

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 1:35 p.m. on January 22, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Tracy Callard, #259, Wichita
Sarah Pike, #202, Turner
Mark A. Diskin, #266, Maize
Linda McPherson, #232, DeSoto
Barbara L. Chamberlain, #345, Seaman
Patricia A. Lira, #434, Santa Fe Trail
Susan K. Hagedorn, #223, Barnes
Linda L. Nelson, #305, Salina

Others attending: See attached list

Chairman Umbarger welcomed the Kansas Teacher of the Year Team, and then introduced Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education, who told a little about the program and introduced the team leader, Tracy Callard who is also one of four national finalists.

Tracy Callard stated that the group has 146 years of teaching experience between them. The group has two issues that they are focusing on this year, the first is commitment to recruiting, training and developing quality teachers throughout the state of Kansas, the second issue is making sure all children in Kansas receive an education where they can be successful in school and in life. Tracy teaches in a school where 95% of the children fall below the federal poverty line, 87% of the children are minorities, and 70% speak a language other than English at home. Generally children growing up in poor environments do not succeed academically, but her school was recognized by the US Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, the only school with that title in South Central Kansas. Her school has sent more kids to gifted programs than any other school. Tracy says the kids are really doing well and she credits their success to the help they receive from the State Legislature, State Department of Education, local administrators, local Board of Education and the great quality of teachers they have in their school.

Sarah Pike teaches 8th grade English. Sarah shared two different kinds of success stories, one, a boy with a supportive family all through school receiving all the help and support he needed. He is now a college graduate with a successful career. The a second success story was about another child with a single parent who was not able to offer the same kind of support. This single parent worked all the time, couldn't help with assignments and was abusive. The student had trouble achieving in school, was frequently suspended and eventually dropped out. Although almost out of reach for her, she got a GED though a drop out recovery program, graduated from a community college and is now working. Both are success stories. The first would be expected to succeed, the second may not without caring teachers. These students are in every classroom in every school and the decisions the teachers make impact every child.

Mark Diskin, a chemistry teacher, had two questions for the Committee to consider. One, every day, do we to the best of our ability provide opportunities for students to succeed? and two, every day, do we help recruit, retain and develop quality teachers in the state of Kansas? He asked the Legislature to help

CONTINUATION SHEET

provide successful experiences every day and that they help in retaining, recruiting and developing quality teachers. He also shared a touching story about a special education student that touched his life as much as he touched the students life.

Linda McPherson, an elementary music teacher, stated that teachers can and do make a difference, but that certain factors need to be in place for teachers to be successful and for children to learn. They need time to plan, they need resources to teach and they need them to be readily available. She shared a success story about a student who had been told he shouldn't take a music class because he could not sing. Linda spent time with the student and he was successful. He is now majoring in vocal music in college.

Barb Chamberlain, an English teacher in her 27th year of teaching, shared a success story about a student from a dysfunctional home. Barb stated that she was more worried about the child's self-esteem than her academics. She stayed in touch with her through the years and now she is going to college. Barb shared a letter she received from this student stating that, to her, she was not only a teacher of the year, but her teacher for life. She feels strongly that every student needs a quality caring teacher and that we have to do everything we can to retain the good teachers we have and attract dedicated talented young people into the profession.

Pat Lira, social studies teacher, has a passion to provide opportunities and tools students need to succeed in life. Pat told a story about a student with a lot of problems at home who has trouble reading, even though teachers have tried to help him. He has made some progress, but he is still not reading up to grade level. Even though he has trouble reading, he is very smart and has other tremendous abilities, he hears things and remembers, and can make things with great detail. Her point was that many students have skills to offer, but these skills are not all measured on tests.

Sue Hagadorn, K thru 4 reading-math specialist, believes what a child thinks of himself will determine his own destiny. She teaches all her children as if they were ivy league material and believes early intervention is the key. She believes all children can learn to read. It is good reading skills that lay a solid foundation for academic successes.

Linda Nelson is a math teacher that will be eligible for retirement in the next ten years along with more than 1/3 of all Kansas teachers. Her concern is how these positions will be filled. In 1996, there were 3500 new teaching certificates issued in Kansas and last year there were only 1700. The situation is serious. She asks why are these young people so reluctant to going into the field of education? She believes salaries are a factor, but also that they sense that the teaching profession is not held in high esteem. Education cuts will only validate that concept.

During discussion, the teachers told how and why they became teachers and how the schools have cut costs and how they have compensated for shortages with there own time and money. Many teachers have second jobs and work during the summer months just to make ends meet to pay their own bills.

The Committee asked the teachers to go back and spread the message to members of their community to contact their Representatives and Senators telling them of their needs and concerns and that they are willing to pay additional taxes to fund education. The teachers applauded the Committee for their work.

Senator Schodorf made a motion to approve the minutes for January 15 and January 16, 2002. Seconded by Senator Vratil. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

