

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson John Vratil at 1:30 p.m. on March 6, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senators Corbin, Downey, Hensley, Lee, Oleen, Umbarger (excused)

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: Jerry Niebaum, Planning Coordinator, KAN-ED

Others attending: See Attached List

KAN-ED Presentation

Jerry Niebaum, Planning Coordinator, KAN-ED for the Board of Regents, came before the Committee to provide a status report. The purpose of the KAN-ED Act is to provide for a broadband technology-based network to which schools, libraries and hospitals may connect for broadband Internet access and intranet access for distance learning. The creation, operation and maintenance of such a network was to be known as the KAN-ED network and the Kansas Board of Regents was charged with this task. Twenty-eight states now have comprehensive statewide networks and Kansas is not yet one of them.

The broadband network is important to continuing education. Kansas had 500 teaching positions unfilled last year. KAN-ED will offer opportunities for continuing education, professional development, and opportunities for teachers to interact with other teachers. Some schools offer courses through interactive distance learning, but many cannot communicate with other networks. KAN-ED interactive distance learning will reach all of our school districts. For health care workers, KAN-ED will offer professional assistance, especially in rural areas. Kansas is comprised of many small businesses and KAN-ED expects to provide informational resources through local libraries to help insure their success.

KAN-ED's recommended annual budget is \$11.8 million, of which \$10 million would come from state sources and \$1.8 million would come from the federal universal service fund. KAN-ED says that this is an extraordinarily frugal budget compared to other states.

KAN-ED has contracted with the State Division of Information Systems and Communications (DISC) to create the statewide network service, taking advantage of the extensive contracts they have in place to deploy and support such a network. KAN-ED is ready to move forward with its plans and needs action by the Legislature to create a revenue source. (Attachment 1)

During discussion, Mr. Niebaum stated that if funding is provided, they would expect to move quickly and have a significant number of connections by the beginning of the school year this fall. If the program is not funded this year, it is feared that a lot of the enthusiasm and momentum will be lost.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.



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Creating the Kansas Information Highway for Schools, Libraries, & Hospitals

Testimony for the Senate Education Committee about KAN-ED,
By Jerry Niebaum, March 6, 2002

Members of the Committee I am here today at the request of Senator Umbarger to provide a status report on KAN-ED, a project assigned to the Kansas Board of Regents in the legislative session of 2001. For the past 20 years I've been a university administrator in computing and networking for the University of Kansas. Since last May I've been on special assignment as KAN-ED Planning Coordinator for the Board of Regents.

Twenty-eight states now have comprehensive statewide networks to support education. Kansas is not yet one of them.

The KAN-ED Act, which the 2001 legislature enacted, says the following:

“The purpose of this act is to provide for a broadband technology-based network to which schools, libraries and hospitals may connect for broadband Internet access and intranet access for distance learning. For that purpose, the state board of regents shall contract in accordance with this act for the creation, operation and maintenance of such network to be known as the KAN-ED network.”

Why is it important for Kansas to have a comprehensive communications network for schools, libraries, and hospitals? Last fall our public schools opened with more than 500 unfilled teaching positions. Many of these vacancies were in rural communities where it has been especially difficult to recruit qualified teachers. In the areas of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Foreign Languages the shortages are acute. Many of our schools continue to offer courses in these disciplines through interactive distance learning from other communities. We have about 11 unique interactive distance learning networks in the state many of which cannot communicate with other networks. Currently, only about half our school districts have access to this technology. With KAN-ED interactive distance learning can reach all our school districts.

Rural health care continues to be a great concern for our state. One reason it is difficult to recruit and retain healthcare workers in rural areas is professional isolation. With KAN-ED we expect to reduce that isolation by interactive collaboration and education. We expect to make it possible to extend telemedicine resources to all hospitals in Kansas.

*Senate Education
3-6-02
Attachment 1*

The backbone of the state economy is and will be small business. The future of rural Kansas depends on such business. Many business owners and entrepreneurs rely on resources of their community public library for guidance on creating and operating their business. The economic growth of our state will depend on their success. With KAN-ED we expect to provide information resources through local libraries to help insure their success.

You have each been given a copy of a multi-media CD presentation about KAN-ED assembled by folks at the Regents Communications Center at Kansas State University. I urge you to take time to explore it with a PC that has sound available. Don't try to use it in an audio CD player.

What are we requesting? The total annual budget recommended for KAN-ED is \$11.8 million, of which \$10 million would come from state sources and \$1.8 million would come from the federal universal service fund. The proposed annual budget of expenditures is (\$millions):

Backbone circuits	\$ 6.8
User network service	2.5 (grants to impoverished user communities)
Software	.5
Databases	.6
Staffing (9 FTE)	.8
Training	.5
Office Expense and Misc.	.1
Total	\$11.8

Relative to education networks in other states this is an extraordinarily frugal budget.

As indicated in our CD presentation, we have the support of Southwestern Bell, Sprint, Cox Communications, Pioneer Communications, and other communications vendors throughout the state. We have crafted a public/private partnership that makes sense.

We have contracted with the State Division of Information Systems and Communications (DISC) to create the statewide network service, taking advantage of the extensive contracts they have in place to deploy and support such a network. We believe that contracting with the State Division of Information Systems is prudent use of state resources.

The important highways of this century are destined to be information highways. We cannot afford to limit our schools and libraries to back roads. The KAN-ED project has momentum. It has the support of a very broad base of vendors and user communities. KAN-ED volunteers have contributed countless hours to reach this point. We are poised and ready to move forward with our plans. We need action by this legislature to create a revenue source.

Additional detail about KAN-ED is available at our Web site: <http://www.kan-ed.org>

I will be pleased to answer questions as best I can.