

Approved: 3/7/01
Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ralph Tanner at 9:00 a.m. on February 20, 2001 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present:

Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Ann Deitcher, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Ethel Peterson
Sydney Sauer, Elementary School Counselor
Mark Tallman, Kansas Assoc. of School Boards
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Assoc.

HB 2448 - School districts, elementary school guidance programs.

Representative Ethel Peterson spoke to the Committee in support of **HB 2448**. (Attachment 1).

Additional written testimony in favor of **HB 2448** was distributed. (Attachment 2).

Appearing before the Committee as a proponent of **HB 2448** was Sydney Sauer. (Attachment 3).

Mark Desetti spoke to the Committee in favor of **HB 2448**. (Attachment 4).

Mark Tallman appeared in opposition to **HB 2448**. (Attachment 5).

The hearing on **HB 2448** was closed.

Representative Horst introduced, as a point of privilege, students from South Middle School in Salina who were here as guests.

HB 2325 - Industrial arts teachers, licensure without degree.

It was moved by Representative Morrison and seconded by Representative Huebert that **HB 2325** be passed as amended. After a voice vote, the Chair being undecided, asked for a show of hands. The count was 12 in opposition. The motion failed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m. No future meetings are scheduled at this time.

STATE OF KANSAS

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TOPEKA

HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

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EDUCATION
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

February 20, 2001

To: The House Education Committee
From: Representative Ethel M. Peterson
Re: House Bill 2448

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to describe the components of HB 2448, and to speak in favor of it's passage. This bill would require that starting on or before commencement of the 2006-2007 school year, schools in Kansas must provide elementary counselors for all pupils enrolled in kindergarten through grade six.

Then it refers to some of the tasks which might be assigned to counselors. The reference in this bill is to "certified elementary counselors." In Kansas, the requirements for certification of counselors are already in place. A school counselor must have both a bachelor's and a master's degree and have two years of teaching experience, thus it is a seven-year preparation. The master's degree is required to be in the arena of professional counseling.

What do school counselors actually do? They instruct students in many areas, such as anger management, prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, developing good study habits, time management, courtesy and playing fair, and many other topics. They consult with parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members interpreting tests and test scores, discussing placements, seeking other helps, etc. They do individual and small group counseling to help solve problems. Counselors help with referrals to other agencies for additional help and for networking. This might include SRS, Mental health agencies, courts, law enforcement, merchant associations or various others.

This bill provides for a way for schools to connect via inter-locals, etc so two schools might share a counselor. Within a given district, the possibility exists for a counselor to serve in the morning at Building A and in the afternoon at Building B for example. The significant feature is that a counselor is assigned to that building and is "on-call" in an emergency.

In the US, there are presently 27 states that mandate school counselors, with two more considering mandates. The US Senate is considering a resolution to provide competitive grants for

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states or local communities to aid them in establishing elementary counseling programs. So Kansas is not unique, or even the first to propose this idea. However, this is not just a fad or a "flavor - of - the - month proposal for school improvement. Instead, counseling is a service that improves student achievement and academics skills. It increases student attendance and decreases the number of disruptive incidents in the classroom. This is not just opinion - it is fact backed up with dozens of carefully constructed and controlled studies which rigorously evaluated the impact of counseling over the last 20 years. If you are interested, I would be happy to offer the sources for further information on these studies.

Studies on the effects of small group counseling for failing elementary school students found that 83% of students showed improved grades when working with a counselor. (Boutwell & Myrick 1992 - Academic Achievement and Counselor Accountability)

Only 20% of youth with mental disorders get the help they need. The consequences of failing to provide treatment services to children with severe emotional disturbances are significant in many areas. Of these students, 48% drop out of high school. Of those dropouts, 73% are arrested within five years of dropping out. In addition, students with severe emotional disturbances miss more days of school each year than students in any other disability category. Counseling could help alleviate that. (Journal of Counseling & Development. March/April 1997.)

Counseling decreases classroom disruptions, thus helping all to learn. Counselors support teachers in the classroom in order to enable teachers to provide quality instruction designed to assist students in achieving high standards. Students in schools that provide counseling services indicated their classes were interrupted less by other students and their peers behaved better in school.

School counselors are trained to recognize "early warning signals" in at-risk youth. They can follow-up on the work that our hot-line began. They work with teachers, principals, and parents to develop safety programs to prevent school violence.

Perhaps you noticed when one of the Milliken - Award teachers referred to a youngster suffering a "melt-down", it was the school counselor they went to for help. Another person testified here last week that a counselor made over 40 phone calls, getting information on a foster child "stuck" in the system. Certainly, when a Columbine or a Paducah hits the headlines, we hear that "counselors will be available." Even when tragedy is averted, as it was recently at Hoyt, the announcement said "counselors will be available if needed." It's obvious counselors can be, and are, a vital part of good school programs. I believe that any school can be improved significantly with the addition of school counselors. That's why I urge you to pass HB2448 favorably and start making a difference.

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Northwest

Elementary School

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(316) 227-1604 Fax (316) 227-1724

Children First

Kathy Ramsour
Principal

Ethel Peterson
Educational Committee
House of Representative
Topeka, KS.

Dear Ms. Peterson,

HB 2448 has come to my attention and I would personally like to express my support and hope for HB 2448's passage. My name is Kathy Ramsour. Presently I am an Elementary Principal in Dodge City. Prior to that I was an Elementary Counselor. Our building has 560 students. 51% of our students are low socio-economic and in the past 5 years our school has gone from 8% to 54% minority. Last year we had over 300 student's transfer in and out of our building. We have been blessed with a full time Elementary Counselor for the past 3 years and before that we shared a counselor with the Middle School.

The emphasis coming from you, our legislators, is accountability for each of our Kansas schools. It has been my experience in 28 years of being a teacher, counselor and administrator that no school is immune to violence, depression, families in crisis, drugs, abuse, etc. Our schools are trying to establish a strong identity of their own but until this is complete the street culture continues to rule and family values seem to struggle. We see families in which both parents work, more single parent families, students with anger, aggression and more violent behaviors than ever before. The state is closing more hospital institutions causing these children to be placed in our school systems without support of any kind. Elementary counselors are the only chance of survival for many of these children.

Elementary counselors help students become problem solvers. As educators, counselors see the children's concerns and work with them individually to be more successful and able to cope. As an elementary counselor I have seen more sexual/ physical abuse, gang activity, occult involvement, depression, poor social skills, children with little or no food, children being sold for sex and my list could go on. Without the counselor many of these cases would not have been addressed and children would have continued to suffer in silence.

As legislators, have you ever seen the skin torn from the stomach of a child because of a belt, or Drano poured on a child? Do you understand what it may feel like to witness your Mama's arm broken from a domestic fight or a parent

Our Mission . . .

- to provide a safe, orderly, nurturing environment;
- to teach all students the skills necessary to be life-long learners;
- to help students develop a positive self-concept;
- to respect all students as individuals and teach them to extend respect and understanding to others.



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stabbed? Have you ever feared going to sleep and waking up being sexually molested? This is what children live through every day in our schools!

Teachers more and more need help with the affective domain in a child's life before we can ever get to the academic side. Schools face an increasingly complex task. Responsibility for learning and working hard rests with the students. But, we must allow students the time to work and understand all aspects of their life now and in the future.

If every school has a counselor it would allow the children to heal from the inside out and create at the same time successful learning in our schools. Please understand the importance of this bill. I have seen what Elementary Counselors can do and the successes we have because of them. Every child deserves the opportunity to a happy life. Please support HB 2448.

Thank You,

Kathy Ramsour

Kathy Ramsour, Principal
Northwest Elementary School
Dodge City, KS. 67801

To: Dr. Tanner and the House Education Committee
From: Sydney Sauer, Counselor and Professor

Re: SB2448 Elementary School Counseling

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. It is a pleasure to be here. My name is Sydney Sauer. I am a wife, mother of 4 grown children (with college degrees), mother-in-law, and grandmother of two. I have been an educator for 34 years, the last 17 years as an elementary school counselor. I am also a university professor in the School of Education, teaching graduate courses at Mid-America Nazarene University. The courses I designed and teach include The Bully-Free Classroom, Character Education, Discipline with Love and Logic, Emotional Intelligence, Dynamics of Relationships, and Teambuilding, to name a few. Most of the participants in these courses are educators.

The research is in and the findings from much of the literature are the schools of this nation are concerned with educating all of the children. Not only are we responsible for academic literacy, but also for emotional and moral literacy. It really is schools oldest mission. If we remember Teddy Roosevelt's famous quote –“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.” Down through history, education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good. I went into teaching in the first place not only because I loved kids, but also because I wanted to make a difference in their lives, teaching them good values as well as reading and math, to affect the kind of human beings they would become.

It's obvious that children who are deeply troubled or emotionally distracted cannot concentrate successfully on academic tasks. To promote learning, a professional elementary counseling program is a basic service that needs to be provided to all elementary schools. The sad truth is that in many elementary schools, the counseling service available to children is insufficient, or even nonexistent. (1)

Adults often forget what it's like to be little. According to an Iowa survey, children in the third grade worry about a family member getting sick or hurt, doing well on tests, what parents think of their work, drugs and alcohol, safety of the neighborhood, problems in the family, tattling, teasing, making good decisions, people getting too angry, and what they should do when they get angry. (2) Can you remember what you worried about in the third grade when you were a kid?

And tragically, many children are coping with extremely debilitating problems, at a level that would test the most resilient adult. Schools -- and communities -- simply must do more to meet children's emotional needs, which can be shockingly acute. (3)

To quote a counselor, Bruce Fink from Coventry Elementary School in Cleveland Ohio, “Guidance is usually seen as necessary in junior high and high school. But at the elementary level, we can help before problems become deeply entrenched. I was a counselor at the high school for nine years, the middle school for three. I have been here at Coventry Elementary for seven years, and this is the only place where I see real results.”

Following the Littleton massacre, federal officials – including the President and several members of Congress – began renewed calls for hiring additional counselors in America's schools. Absent the recent problems, there should be more counselors for elementary and secondary students at all times, not just following a tragedy. It seems we

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react, but we need to be preventative. How many times have you heard this on the media following a school tragedy – “Counselors will be available for the students and staff.” School counselors are a “terrific investment.” Salt Lake City Mayor Deedee Corradini, President of the U. S. Conference of Mayors, proposed the hiring of 100,000 school counselors to help curb youth violence.

Much of the time the problem is with the budget. In 1996 taxpayers spent 1.4 billion to operate, repair and build state prisons. There were officially 33,939 prisoners in the state institutions so it took \$43,700 yearly to keep one prisoner locked up. Many elementary school counselors would be pleased with a salary of \$43,700 and would only have to save one child from a life of crime. That is an easy deal. What better investment could you make to benefit children and society?

The common sense argument has to be that it is cheaper and more logical to invest in our children’s mental health up front, with preventative, proactive programs that teach children how to solve problems and get along than it is to build prisons or pick up the pieces after a tragedy like Columbine. Our society persists in preferring expensive solutions to complex problems rather than affordable investments in our most vulnerable citizens, America’s children. We’d rather spend millions in law enforcement and prisons than hundreds of thousands in education and after school programs. The cost of behaving reactively rather than proactively is even bigger in human terms than in dollar amounts.(4)

(Kagan and Moss’) 30 year longitudinal study indicated that: The most dramatic and consistent finding was that many of the behaviors exhibited by the child during the period of 6 to 10 years of age and a few during the age period 3 to 6 were moderately good predictors of related behaviors during early adulthood. This indicates the importance of early elementary school years in terms of forming the child’s basic attitudes, goals and values. The elementary school counselor, through the developmental approach to guidance and counseling, is in a position to help children with their social, self, and intellectual development both directly and indirectly. The knowledge explosion and the crisis in the family have forced teachers to seek additional assistance in meeting the child’s needs in the emotional, social and self-development areas. It is also apparent that children are able to change their style of life and self-concept more easily at an early age. (5)

Beyond the rhetoric and research let me tell you about the **reality**. On any given weekday 560 children arrive at my school carrying backpacks, school lunches and in the most recent week, Valentines. However, many come carrying baggage not easily seen. As I plan my week of classroom guidance, individual, and group counseling times, I feel overwhelmed with the task at hand. On Tuesday morning I need to get into all four fifth grade classrooms for a 35-minute classroom guidance session, we are studying bullying behavior, teasing, popularity and how students can make our school bully free. The students are eager to discuss this topic. In the four third grade classes we studying how to make good decisions, what goes into making one and helping students to understand how the decisions they make will affect their lives. I have five 2nd grade small groups sessions with children on Monday and Friday, this week we will be exploring feelings and how to understand another persons feelings, we will learn the meaning of the word empathy. On Thursday afternoon, five individual groups of first graders will meet in my office to learn about healthy ways to make and keep friends and how to handle angry feelings. On Friday morning, I need to spend time in all four fourth grade classrooms to discuss stress

and procrastination and how the two go hand in hand. Students will learn the ripple effect of self-defeating behaviors.

There is a faculty meeting at 7:45 a.m. on Thursday that I must prepare for. I have a power point presentation on the staffs' response to a crisis situation. Wednesday morning, we have the Student Instruction Team meeting of which I am a member, to discuss students who are having difficulty in some area of their life, which is interfering with their learning. Wednesday afternoon there is a district counselor meeting of which I am in charge of the in-service on how counselors can help teachers infuse Character Education into their daily curriculum. There are 15 messages on my voice mail, many from parents who want to schedule a time to discuss many serious and not so serious family issues. A couple of messages remind me of my role on the staff development committee as we gear up for the next five year cycle of school improvement. As I check my email there are twenty-one new messages, one giving me an update on one of my students' Moms; Michael and Mark's Mom was diagnosed with a Stage 4 brain tumor during the first week of school. I must check in on both boys for an individual counseling session to see how they are coping. I also need to conference with a third grade teacher, she is concerned about a student stealing other's snacks and she thinks it is because he is hungry, and Dad may be neglectful. His parents are in the middle of a nasty divorce.

In terms of individual guidance the list seems endless: I must see Ramona (name changed) again, she is in 4th grade. She and her Mom had just moved to a battered women's shelter due to some abuse and infidelity by her father. I was unaware of this situation until two weeks prior to Christmas when Ramona's Mom was tragically killed in car wreck as she was leaving work to come pick up her daughter from school. Needless to say, she is one of my top priorities. Last week she told me she felt like she was the only kid at school without a Mom. I asked if she would like to talk to other students without a Mom, her answer was yes. I was thankful, because now I can get Melissa a 5th grader who last year, one spring morning was driven to school by her Mom and then Mom went home and hung herself and Melissa has done much suffering in silence. I visit with Melissa and see if she would be willing to share her situation with Ramona and she agrees. Hooray, both girls can do grief work together and hopefully establish a bond that will help them cope with these incomprehensible events.

Other priorities are Angela in 4th grade, who has lost ten pounds since November; the lunch ladies say she is not eating any school lunch at all. We visit, and she tells me she is on a diet to loose weight so she can look good in a swimming suit. Both her parents are alcoholics. One of my voice mail messages was from neighbor very concerned about this child. The school nurse and I will do a follow-up and document her eating patterns.

Tom is diagnosed ADHD, OCD, and Dad told us at the last meeting as we were discussing his violent behaviors that Mom woke up one morning and found him holding a knife from the kitchen over her head. His aggressive behavior has lessened at school, but the meeting with this child's psychiatrist said that he could not be out in the neighborhood without constant supervision because of his previous violent behavior. Many area mental health hospitals have closed, and children with so many emotional and psychological needs are in our school systems. There are no other resources.

This list could go on and on. I haven't even mentioned the counselors' role in the development of a positive school climate, the numerous in-services presented, the parenting courses taught, the counseling with staff struggling with their own personal issues, consultations with parents and teachers, serving on various district and community committees, etc. During my years as a counselor, I have witnessed some tragic events in the lives of children so young. In another district in which I worked, I have seen the perfect imprint of an iron on a five year olds' back. All kinds of stories of abuse from neglect, to physical, to sexual have been the issues of many children in my office. I'll never forget ten-year-old Tyson who witnessed his Father break his Mother's leg because she would not get up and get him a beer.

You may think these stories are made up, you can't make this stuff up, it's real! I invite any of you to shadow an elementary counselor and see for yourself. I work in one of the most affluent districts in the state of Kansas and for that matter, the nation, Blue Valley. The level of income at my school would be approximately in the six figures, with most of the parents having college degrees. Children's suffering comes to all socioeconomic levels; we must not allow them to suffer in silence.

Early identification and intervention of children's problems are essential to change some of the current statistics regarding self-destructive behaviors. If we wait until children are in middle or high school to address these problems, we lose the opportunity to help them achieve their potential, as well as the feelings of dignity and self-worth. For many children, the elementary school counselor may be the one person who provides an atmosphere of safety, trust and positive regard. (6)

Do we make a difference in the lives of children? You bet we do! Some big, some little, but our influence affects eternity and sometimes we never know how much. Occasionally, we have the honor and opportunity and to understand as I did on February 12, 2001, when I was invited to a Junior High in Olathe to hear a student I worked with eight years prior read a tribute to me during the Kind Kansas Citian contest. I was just doing my job as an elementary school counselor, not to receive accolades but to help others. Isn't that all of our roles in life, to lighten another's load, especially that of a child? Elementary school counselors should not be an option, but a requirement for effective schools. I recommend that SB2448 become a reality in the state of Kansas. In closing, I would like to share this quote from Edmund Burke,

"All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."
Thanks for listening. I'll be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

(Essay Tribute attached)

- (1) Ernest L. Boyer, *The Basic School, A Community for Learning*, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- (2) Jan Kuhl, "Report on Children Needs Survey," administered by the Des Moines Elementary Counselors, Des Moines Iowa.
- (3) Ernest L. Boyer, *The Basic School, A Community for Learning*, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- (4) Emmie Kennicott, counselor, Olathe District Schools, Bentwood Elementary School.
- (5) Don Dinkmeyer and Edson Caldwell, *Developmental Guidance and Counseling: A Comprehensive School Approach*.
- (6) American School Counselor Association, "*Why Elementary School Counselors?*" Alexandria, Virginia.

My idol of kindness is not a rich doctor. She's not a famous actress or a defensive lawyer. She is, however, caring, trustworthy, unselfish, loving, compassionate, and a fabulous listener. My elementary school counselor, Mrs. Sauer, is better than any fame or fortune I could ever want.

Mrs. Sauer helped me through one of the most difficult times of my life. My parents divorced when I was seven, and I took it worse than any of my sisters. I am the oldest of three, so I felt the need to keep myself together for them and my mom. During my weekly session with Mrs. Sauer, she taught me how to be strong for my family and strong enough to talk to her about the divorce and not feel ashamed. Mrs. Sauer was a friend to me when I thought everyone was against me. Sometimes, she showed her kindness by just sitting beside me and patting my back when all I could do was cry. I am still amazed at how she didn't let any of the other problems or situations she had to deal with affect the attention she gave me while I was with her. Mrs. Sauer showed me the gold at the end of my rainbow when all I could see were cloudy skies.

Today, when I need help, I use the resources she taught me.
I'm also not ashamed to ask, knowing everyone needs help
sometimes. Mrs. Sauer is my idol of kindness, and I hope to impact
others' lives with a fraction of the kindness she showed me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mandy Wilson". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "M" and a decorative flourish at the end.

Mandy Wilson



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Mark Desetti testimony
House Education Committee
February 20, 2001

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Mark Desetti and I represent Kansas NEA.

I come before you today to speak on House Bill 2448. KNEA supports the concepts contained in this bill.

We believe there is a need for elementary school counselors and that counselors have an important part to play in the elementary school program. Let me share with you some of the activities that are supported by counselors:

1. In schools with counselors, children participate in small group and whole class programs to combat bullying and teasing – behaviors which are all too common on playgrounds and in hallways.
2. Counselors provide critical support for special education programs. The emphasis on inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom drives the need for counselors to support the program. This is particularly true as schools cope with children with behavioral disorders.
3. Counselors provide support for drug abuse prevention education programs.
4. Counselors assist in the analysis of school-wide assessment data and assessment data for specific programs.
5. Counselors are an important part of a comprehensive staff development program, working with staff members on issues impacting children's social and emotional development.

In short, counselors are a critical element in a school's efforts to provide a safe educational environment and a comprehensive instructional program.

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Attachment # 4



TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Mark Tallman, Assistant Executive Director for Advocacy
DATE: February 20, 2001

RE: Testimony on H.B. 2448: Requiring Elementary Counseling Programs

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. 2448, which would require school districts to provide elementary school guidance programs by 2006-07. We have no objection to these programs and know that many school boards have authorized such programs and more would probably support doing so. But we do not believe the Legislature should require this budget, personnel and program choice on every district, especially at a time of limited resources and without provide additional funding to support these programs. The fact that requirement would not take effect until 2006-97 only means that we have really no idea what the financial condition of school districts will be.

It is important to remember that school districts operate within finite resources. I will not dwell on the inadequacy of school budget increases in recent years. I will simply note that within those resources, school districts are facing the most serious problem of teacher and employee salaries in recent years, soaring energy bills, rising health and workers compensation premiums, new technology costs, and demands for increases educational support programs from early childhood intervention to truancy prevention. These demands are not going to decrease: your subcommittee on accountability has presented recommendations that would dramatically increase requirements and costs for local school districts.

Our concern is that H.B. 2448 essentially implies that local school boards cannot determine the priority of elementary guidance programs for their own schools and communities. We do not agree with that assessment. School districts should be held accountable for performance or outcomes. Mandating particular programs is an input. We suggest that some schools may be successful without elementary guidance programs and some schools may struggle with them. The focus of the state should be on results.

Thank you for your consideration.

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