

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kathe Decker at 9:00 A.M. on February 6, 2006 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Ted Powers- excused

Valdenia Winn- excused

Committee staff present:

Kathie Sparks, Kansas Legislative Research

Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research

Art Griggs, Revisor of Statutes Office

Ann Deitcher, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Steve Adams, Supt., USD 425 & USD 433

Rep. Pat Colloton

Rep. Bill Otto

HB 2625 - Interlocal cooperation agreements for shared schools.

Superintendent of Schools, Steve Adams spoke to the Committee in support of **HB 2625**. (Attachment 1).

A question and answer session followed.

Written testimony only in support of **HB 2625** was submitted by Mark Tallman of KASB. (Attachment 2).

The hearing was closed on **HB 2625**.

HB 2578 - Establishing the special ed teacher service scholarship.

Representative Colloton spoke to the Committee in support of **HB 2578**. (Attachment 3).

Offering written testimony only in support of (were: Tes Mehring, Ph. D, The Teachers College, Emporia State University, (Attachment 4); Rick Ginsberg, Ph. D, Dean, Kansas University, (Attachment, 5) and Diane Lindeman, Director of Student Financial Assistance, Kansas Board of Regents, (Attachment 6).

A brief question and answer period followed.

The hearing was closed on **HB 2578**.

HB 2585 - School board member districts.

Representative Otto spoke to the Committee in support of **HB 2585**. (Attachment 7).

The hearing was closed on **HB 2585**.

A motion was made by Representative Storm and seconded by Representative Horst that **HB 2585** be passed favorably out of Committee. The motion passed on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m. The next meeting of the Committee on Education is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2006.

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Steve Adams. I am the joint superintendent of Highland USD 425 and Midway USD 433. I am accompanied by Doug Huxman, superintendent of Troy USD 429 and Mike Newman, joint superintendent of Wathena USD 406 and Elwood USD 486. Each of our school districts is located in Doniphan County. We are here in support of HB2625 to establish inter-local schools. We believe this bill provides the mechanism and incentives to address the major barriers that prevent school mergers or consolidation.

There are five school districts in Doniphan County that serve about 1600 students. The general consensus of the public has been that there are too many schools in the county. For two decades talks of consolidation or combining schools have occurred. Outside consulting services have been utilized. Studies have been conducted. Despite all the efforts, talks halted because of two issues, facilities and control.

In 2003, the Highland and Midway districts reached an agreement to enter into a contractual agreement to close two jr./sr. high schools and create a shared high school in Highland and a shared middle school at Midway. Exist facilities were converted for this purpose. That contracting venture has been very successful and national recognized as an American School Boards Journal's Magna Award winner for innovations in school improvement (article on back). Cooperative agreements between school districts can and do work. The Troy and Wathena School Boards have openly expressed their interest to join with Highland and Midway in such an arrangement.

The Doniphan County dilemma is that small districts have small buildings. No one district has a facility capable of handling the combination of all the high school or middle school students. This is compounded by the fact that each board is reluctant to give up all control of that facet of the children's education to another board of education.

HB2625 answers those concerns by establishing authority for boards of education to enter into inter-local agreements to establish shared schools and shared facilities. Provisions of the bill allow for the establishment of an inter-local board of directors to govern the school with equal representation of all participating school districts. Provisions of the bill include: 1) the ability to share valuation and debt, 2) three years of new facilities weighting, and 3) spending flexibility to off-set the financial burden associated with building facilities.

We believe that HB2625 will open doors for rural and small school districts to help themselves in creative ways to remain viable and competitive in providing equal educational opportunities to rural Kansas kids. We also believe that it is good for Kansas as it promotes efficiency in the educational system without sacrificing quality. We suggest to the House Education Committee that this bill contains the "out-of-the-box" thinking needed to address the dilemma of declining enrollment and adequate funding of rural Kansas education.

We respectfully thank you for your consideration on this issue.

House Education Committee

Date: 2-6-06

Attachment # 1-1

Achieving Together

Highland USD 425, Highland, Kan., and Midway USD 433, Denton, Kan.



PROGRAM

Sharing Schools Through InterDistrict Contracting

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

To improve the educational opportunities for students with limited resources.

SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS

Bill Hargis, Highland
Doug Johnson, Midway

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Highland USD 425
Mike Blevins
Rod Carwell
Brad Gilmore
Tim Nuzum
Ron Schneider
Scott Twombly

Midway USD 433
Mary Becker
Al Fuhrman
Tom Halling
Vicki Jones
Miriam Scholz
Galen Weiland

SUPERINTENDENT

Steve Adams

The one-room, rural schoolhouse where one teacher taught first grade through high school is an American icon. But in an era of stringent demands for high test scores, rural school districts are finding new ways to help their youngsters compete academically.

Two school districts—Highland USD 425 and Midway USD 433—turned to interdistrict teamwork to offer more academic opportunities to their students. Tucked in the northeast corner of Kansas, the two districts suffer from inadequate state funding and declining enrollment. But working together, they have created an educational program beyond their reach as independent districts.

The two school boards hired a superintendent to serve both districts and worked with him to develop an interdistrict contracting model. The model protected both systems' funding, while allowing them to share services efficiently and effectively. The districts share middle and high schools but maintain their own elementary schools.

"By contracting with one another to provide a shared high school in one district and a shared middle school in the other district, we have been able to offer schools with the variety that only larger districts can offer," says Steve Adams, superintendent for both districts.

In addition, contracting for shared schools allows each district to maintain its "low-enrollment weighting," a move yielding more general state aid funding than if the districts consolidated, Adams says. Together, the two districts serve 462 students.

For Highland, the interdistrict contracting allows the district "to keep elective course offerings that may have been lost due to declining enrollment and falling revenues," says Bill Hargis, president of the Highland board.

Their creative arrangement meant a lot of work for each district and its board. The to-do list included deciding where to put the high school and middle school; aligning programs and curriculum; and creating staffing agreements that minimized staff displacement and maximized flexibility to match staff talents to work assignments.

"Our two boards have worked very hard to increase the educational opportunities for our students," says Vicki Jones, vice president of the Midway board. "We have made very good progress and our patrons, community, and students are all excited."

Indeed, students are benefiting, Adams says. "We are virtually the only districts in the state of Kansas, or any other state that I know of, that have entered into such an arrangement."

For more information, contact Steve Adams, superintendent, at (785) 442-3286, or by e-mail at sadams@highlandusd.k12.ks.us. The joint website for the two districts is www.doniphanwest.org.



The boards of Highland and Midway districts collaborate to share services and offer more academic opportunities to their students.

KANSAS
ASSOCIATION



OF
SCHOOL
BOARDS



1420 SW Arrowhead Road • Topeka, Kansas 66604-4024
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Written Testimony on **HB 2625**
before the
House Committee on Education

by

Mark Tallman, Assistant Executive Director/Advocacy
Kansas Association of School Boards

February 6, 2006

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written comments on **HB 2625**, which would allow school districts to create interlocal agreements to build and operate shared schools.

KASB members have adopted two basic positions on school consolidation issues. First, we oppose state **mandates** in this area, believing that these decisions should be made at the local level. Second, we support efforts by the state to encourage voluntary initiatives for consolidation, cooperation or other efforts to more efficiently share resources where appropriate. We believe **HB 2625** meets both criteria.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me or other members of our staff if you have questions before you take action on this bill.

House Education Committee

Date: 2-6-06

Attachment # 2

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PAT COLLOTON
28TH DISTRICT

Chairwoman Kathe Decker
House Education Committee
State Capitol
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: House Bill 2578

Dear Chairwoman Decker and distinguished committee members:

Representative Kathe Decker and I are co-sponsoring a scholarship program to increase the number of special education teachers in Kansas (HB 2578). The format of the program has been designed with the assistance of Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of the Kansas Department of Education and Diane Lindeman, Director of Student Assistance for the Board of Regents. We have visited with deans at the colleges of education in Kansas.

There is a critical shortage of special education teachers in Kansas. The highest turnover rate for any teaching specialty is in special education and so school districts must constantly refill these positions. At any given time there are a significant number of vacancies, provisional teachers, and teachers who are not trained in special education and who are teaching on waivers. The trend in recent years has been for most new special education teachers to come from licensure programs that allow part-time study spread over several years to obtain a masters. These programs result in full endorsement in special education. There is very little financial assistance available to these students. It is the object of this program to increase those numbers with a scholarship program modeled after the scholarship programs for underserved areas, and aimed at those students who are already licensed and working part-time toward full endorsement in special education. It will provide them with tuition money as they take their required coursework over several years. We believe that this is the best way to address the shortage of special education teachers in Kansas.

Anyone who has ever observed a special education classroom as a parent or otherwise knows that the skill of the special education teacher is critical to these students being able to learn. It takes a teacher who has incredible mental stamina, empathy, and commitment to finding the best pathway to overcome the student's barrier to learning. We need fully trained teachers and this bill will help achieve that.

House Education Committee
Date: 2-6-06
Attachment # 3-1

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
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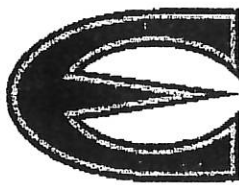
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PAT COLLOTON
28TH DISTRICT

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Colloton

State Representative Pat Colloton



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THE TEACHERS COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE DEAN
Campus Box 4036

February 3, 2006

Dear Chairman Decker,

I would like to take this opportunity to extend support for HB No. 2578. There is a critical need for special education teachers throughout the state of Kansas. If you were to review longitudinal data from the Kansas State Department of Education, it would quickly be noted that the shortage of special education teachers has existed for several decades. This year alone, Emporia State University is working with over 200 teachers who are seeking provisional special education licensure on waivers. As we near the end of the school year, teachers are beginning to give notice that they will be retiring or not returning to special education classrooms next year. My special education faculty receive desperate phone calls from superintendents and human resource directors almost daily seeking qualified special education teachers to fill anticipated vacancies. The mandate of No Child Left Behind legislation for highly qualified teachers is making it particularly difficult for middle and high school special education teachers to meet requirements. Many current special education teachers at these levels received their initial license to teach in areas like art, physical education, or music rather than math, science, or language arts. Nationally, the burn-out rate for special education teachers is three to five years. As special education paperwork requirements continue to increase and as more and more parents engage in litigious action with school districts, even higher numbers of special education teachers will likely leave the field even earlier.

The proposed special education teacher service scholarship program can help alleviate the special education teacher shortage. A conversation with Representative Pat Colton on Thursday indicated that eligible recipients would receive \$6,000 over a five year span while pursuing coursework that will lead to special education licensure. Many of the Regents institutions provide licensure programs at the graduate level only. Most require 32 to 36 hours of coursework. Graduate tuition per credit hour at ESU currently is \$177. Generally, students enrolling in special education programs are part time students, taking either one or two three credit hour courses each semester. The average special education student at ESU completes the courses for provisional licensure after two semesters, and can complete all of the courses required for the conditional license after five or six semesters if continuously enrolled each semester. The proposed \$6,000 scholarship stipend over a 5 year span would provide adequate financial support and an adequate timeline for most individuals to complete the requirements for an endorsement in special education in Kansas.

HB No. 2578 will provide a significant incentive for Kansas teachers to consider adding a special education endorsement to their teaching license. I hope the House Education

An Equal Opportunity Employer

House Education Committee

Date: 2-6-06

Attachment # 4-1

Committee and legislature seriously consider passing this proposed legislation. Kansas children – especially those with disabilities – will be the true beneficiaries if this legislation is passed.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information: 620-341-5367 or mehringt@emporia.edu.

Sincerely,



Tes Mehring Ph.D.
Dean
The Teachers College
Emporia State University

The University of Kansas

School of Education

February 5, 2006

The Honorable Pat Colloton
Kansas House of Representatives
Docking State Office Building
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Representative Colloton,

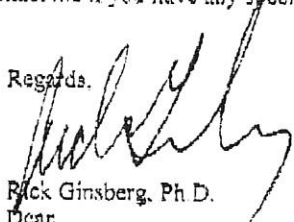
I appreciate the invitation to comment on HB 2578 which establishes a Special Education Teacher Service Scholarship Program. While the University of Kansas does not have an official position on this measure, I am happy to share my perspective on the benefits of this legislation. In addition, I shared information about the legislation with the Deans who make up the Council of Education Deans in Kansas, and all those present at our meeting last Friday. All the Deans unanimously support the legislation you are proposing (this includes the Education Deans from Kansas State University, Wichita State University, Pittsburg State University, Emporia State University along with the Chair of the Education Department at Washburn University).

School districts all across the United States and Kansas are facing shortages of teachers with the proper endorsement to teach in special education classrooms. With the mandate in the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation to have "Highly Qualified" teachers in every classroom, the shortages in special education are a significant concern. Policy makers and educators need to consider varying incentives to attract more individuals to obtain the necessary qualifications to work with special education students. As both an educator and a parent of a special needs child, I know through my professional and personal experience the difference that a properly qualified special education teacher can have with students who have special needs. Your proposed legislation offers financial support for individuals to seek full endorsement in special education and the flexibility to allow for both part-time and full-time students to take advantage of this incentive. Programs such as the one proposed in HB 2578 should be part of a concentrated effort to attract more people into this important area.

As you probably know, the Department of Special Education at KU is ranked as the top program in the United States among public universities in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings. The department faculty are among the most knowledgeable individuals in the field in the world, and I sought their input. They were very supportive of your proposed legislation. Given the scarcity of state resources, this bill is especially admirable as a means of addressing a problem schools districts all across the state confront. Thank you and your colleagues for working to consider this program.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any specific questions.

Regards,



Rick Ginsberg, Ph.D.
Dear
(785) 856-9650
ginsberg@ku.edu

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House Education Committee

Date: 2-6-06

Attachment # 5



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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February 6, 2006

Representative Kathe Decker
Chairwoman
House Education Committee
Statehouse, Room 128-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Representative Sue Storm
Ranking Member
House Education Committee
DSOB
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairwoman Decker and Ranking Member Storm:

On behalf of the Board of Regents, I write to express the Board's support for House Bill 2578. This legislation would establish the Special Education Teacher Service Scholarship Program.

HB 2578 is specifically designed for teachers who are currently licensed-to-teach to enable them to return to school to acquire additional education hours to be licensed as special education teachers. Through conversations with educational authorities in the state, it is this group of teachers that we most want to target and would benefit most by access to financial assistance. Research indicates that teachers who have more formal teaching preparation are more likely to remain in their field. This is the intended result of this scholarship program.

It would be beneficial to have better prepared special education teachers who will want to stay in their positions teaching students with special needs in Kansas on a long-term basis. This scholarship program would provide assistance to a group in which there is little financial assistance available (i.e. those with bachelor's degrees who are attending school part-time.)

Because the bill would require current teacher licensure it is assumed that the majority of those teachers who would take advantage of the assistance from this program would be attending school part-time as they would be continuing to teach full-time. This bill allows students to take up to five years to complete their coursework. The amount of scholarship assistance would be pro-rated based upon the number of hours that they were enrolled in. This bill provides for assistance up to \$3,000 per semester based upon full-time enrollment.

The Board supports efforts to financially assist persons in accessing educational opportunities that will ultimately benefit the state of Kansas. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Lindeman
Director of Student Financial Assistance

House Education Committee
Date: 2-6-06
Attachment # 6

Last year the house passed a bill similar to HB 2585 122-2 then it went to the Senate and they improved it going to line 18 so that schools will be able to change districts more often than every ten years. It allows you to get your district to have one person one vote without taking your own district to court. The senate had a floor amendment that changed it to board members taking office in May rather than July and was killed on final action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Otto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

House Education Committee
Date: 2-6-06
Attachment # 7