program facilitator helps parents make good choices about what their children need. They are performance based; tests are given and assessments are made. The IPBS is required at the grade level to determine if a child is making progress. They are able to take the children and give them some type of idea of how they are progressing through the state guidelines and curriculum. They have the materials to make the process work.

Mr. Pendleton stated there are over 50,000 students in Kansas not attending any school or attending a non-accredited school. This is something of which there should be concern as it is almost 10% of the total enrollment in the state. He has done a survey of the parents of the charter children and asked them what the number one reason was they had left public education. He said it was not religion, not right wing extremism or safety and security; it was choice. The school district had not let them have any choice. He stated that Wichita Public Schools will have a virtual school this fall. Greenbush will also have several schools. Other schools across the state are picking up on this idea.

Mr. Pendleton summed up his testimony by stating his hopes for expansion of charter schools in the state. He hopes it is expanded with direction. If accountability and progress are not accomplished, then the charter should be lost. Charters should be magnificent ideas and creative thinking for the state for the future of public education.

Mr. Pendleton was asked if he thought there was sharing and innovation in the charter school system. His response was that he thought there was. He added that the charter program in his mind is not the solution to a school's problem. There are other ways to deal with that other than a charter. In his mind, charter is an opportunity to test a solution to a problem that abounds statewide.

After further comments, the Chairperson thanked Dr. Pendleton and stated the committee would take up the bill again next week.

The meeting was adjourned.

# SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: March 15, 2000

NAME	REPRESENTING
Mark Tallman	KAGB
Mark DeSetti	KNEA
Byron Bergkamp	St. Joe Ost <sup>USD</sup> 267
Dorothy Bergkamp	St. Joe Ost <sup>USD</sup> 267
Victoria Bergkamp	St. Joe Ost <sup>USD</sup> 267
Arlen Freund	Goddard K. USD 265
George Marson	St Joe Ost USD 267
Michelle Nichols	St. Joe Ost U.S.D. 267
Mary Ann Freund	Goddard K's USD - 265
<del>Donna</del>	Bischoffswood
Clay Deaton	Budget
Rep. Don Thomas	
Alfred Schward	
Louise Cole	Sen. Iyon Office
Harshel Poor	Self.
Chyllie Kelly	KSD E
Sally Finney	USD 501
Jacqueline Oakes	SQE
Denny Aps	USA - KCR
Jim Zarvalley	USD #512

*Please support Charter Schools!*

**Chartering; A Way for St. Joe Ost to Prosper**

The St. Joe Ost school is a 1st-8th facility located in the Renwick School District near Wichita, KS. It is a facility that is a center-point of the St. Joe Ost community. The building consists of a small gymnasium, four classrooms, a small band room, a lunchroom and a kitchen. One schoolroom serves as a head teacher's office, library, teachers' lounge, secretary's office, and infirmary.

The large majority of the Renwick District lies in metropolitan Sedgwick County, except for St. Joe Ost, which lies in rural Reno County. Until the 1999 school board election, St. Joe Ost had direct representation on the board. Because of changes in inter-district boundaries and the large majority of the district's population residing in the eastern areas of the district as Wichita expands, all board members now live outside of the St. Joe area.

While other schools in the district have received bond money for capital improvements, St. Joe has never received money of any kind for improvements, and has had difficulty obtaining funds even for maintenance work. Much of the maintenance at the school, therefore, has been, and continues to be, performed by local patrons; such as landscaping, excavation and foundation repair, waterproofing, grounds-keeping, sidewalk replacement, tuck-pointing and masonry repair, and general building repair. Most money for supplies and materials comes from capital outlay funds. Most labor and equipment is donated.

Those patrons have also organized fundraising functions for new playground equipment including: ball-field equipment purchases, the self-manufacture of a backstop and fence for the baseball field, the self-manufacture of swing-sets and other playground equipment, and so forth. Those same patrons have recently begun paying property taxes for the new Renwick School District \$18 million bond voted through in 1999 in which our school is not even mentioned.

In 1998, the school was allocated approximately \$240,000 in capital outlay funds for maintenance work to bring our school back up to an acceptable state of repair. The money, however, is now being distributed in small increments over a five-year period of time, and then, only if funds are left over at the end of each year and after all other district needs are addressed. In this manner, any major projects are impossible to pursue. In the meantime, the building continues to need updating and attention, and more local people are being tempted to send their children to schools elsewhere in the district. Students are allowed to ride a bus to other schools in the district if they desire. Their parents feel it is only a matter of time before the school closed, and their children would be sent to other schools anyway.

*Senate Education  
3-15-2000  
Attachment 1*

A survey was taken in 1997 of the district's population to get a feeling for whether or not the people of the district, as a whole, desired to keep St. Joe Ost open or to close it. Roughly 50% of the people surveyed wanted to close St. Joe Ost because, incorrectly, they believed it would save the district money.

The St. Joseph Elementary School Survey Committee, during the 1997-98 school year, estimated the annual operating cost of the school at \$268,594.10. The average cost per pupil for children attending St. Joseph came to \$3629.65; a figure that compares closely to other schools in the district. If all students went to St. Joe that were within its district boundaries, operating costs per pupil would be at the lowest of any school in the district at \$2398.16. If the school were closed, there would be the additional yearly cost of \$6475.00 to bus St. Joe Ost kids to other schools in the district. The additional number of students required to ride a school bus from St. Joe to another school in the district would require St. Joe children to be on a school bus for more than one hour, two times per day, as they are bused to schools nine miles or more from St. Joe Ost.

A charter would allow St. Joseph to acquire our fair share of operating funds based on the amount of children attending the school, and use that money more economically and wisely to better facilitate the operation of our school. That would give St. Joe Ost the ability to determine its own destiny. Like the Yoder Charter School has proven, a small rural based school left to govern itself can succeed at the job of teaching children, and can draw an adequate supply of pupils from demand created within the community in order to secure adequate operating funds to guarantee its future.

My family and I have lived in the St. Joe area for approximately nine years. Every two to three years, the existing Renwick School District Board enacts a drive to close the school down. Their ignorance presumes that the school building is beyond repair, and should no longer be maintained, although the members of the board seldom, if ever, come to the school to see the condition of the school for themselves. However, a commercial architect, Haney and Associates, in 1998, after examining the site, declared the building to be structurally sound.

The board members also believe that the education the children at St. Joseph receive is sub-standard, and therefore the children of St. Joe would benefit from an education elsewhere in the district. However, annual standardized tests show St. Joseph students to perform at levels equal to, or exceeding, students at other schools in the district, as well as other students in the state.

## CONCLUSION

St. Joe Ost has operated in the shadow of the Renwick School District for thirty five years. In that period of time, the school has received little help from the district, and is now threatened with closure by a district that is becoming larger and larger every school

year, and growing away from the roots the district was created on; the shared values and moral beliefs St. Joe opted into the district for in 1965.

Left to develop itself in a charter atmosphere, St. Joe Ost could begin again to build a school atmosphere that concentrates on bringing up and readying its children for life in the twenty-first century based upon the values and moral beliefs its forefathers built the school on in 1922; not on the values and beliefs integrating from the large metropolitan area of Wichita, KS as it continues its growth westward.

St. Joe Ost has already proven, over a long period of time, its ability to educate its children. It would like a chance to obtain adequate funds to maintain and improve its facility, and develop a school atmosphere more parents want to raise their children in as its available student base increases, and the threat of closure disappears.

**KANSAS STATE ASSESSMENT SCORES  
TAKEN FROM KANSAS  
SCHOOL BUILDING REPORT CARD 1996-1997  
(Numbers are expressed in percentages)**

Reading Assessment

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Expository 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
64.3	61.1	76.0	70.3	69.0	67.6

Narrative 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
64.2	64.2	76.4	75.6	65.8	72.2

Reading Index 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
64.2	62.6	76.2	72.9	67.4	69.9

7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Expository 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
60.66	86.1	74.1	64.3	62.4	56.8

Narrative 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
62.96	75.0	73.4	62.6	70.2	63.5

Reading Index 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
61.81	80.6	73.7	63.5	66.3	61.2

## Math Assessment

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### Problem Solving 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
58.07	66.4	66.0	64.3	60.2	65.6

#### Communications 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
59.2	72.4	72.7	63.8	61.4	69.3

#### Reasoning 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
53.45	63.0	58.1	56.5	50.5	58.3

#### Power Score 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
56.9	67.3	65.6	61.5	57.3	64.4

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### Problem Solving 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
50.4	52.5	56.2	43.7	58.9	49.7

#### Communications

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
60.71	72.0	74.2	51.0	69.0	60.4

#### Reasoning 1997

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
46.35	61.5	56.1	41.5	52.1	45.2



7<sup>th</sup> Grade (con't)

Power Score

State	St. Joe	St. Marks	Garden Plain	Colwich	Andale
52.5	62.0	62.8	45.6	60.0	51.8

**Points of Emphasis:**

- As Wichita expands, there is a growing population pushing westward toward St. Joe insuring a growing student base.
- We have paid taxes toward bonds to improve other district facilities, yet we have received \$0 of this bond money.
- We have one school room that serves as a head teacher's office, library, teacher's lounge, secretary's office, and infirmary.
- We were promised \$240,000 by the Renwick School Board in capital outlay, but only if there is any money left over after the end of the school year. It's given in such small increments over a period of years so that no major improvements are impossible.
- In order to best utilize the small amounts of funds we constantly use volunteer labor and equipment to upgrade and maintain our facility.
- Most of the time we get used equipment from the other schools in the district, i.e. computers, fax machines, scoreboard.
- On standardized test scores, in most instances, we meet the state average and usually exceed both state and district averages.