

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Senator John Vratil at 1:10 p.m. on February 6, 2001 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research  
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. Ron Wimmer, Superintendent, USD #233 - Olathe  
Dr. Kent Hurn, Superintendent, USD #345 - Seaman  
Mr. John Benson, Superintendent, USD #503 - Parsons  
Mr. Steve Nilhaus, Superintendent, USD #281 - Hill City

Others attending: See attached list

Chairman Umbarger, due to another commitment, will be late today. Vice Chairman John Vratil will conduct the meeting until he arrives.

**School Finance Hearings on Base State Aid Per Pupil, Local Option Budget, At-Risk Weighting, Special Ed and Correlation Weighting**

Dr. Ron Wimmer, Superintendent, Olathe School District gave testimony (Attachment 1) sharing his prospective on the problem of inadequate financial resources to accomplish the his district's Vision for Excellence.

During committee discussion Dr. Wimmer stated that he believes his district is supportive of providing the necessary funds to insure that the children receive an excellent education. They have demonstrated this through their past commitment on bond issues and he believes that commitment is still there today. Dr. Wimmer believes their district has one of the lowest administrative costs in the state. To retain and hire new teachers, their district has stressed benefits that do not have direct dollars attached to them. They have looked into allowing the employees to utilize unused sick leave to purchase back insurance, professional staff training, medical reimbursement plans, and matching tax sheltered annuities.

Chairman Umbarger apologized for being late and introduced Dr. Kent Hurn from Seaman School District. Dr. Hurn presented his testimony (Attachment 2) on the issues as they affect his district.

During discussion, Dr Hurn stated his district doesn't want a tax increase, but they would support it for purposes of education. Dr. Hurn was Chair of the USA School Task Force and the increase in tax question was asked all over the state and no one wants taxes on their property. The most popular tax is sales tax or a combination of income and sales tax.

John Benson, Superintendent, Parsons, presented his concerns on serious employment and funding issues facing school districts in SE Kansas in his testimony. (Attachment 3)

Mr. Benson, in committee discussion, said he was concerned that the funding for education at an adequate level has not been there during the last 8 years when the economy was good and is concerned what will happen when times are bad.

Steve Nilhas, Superintendent of Schools, Hill City, KS gave testimony (Attachment 4). He sited problems of loss of budget authority due to declining enrollment, the lagging of state aid behind the rate of inflation and their commitment to provide a broad range of programs to meet the needs of all the

CONTINUATION SHEET

February 6, 2001

students. They have closed an elementary school building, cut some positions and raised local taxes. Decisions need to be made on who is responsible for education in Kansas; is it state responsibility or local responsibility or a combination of the two.

An error was noted in the minutes for January 29, 2001. A bill number will be corrected from SB3092 to HB2092. Motion to approve minutes for January 29, 2001 with correction, and January 30, 2001 was made by Senator Schodorf and seconded by Senator Vratil. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, February 7, 2001

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST**

DATE - 2-6-01

<u>NAME</u>	<u>REPRESENTING</u>
John Alleg	KEC & KFHC
KENT HURN	JAWAN # 385
Jacqueline Dake	SQE
Drew Nicks	USD 281 Hill City
John Benson	USD # 503 Parsons
Beth Meiard	Families Together, Inc.
Joie Tombs	KCDN
Ron Wimmer	USD 233
Amy Heany	USD 233
Buffy Truck	USA 512
Marnie Clements	USD 418
Bob Vancrum	USD 229
Don Knowles	USA.
Brilla Scott	USA
Diane Gjerstad	Wichita

**Senate Education Committee**  
**February 6, 2001**

**Comments by Ron Wimmer, Superintendent of Schools, USD233, Olathe**

**The Problem: Inadequate financial resources to accomplish our Vision for Excellence**

**Facts**

- ✓ In the past ten years our enrollment has increased by 35% (5,412 students for total of 20,763)
- ✓ Since 1993 the base budget per pupil has increased 5.9% (\$220)
- ✓ Enrollment increases, correlation weighting, and the local option budget sustained us.
- ✓ During this time, our district earned a National Staff Development Award, Blue Ribbon School Awards (14 schools), many Presidential Awards in Math/Science, and the only Kansas district receiving the Kansas Foundation Award for Excellence.
- ✓ In addition to many other awards, student achievement has increased, and voters approved two bond issues (\$184 million –by over 71%)

**Evidence of Needs**

- The GF transfer of \$7.7 million from operating funds to Special Education in 99-00
- Receiving \$27,144 in bilingual funds while spending \$338,895
- Receiving \$144,434 for inservice while spending \$349,309 for staff training
- A beginning teacher salary of \$25,600 (over \$2,000 less than neighboring districts)
- Over 60 support staff positions unfilled to start the school year
- The loss of teachers to other districts with signing bonuses and to the private sector
- A 25% increase in utility costs this year, 22% increase projected next year (+\$800,000)
- A \$50 per pupil increase of 24,000 FTE students equals \$1,200,000

**Priorities (in rank order)**

1. A substantial increase in the base budget per pupil reflective of inflation,
  2. correlation weighting to reflect the costs associated with larger districts,
  3. increased special education funding to reduce transfers from General Fund.
- Funding to recruit and retain quality teachers and administrators, to maintain current pupil teacher ratios to enhance learning, to meet the growing needs of at-risk and early childhood education programs, and to ensure that dollars for education can be put into the classrooms.

**Possible Effects of Not Addressing the Problem:**

- Decline in student achievement due to the lack of excellent teachers, insufficient staff training, and the inability to meet employment needs
- Negative impact on economic development dependent on well-educated workers
- Larger class size affecting overall student achievement
- Lack of funds for innovation and implementation of new educational programs
- Decline in educational ranking for the state
- Not providing the best opportunities for Kansas children

**Support for Increased Funding**

- Boards of Education, Chambers of Commerce, News Media support tax increase
- Now the people of Kansas must take action to provide resources for public education
- “We have little more than our past. Everything for our children depends on their future”

*Senate Education*  
*2-6-01*  
*Attachment 1*

**Base State Aid Per Pupil**

\*Governor-\$50, Task Force-\$180, Coalition-\$680, All day Kindergarten

Salaries for teachers. Salaries for at-risk programs and alternative settings for kids that can not meet standards that have been determined as important. Almost everything you do for education is salary driven. We are a people driven company. You have a system that is working. You have a system that has applied all the bandaids we know to apply. We are generating the most educated workforce in history. To move to the next level is difficult. To move off of any plateau requires concentrated effort in tweaking a successful system. An entire systemic change is not needed.

**Special Education**

\*100% excess costs, teacher unit; Governor's Task Force, two tiered;  
Extend school year, if needed

I had one legislator say that parents of students can do much of what we seek. That is true but I spend a great deal of time worrying about those that do not receive that. Busy parents, parents with limited abilities, single parents, etc., all cause the school responsibility to change. Accountability to the public that includes the truant or chronically absent student takes additional personnel.

**Correlation Weighting**

\*Weighting to 1,500 students, presently 1,725; coalition 1/2 ratio

**At Risk Weighting**

\*9% to 10%

Scores would be much higher if those that were absent 10% of the school year did not count. Since they do, we need the resources to correct that.

**Local Option Budget**

\*All property tax, little state aid, 25% maximum, federal fiscal neutrality?

**Note:** When people start saying they are willing to put more money into education, talk begins about tax increases. When that talk starts, we get this barrage of vouchers, formula change, special ed distribution formula change, accountability, etc., that only serves as a diversion from the real problem in education. That is simply adequate funding. No business could operate on the kind of monetary increases we have been asked to do for years. Ask the same question differently and you get a different set of answers. If we do not get what we need, our people still deserve a reasonable raise and that will have to come from the LOB. That can only be funded by property tax which is the most hated tax there is and that is a tax increase. One question some people ask is "what have you cut?". For us, instructional, equipment, library, but mostly we have maintained what we can for kids and are doing it with LOB property tax money.

**What happens if you don't get it?**

-Nothing happens, we will continue to lose teachers from the profession, lose leadership in buildings/districts, lose alternative settings for those that need it the worst, allow wealth poor districts to fail, make minimum programs become maximums, penalize high salary/high operation districts, create larger class sizes and a marked loss of much needed one on one assistance for many students.

Basic educational opportunity should be available to all without variation in the required curriculum. That belief promotes that there is wisdom and merit in liberty.

*Senate Education  
2-6-01  
Attachment 2*

The basic framework of the finance formula is sound. Kansas has a strong public school system. We must be able to recruit high quality staff and retain the quality staff we already have employed. The student achievement gap continues, although the scores are at a higher level. If disadvantaged students begin schooling behind, it is likely they will need additional assistance to "catch up". The use of technology is obvious and enables education opportunities to be enhanced. Despite what I hear some key legislators say, I believe there is a great source of support for schools. I do not think any body should be placed in a position where they have to beg for your kids. Politically, I would not want to run on the platform of no more money for schools. Loss of revenue above bare minimum requirements slows down or prevents innovative or high cost programs. Nobody "wants" a tax increase. That is not the issue. The issue is, are you "willing" to support a tax increase for education? When I think of a tax increase, I think "property tax" because that is the only source school districts have available. But legislators know what people think of property taxes. You have a mix of taxes available to you, including the sales tax. Ask yourself how many people thanked you for the tax cuts that have already been passed. Ask the question differently(willingness of increase if used for education) and you most likely will get a different answer.

**Reminder**

School districts do not "snap" a part, they "ooze" a part. By the time you notice that something is not working, it is way too late to fix quickly.

2-2  
~~2-1~~



PRESENTATION TO KANSAS SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, February 6, 2001 - 1:30 p.m.  
John Benson, Superintendent, Parsons USD #503

**Opening:**

- ◇ Chairman Senator Umbarger, Vice-Chairman Senator Vratil and Senators. Thank You for the opportunity to present information concerning serious employment and funding issues facing the Parsons School District and other school districts in Southeast Kansas and throughout our state.

**Issue #1 Maintaining and Hiring of Qualified Teachers and Other Staff:**

- ◇ Current Job Openings in the Parsons School District - Pittsburg Community Schools and current salary ranges for teachers and other employees.
- ◇ Loss of employees to other school districts and to the private sector.
- ◇ Health Insurance Issues.  
Provide targeted budget dollars for employee health coverage.  
Do not count employees with group health coverage outside of the school district in the participation formula for the state health plan.
- ◇ Senator Downey's "Recruiting, Retaining, and Retraining" Proposal  
Fund Teacher Scholarship Program  
Increase salaries and benefits  
Fund current Teacher-Mentor Program  
Fully fund Kansas Teacher Inservice Program

**Issue #2 Funding Issues:**

- ◇ Increasing base payment per student. Parsons 86% from state.
- ◇ Increase Supplemental General Fund Limit of 25% to 30% this year and add 1% in following years. Parsons 51% from state. Funding from local districts would increase as compared to increasing base per student.
- ◇ Funding Special Education at full cost would free-up current general fund dollars from each district's special education programs - Insure that increasing federal dollars reach local school districts. General Fund dollars going to special education in Parsons are \$430,000. each year.
- ◇ Funding Capital Outlay Budgets at same rate as Supplemental General Fund.
- ◇ Give current employees the option to receive KPERs retirement benefits and still work in the school district without tenure for teachers.
- ◇ Fund School Districts One Year in Advance as in Iowa - Planning, Negotiations, Hiring of Staff, Planning for Enrollment would be more cost effective.

**Summary:**

A multiple year effort is needed solve the current employee shortage and funding issues. In the past years a large percentage of the increased legislative funding for public education is because of the increasing number of Kansas students. It is time to help all students! Can we afford the risk of becoming a second rate public educational system in the United States which would effect business, industry, banking, health, and most of all the quality of life for all Kansans.

*Senate Education*  
2-6-01  
Attachment 3

101 Help Wanted

PARSONS USD 503 is accepting applications for an In-School Suspension Supervisor at Parsons Middle School and Instructional Aides. Applications are available at the Superintendent of Schools Office, 2900 Southern, Parsons, KS 67357 (316-421-5950) EOE.

PERSON KNOWLEDGEABLE in the area of cabinet making and carpentry to teach students at Parsons High School. Qualifications: person must have at least 4000 hours of journeyman level work experience, and an ability to work with high school age students. Minimum starting salary \$24,000 plus fringe for nine months. Applications can be picked up at Parsons USD #503 Board Office, at 2900 Southern, Parsons, Kansas. Last day for accepting applications is February 1, 2001.

RAY PRODUCTS, INC., has opening for die cut press operator on the DAY shift (6:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mon. - Thurs.) Starts at \$10.02 and increases to \$11.02 in 15 months. Excellent benefit package. We will train. Apply at Ray Products, Parsons Industrial Park #1. EOE.

Pittsburg Community Schools • USD 250

VACANCIES as of Feb. 1

CERTIFIED:

PMS INTRAMURALS:

3 Boys Basketball Coaches

2001-02 POSITIONS:

Physical Science/Biology Teacher - PHS

Math Teacher - PHS

6th Grade Basic Studies Teacher - PMS

Head Track Coach - PHS

Debate/Forensics Coach - PHS

Early Years Multiage K-1 Teacher - Lakeside

CLASSIFIED:

Electrician - Maintenance

Part-time Paraprofessional - Kaw Valley

Paraprofessional - Kaw Valley

Lunchroom Supervisor - PMS

Food Service Director - District

3 Part-time Paraprofessionals - Westside

Food Service Dishwasher - Lakeside



**Current Job Opening in Parsons District Schools:**

Math Teacher - High School (Open since August, 2000)  
Welding Teacher - High School  
Cabinet Making - Viking Industries Teacher - High School  
General Construction - Viking Industries Teacher - High School  
Video Productions/Technology Teacher - High School  
Viking Instruction Center Teacher - Math/Language Arts - High School  
Gear-Up Grant Director - Middle School  
Gear-Up Technology Teacher - Middle School  
(3) Classroom Math/Reading Aides - Middle School  
Initial Suspension Aide - Middle School

**Projected Openings for 2001-02**

Math Teacher - High School  
Business/Technology Teacher - High School  
Social Science Teacher - High School  
Video Productions/Technology Teacher - High School  
Cad-Drafting Teacher - High School  
Science/Math Teacher - High School  
Several Elementary Teachers  
15 to 20 Classified Positions

**Salary Ranges in Parsons District Schools:**

Teacher Salary Schedule - Base \$25,348 \* Top \$41,622 (25 years with MS+45 or EdS)  
Aide Salary Schedule - Base \$6.40 \* Top \$8.50 (10 years experience)  
Custodian Salary Schedule - Base \$7.55 \* Top \$10.55 (10 years experience)  
Food Service Salary Schedule - Base \$6.70 \* Top \$9.20 (10 years experience)

**Loss of Parsons school employees to other school districts and to the private sector:**

Superintendent	Superintendent - Gardner Edgerton
High School Principal	High School Principal - Goddard
Middle School Principal	High School Principal - Atchison
Elementary Principal	Elementary Principal - Salina
Elementary Principal	Elementary Principal - Garnet
Elementary Principal	Elementary Principal - Blue Valley
High School Math Teacher	Neosho County Community College Math Teacher
Viking Industries Teacher	Private Sector Construction
Viking Industries Teacher	Private Sector Construction
Gear-Up Director	Labette Community College
Gear-Up Technology Teacher	Labette Community College
High School Video Prod. Teacher	Private Sector Technology- Kansas City
High School Debate/Forensic Teacher	Private Sector Business-Gladstone, MO
High School English Teacher	Teacher - Washington State
High School Math Teacher	Teacher - Altamont, KS
High/Middle School Band Teacher	Assistant Principal - Pittsburg, KS
High/Middle School Orchestra Teacher	Private Sector Business - Lawrence, KS
High School Business Teacher	Teacher - Goddard, KS
High School Math Teacher	Teacher - Junction City, KS
Middle School Counselor	Counselor - Ft. Scott, KS
Middle School Counselor	Elementary Principal - Galena, KS

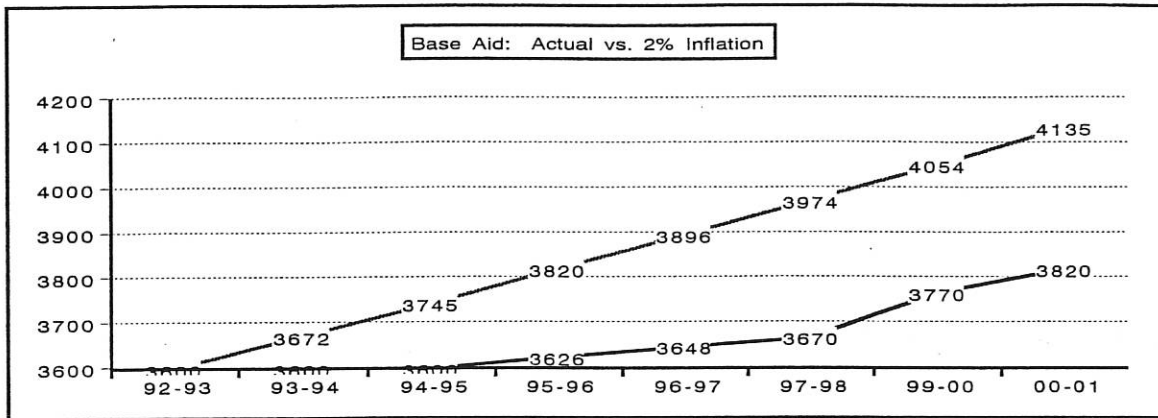
20 or more classified employees to private sector each school year which equals 25+% each year.

# PARSONS DISTRICT SCHOOLS USD 503

## DISTRICT INFORMATION

- 53rd largest school district in Kansas.
- 115 certified staff members and 83 classified employees.
- Member of Tri-County Special Education Cooperative.
- Member of Southeast Kansas Education Service Center.
- Extensive classroom aide and paraprofessional support for innovative special education inclusion program.
- Pre-school and elementary hearing impaired programs.
- \$900,000 Vocational-Technology building at Parsons High School opened for the 2000-01 school year.
- 7 million dollar renovation at Parsons Middle School which is to reopen in August, 2001, for the 2000-01 school year. This is the first bond issue to pass since 1969.
- A 32-year history of declining enrollment losing an average of 37 students per year; in 1969, 2,823 students - today, 1,640 students; two school closings, McKinley in 1983, and Washington in 1998.
- Annual reductions in certified and classified staff. Reduction of administrators from 13 to 9.
- Loss of General Fund dollars in 4 of the past 8 school years with little percentage growth in positive years. For example, gained \$36,150 for 2000-01 school year added to a total General Fund Budget of \$7,334,158 for 1999-00 which equals .5 percent.
- The district's average teacher salary has been declining for several years because of staff reductions and retirements.
- Free/Reduced lunch students increased from under 20% to over 60%.
- Increase of 55% in Federal Government Programs and Grants during the past three years.
- Reduction of district mill rate from 101.3 mills (19991-92) to 42.8 mills for 2000-01. Excluding bond mills, current mill rate would be 33.9 mills.

DATE: February 6, 2001  
 PRESENTED TO: Senate Education Committee, State of Kansas  
 SUBMITTED BY: Steve Nilhas, USD 281 Superintendent of Schools  
 Hill City, KS



**Three factors faced by USD 281 and many other schools:**

- USD 281 has lost 17% of its budget authority over the past five years.
- State aid has lagged behind the rate of inflation.
- We are committed to providing a broad range of programs to meet the needs of all students.

**Our response:**

- One school closed
- 7 positions cut
- Local levy raised by 10 mills - a 50% increase – This came at a time when the Governor and the Legislature were bragging about tax cuts and low taxes!

**Who is responsible for education in the State of Kansas – State or Local?**

- Do we want equity? – Should it matter where a student lives? Should all students have an opportunity to learn in a safe school staffed with qualified teachers?
- Do we want additional burden placed on property tax payers to fund education locally? What about districts who have little valuation?
- We don't want more! We would be happy to end 8 years of cuts!

**What if we don't support public education?**

- Growing gap between "haves and have nots."
- Diminished economic growth.
- Loss of recent gains in academic performance.
- Loss of talented individuals.

Of course it is possible none of these bad things will come to pass even if we continue to neglect educational funding, but I'm not willing to take the chance. I'm going to be a strong voice for educational funding even if it means raising my taxes. Last August seven people were courageous enough to raise taxes because it was the right thing to do for the kids of USD 281. Many boards of education across the state have had to do the same. The question remains.....

Do you have the same courage?  
*Senate Education*  
*2-6-01*  
*Attachment 4*