

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:40 p.m. on February 15, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Deb Hollon, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Kathie Sparks, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes  
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator John Vratil  
Pattie Wolters, President, USD 150 Board of Education  
Chip Gramke, Wichita Board of Education  
Bill Reardon, USD 500 Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools  
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association  
(KNEA)  
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School  
Boards (KASB)  
Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators

**SB 509—School finance; distribution of monies for at-risk education programs**

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, noted that **SB 509** was introduced by the Committee at the request of Senator Vratil. She explained that the bill made several amendments to the school finance law relating to at-risk pupils. The first change was on page 5, Section 3, wherein the definition of an at-risk pupil was changed. She explained that the current definition referred to pupils who are eligible for free meals under the National School Lunch Act and who are enrolled in a school district which maintains an approved at-risk pupil assistance plan. The new definition would be “a pupil who scores below proficient on the mathematics and reading state assessments and who is enrolled in a district which maintains an approved at-risk assistance plan.” The second major amendment, which was in Section 1, concerned the distribution formula for the funds. The bill eliminated the at-risk weighting and provided that the money would be distributed subject to appropriations to the districts based upon the FTE enrollment of at-risk students in each district. To conform to the amendment for the elimination of at-risk weighting, an amendment to the special education formula was in Section 2, page 2, wherein the current subtraction for “at-risk pupil weighting was changed to reduce the “at-risk funding” that each district receives. The definition section of the bill in Section 3 amended the definition of “at-risk pupil.” The definition of “adjusted enrollment” was amended on page 6 to delete at-risk weighting and the definition of at-risk weighting. In the definition section on page 8, “at-risk fund” was deleted from the definition of “Program weighted fund.” Section 5 amended K.S.A. 72-6414a. The money in the at-risk fund is to be used solely for the purpose of funding at-risk programs for at-risk pupils who meet the definition of those students who do not meet proficiency on the math and reading assessments. A provision was added that districts may still provide at-risk programs for those pupils who do not meet the new definition; however, the cost of providing services to those pupils must be paid from a source other than the at-risk fund. Sections 6 and 7 included clean-up amendments.

Senator John Vratil testified in support of **SB 509**. He informed the Committee that, with the help of the State Department of Education, he had been conducting an analysis of the at-risk funding system for at-risk students, and he distributed copies of a spreadsheet showing the results that analysis. (Attachment 1) He pointed out that the school districts were listed from small to large in terms of full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE). The number of students entitled to free meals was shown in the second column, followed by a column showing the percent of students in each school district that are entitled to free meals. A column entitled “2005-06 Total At-Risk Students” showed the number of students for which the school district is actually providing at-risk services. He noted, “You’ll see the first school district there, Decatur (Pawnee Heights), gets funding for five students and provides services to zero students. The last column is the percentage difference, and for Pawnee Heights, that’s 100 percent because they don’t provide services to any of the students, and they get funding for five.”

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:40 p.m. on February 15, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

He went on to say that the last page of the handout showed that, for the 2005-06 school year, there were 135,000 students who qualified for free lunches, and there were over 200,000 students who were receiving at-risk services. He commented, "If there was ever a correlation between free lunch students and at-risk students, that correlation doesn't exist any longer. We are providing funding for only about two-thirds of the students who are actually receiving at-risk services, and that's not a strong correlation at all. So it occurred to me that we might want to try to develop a system that would result in a closer correlation between the students that we provide funding for and the students who receive the services. This is not a new concept, but one I think is worth revisiting. Just to give you a little idea of the variance, there are only 50 school districts in the state that are within plus or minus 10 percent of the medium. When I talk about percentages, I'm talking about percentages in the far right hand column. There are only 79 school districts in the state out of 300 that are within a plus or minus 20 percent variance. So what that tells me is, we're not doing a very good job of providing at-risk money for the students who are actually in need of at-risk services and are receiving those services. In fact, I'd say we're doing a pretty poor job of it. To be a little more specific, if you look down that far right hand column, you'll see some rather startling figures. What I call positive variance, that is, those school districts that are actually making money off of our at-risk system, and those are the percentages in red, because they are receiving money for more students than they are providing services to. That ranges from zero percent to 85.9 percent. There's one school district that receives almost twice as much money for at-risk students as the number of students it's actually serving. If you look at the negative variance, it's even more dramatic. It ranges from zero to 851.2 percent. So one school district is actually providing at-risk services nine times the number of students it receives funding for. There are a lot of school districts on this list that are providing at-risk services to three and four times the number of students that they are actually receiving funding for. And that's a pretty poor job on the part of the Legislature. So I started thinking about different ways to do a better job, of actually getting the at-risk money to those school districts who have the greatest need and for those students who are actually at risk, and I thought a pretty good measure of that is what we've called the achievement gap. We've focused a lot on closing the achievement gap, and the Kansas Supreme Court has commented on the need to close the achievement gap. Well, the achievement gap is defined by those students who are proficient in reading and math and those students who are not proficient in reading and math. That's the measuring stick we use. So it occurred to me that maybe we would want to redefine an at-risk student, and the definition that I picked, but there's no magic to it, is an at-risk student should be defined as a student who is not proficient in reading and math. Any student who is not proficient in reading in math, their grade level is truly at risk. So that's the definition that is included in **SB 509**. Another way to look at this is, if we were to redefine an at-risk student that way, we could actually use at-risk funds to help us achieve the requirements of No Child Left Behind." As a point of interest, Senator Vratil distributed a spreadsheet page to each Committee member concerning their particular school district.

Senator Vratil commented further, "The bill is several pages long, but it's really pretty simple because it contains mostly current statutory language. If you agree with me that this information identifies a problem, and I think it does factually anyway, then there has to be a way to correct that problem. On page 5 of the bill, in lines 29 through 31, an at-risk pupil is redefined to mean a pupil who scores below proficient on mathematics and reading state assessments and who is enrolled in a district which maintains an approved at-risk pupil assistance plan. That's the new definition of at risk. On page one of the bill, in lines 15 through 17, that's the real operative statement when it says "within the limits of appropriations" because everything is subject to appropriation. The State Board will distribute monies for at-risk education programs based on the full-time equivalent enrollment of at-risk pupils in each district. So this will do away with the weighting factor for at-risk. The Legislature would annually decide how much money we want to appropriate for at-risk programs, and that total appropriation would be divided by the total number of full-time at-risk students in our schools, and then the money will be distributed on that basis. It's a very simple approach to at-risk funding, an approach that I think all of us can understand very easily. What it results in is using the same formula to distribute money as the formula that we use to determine the students who shall receive at-risk services. Right now, we're using one formula to distribute money and a completely different formula to determine which students receive services, and the two don't correlate at all. But I didn't want to unduly restrict school districts either. So if you look at page 9 of the bill, lines 7 through 12, you'll see a provision there that says, in effect, school districts can provide at-risk services to any students they want to, whether they meet the definition of at-risk or not. But if they provide at-risk services to students who are not defined as at-risk, they have to take that money from the general fund. They can only use at-risk money to provide services to at-risk students. Those are the main elements of the bill."

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:40 p.m. on February 15, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

In response to a question regarding the identification of the number of students who are at or below proficiency in math and reading, Senator Vratil explained, "That's a question I asked too, and I was told that it would be very difficult and time consuming to provide that information so I have not pushed the Department to provide that information until I see how this committee reacts to the proposal. Obviously, if this committee has a favorable reaction to the proposal, we're going to need to find out how many students there are in the State of Kansas who are performing below proficient on both reading and math. That can be done. We have the data. It's objective data; it's not subject to anybody's subjective interpretation. I would not ask the Department to extrapolate. I want absolute, accurate figures so I would only look at the at-risk students in the grades where they are tested, and then the Legislature can decide how much money it wants to provide, presumably enough to cover all twelve grades plus kindergarten."

Pattie Wolters, President, USD 105 Board of Education, testified in opposition to the changes for at-risk funding in **SB 509**. She pointed out that at-risk services are needed before a student fails, at-risk students that are succeeding continue to need services, at-risk weighting provides a safety net of services available to help students and provides continuation of the services, and successful test scores do not mean services are not needed. In conclusion, she noted that, if USD 105 lost at-risk funds, it could no longer afford to maintain its teacher and para professionals dedicated to providing at-risk services. ([Attachment 2](#))

Chip Gramke, Wichita Board of Education, testified in opposition to **SB 509**. He explained that he represented District 4 in southwest Wichita, which has a 75 to 80 percent poverty rate, and a very large percent of the students do not speak English. He pointed out that the students have inherent circumstances that other students do not face, such as their family structure and health services. Many of the students do not know from one day to the next where they will be living so they do not have much security. He observed, "It would be nice to target all students that fail the assessments, but I'd rather we focus on funding the ones that we've defined as at-risk now. I'm afraid that we might dilute the funding if we increase the definition. There's just a big difference in the means that children that live in poverty have and those that don't."

Bill Reardon, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (USD 500), testified in opposition to **SB 509**. At the outset, he called attention to a copy of USD 500's legislative priorities which was attached to his written testimony. He went on to say that, in his opinion, eliminating the free lunch criteria entirely would be counterintuitive to the data in the Augenblick & Myers study and in the Legislative Post Audit report regarding the nexus between poverty and the need for at-risk services. He noted that a study by the Kansas Legislative Research Department showed that there had been a pattern in many states to transition to funding methods similar to those in the bill, but most of those states had returned to a family income criteria. The Research Department further reported that, in every state, over identification had either diluted the funding or dramatically increased the aggregate costs of the at-risk programs. ([Attachment 3](#))

Mark Desetti, representing KNEA and the School Finance Coalition, testified in opposition to **SB 509** in its current form. He contended that the change in the definition of an at-risk student would greatly increase the number of students determined to be at risk. He pointed out that the establishment of a categorical fund would establish a finite amount of funds for at-risk students each year. The group he represented believes that districts must be assured that, as at-risk students are identified, there will be a flow of resources to meet student needs. In conclusion, he argued that it made no sense to change the law to make more students eligible and then place an artificial cap on the amount of dollars available. ([Attachment 4](#))

Mark Tallman, KASB, testified in opposition to **SB 509**. He stated that both KASB and KNEA supported what could be called "poverty plus" which he defined as continued funding based on the number of students eligible for free lunch and the use of additional criteria to identify other students who need special academic support. He noted that national and local tests have indicated that lower income students are more likely to fail to meet proficiency standards; however, not all low income students are actually at risk of failing to meet standards. Although he supported broadening the criteria for determining at-risk funding to include other factors such as failure to meet proficiency standards, he cautioned, if a district receives funding based on the number of students scoring below proficient and uses the funding to help students reach the standards, they would lose funding the next year because fewer students would be below proficient. Without ongoing support, many students from disadvantaged backgrounds may fall behind. ([Attachment 5](#))

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:40 p.m. on February 15, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Gerry Henderson, United School Administrators of Kansas, called the Committee's attention to his written testimony in opposition to **SB 509**, noting that his objections to the bill were similar to those expressed by other conferees. (Attachment 6)

Senator Vratil responded to the testimony in opposition to **SB 509** as follows: "First of all, there is no intention behind this bill of reducing funding for at-risk students. As the members of this committee know, I have been a strong promoter for increasing at-risk funding for as long as I can remember. Secondly, there is no possibility of over identification under this bill because one of the positives is, we know exactly how many students there are in this state who are achieving below proficiency in reading and math, and you cannot possibly over identify under this bill. And the third thing is, if Mr. Tallman thinks that 67.5 percent is a strong correlation, he needs to consult with the statistician." Senator Vratil then responded to questions from the Committee concerning the identification of at-risk students and the proposed distribution of at-risk funds.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2006.

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
GUEST LIST**

DATE: Feb. 15, 2006

NAME	REPRESENTING
Pattie Wolters	USD 105
Drew Lane	USD 379
Gail Kelly	USD 259
Stephanie Hanson	
Brett Siegel	
Amber Weaver	
LINDSAY HOLLIS	
Kelly Rifenbark	
Amy Mitter	
Ron Harbaugh	Topeka Public Schools
Mark Prent	USD 377
Susan Franey	USD 337
<b>RUSSELL MILLS</b>	<b>GACHES BRADEN</b>
Bill Reardon	USD 500
Amanda Benson	student
Amy Annett	student
Sara Chappell	KNASW Student Legislative Day
Bill Brady	SFFF.
Susan Baum	USD 336

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
GUEST LIST**

**DATE:** Feb. 15, 2006

NAME	REPRESENTING
DAVE REMMERS	USD 941
Don & Jane	Way River
Aaron Veleba	USD 498
Sheri Harmer	USD 364
Jenny Yungeberg	USD 498/364
Ryan Modin	USD 415
Ann Severin	USD 415
Janette Bodin	USD 441
Julie Ross	USD 372
Ronda Dewey	372
Jane Ryan	USD 372
Jerry Lauer	
GERRY HENDERSON	USA
Beth Onnes	Huttler Best Relations
MARK DESETTI	KNCA
Stuart Little	Shenroe Mission #512
Lisanne Kalthoff	Bethany College <sup>Lindsborg</sup> Kansas
Karen Ballou	Bethany College

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
GUEST LIST**

**DATE:** Feb 15-06

NAME	REPRESENTING
Glenda Bruyer	USD 413 / Chanute NEA
Kene Lawrence	USD 413 / Chanute NEA
Tony White	KANSAS NEA
Jennifer Lynn	Pruett, Smith, and Associates
Cody McManus	USD 336
Chaz Grange	USD 259
Dodie Weelshear	Ks Education Coalition

**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

USD#	County Name	USD Name	9/20/05 FTE inc 4yr at risk	9/20/2005 Free Meals	2005-06 Free Meals Percent	2005-06 Total At Risk Students	2005-06 Percent Difference Free Meals/At Risk Students
295	Decatur	Prairie Heights	12.5	5	38.46%	0	(100.0)
213	Norton	West Solomon	58.0	19	31.15%	7	(63.2)
228	Hodgeman	Hanston	69.5	14	19.44%	23	64.3
104	Jewell	White Rock	98.5	22	22.00%	10	(54.5)
455	Republic	Hillcrest	96.5	35	35.00%	45	28.6
468	Lane	Healy	104.0	33	31.43%	33	0.0
390	Greenwood	Hamilton	101.5	41	38.68%	50	22.0
221	Washington	North Central	111.5	28	23.93%	6	(78.6)
291	Gove	Grinnell	112.0	15	12.82%	39	160.0
511	Harper	Attica	120.0	36	29.51%	52	44.4
242	Wallace	Weskan	119.0	35	28.46%	18	(48.6)
275	Logan	Triplains	118.0	40	32.52%	10	(75.0)
502	Edwards	Lewis	119.0	54	42.86%	59	9.3
314	Thomas	Brewster	125.8	26	20.00%	20	(23.1)
399	Russell	Paradise	133.5	41	29.93%	67	63.4
424	Kiowa	Mullinville	121.5	56	40.29%	36	(35.7)
476	Gray	Copeland	127.0	55	39.29%	59	7.3
299	Lincoln	Sylvan Grove	136.0	45	31.47%	40	(11.1)
103	Cheyenne	Cheylin	144.0	40	27.21%	20	(50.0)
279	Jewell	Jewell	143.0	49	33.33%	55	12.2
324	Phillips	Eastern Heights	150.0	48	31.17%	80	66.7
269	Rooks	Palco	149.0	51	32.28%	33	(35.3)
285	Chautauqua	Cedar Vale	157.5	61	37.20%	65	6.6
292	Gove	Grainfield	167.0	46	26.90%	65	41.3
401	Rice	Chase	163.3	74	43.02%	106	43.2
496	Pawnee	Pawnee Heights	178.5	45	25.42%	95	111.1
238	Smith	West Smith Co.	179.0	65	35.71%	76	16.9
212	Norton	Northern Valley	180.0	62	32.80%	51	(17.7)
225	Meade	Fowler	179.0	81	41.54%	120	48.1
326	Phillips	Logan	183.5	48	24.24%	56	16.7
106	Ness	Western Plains	191.5	58	29.15%	58	0.0
316	Thomas	Golden Plains	188.1	85	42.29%	141	65.9
433	Doniphan	Midway	197.0	45	22.28%	55	22.2
474	Kiowa	Haviland	176.0	58	28.57%	42	(27.6)
283	Elk	Elk Valley	192.0	103	50.49%	103	0.0
217	Morton	Rolla	198.0	81	39.51%	63	(22.2)
241	Wallace	Wallace	204.0	65	31.40%	92	41.5
278	Jewell	Mankato	207.0	59	27.70%	25	(57.6)
359	Sumner	Argonia	204.0	40	18.78%	45	12.5
220	Clark	Ashland	204.5	73	34.11%	64	(12.3)
451	Nemaha	B & B	208.0	29	13.49%	53	82.8
332	Kingman	Cunningham	212.0	51	23.39%	87	70.6
371	Gray	Montezuma	252.4	68	30.77%	73	7.4
403	Rush	Otis-Bison	218.3	58	25.89%	58	0.0
384	Riley	Blue Valley	219.1	42	18.58%	102	142.9
334	Cloud	Southern Cloud	221.5	85	37.28%	66	(22.4)
471	Cowley	Dexter	234.5	74	30.96%	79	6.8
209	Stevens	Moscow	211.2	103	42.21%	71	(31.1)
425	Doniphan	Highland	238.0	34	13.82%	62	82.4
509	Sumner	South Haven	244.5	60	23.90%	105	75.0



**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

			9/20/05 FTE	9/20/2005	2005-06	2005-06	2005-06
					Percent	Total	Percent Difference
USD#	County Name	USD Name	inc 4yr at risk	Free Meals	Free Meals	At Risk Students	Free Meals/At Risk Students
479	Anderson	Crest	248.0	87	34.25%	150	72.4
219	Clark	Minneola	246.3	63	24.42%	66	4.8
386	Greenwood	Madison-Virgil	246.0	75	29.07%	112	49.3
459	Ford	Bucklin	245.5	86	33.08%	149	73.3
482	Lane	Dighton	244.2	72	27.69%	45	(37.5)
255	Barber	South Barber Co.	252.0	69	26.34%	51	(26.1)
477	Gray	Ingalls	245.9	62	23.40%	81	30.6
200	Greeley	Greeley County	252.5	78	29.21%	139	78.2
432	Ellis	Victoria	259.3	21	7.81%	63	200.0
426	Republic	Pike Valley	257.5	93	34.44%	79	(15.1)
456	Osage	Marais Des Cygnes	258.7	125	45.96%	125	0.0
411	Marion	Goessel	270.0	47	16.85%	29	(38.3)
245	Coffey	LeRoy-Gridley	270.5	73	26.07%	96	31.5
387	Wilson	Altoona-Midway	268.0	94	33.57%	117	24.5
369	Harvey	Burrton	277.0	125	42.96%	142	13.6
397	Marion	Centre	283.0	76	25.94%	76	0.0
422	Kiowa	Greensburg	279.0	48	16.38%	59	22.9
360	Sumner	Caldwell	276.9	98	33.33%	98	0.0
303	Ness	Ness City	272.6	52	17.57%	108	107.7
444	Rice	Little River	285.0	52	17.51%	64	23.1
311	Reno	Pretty Prairie	289.0	48	16.11%	84	75.0
351	Stafford	Macksville	289.0	114	37.62%	111	(2.6)
354	Barton	Claffin	295.0	54	17.82%	72	33.3
395	Rush	LaCrosse	318.5	90	29.03%	154	71.1
227	Hodgeman	Jetmore	299.5	78	25.00%	130	66.7
486	Doniphan	Elwood	297.4	151	48.40%	152	0.7
349	Stafford	Stafford	305.5	133	41.96%	116	(12.8)
492	Butler	Flinthills	313.5	62	19.44%	149	140.3
297	Cheyenne	St. Francis	311.0	73	22.60%	60	(17.8)
224	Washington	Clifton-Clyde	307.1	76	23.24%	94	23.7
300	Comanche	Comanche County	310.2	77	23.40%	40	(48.1)
293	Gove	Quinter	319.0	46	13.77%	148	221.7
412	Sheridan	Hoxie	324.5	62	18.24%	76	22.6
454	Osage	Burlingame	332.0	75	21.61%	117	56.0
347	Edwards	Kinsely-Offerte	308.5	113	32.38%	211	86.7
105	Rawlins	Rawlins County	342.5	89	25.07%	41	(53.9)
381	Ford	Spearville	343.0	47	13.24%	109	131.9
271	Rooks	Stockton	344.0	98	27.53%	124	26.5
488	Marshall	Axtell	316.5	54	15.13%	128	137.0
216	Kearny	Deerfield	335.3	170	47.09%	275	61.8
462	Cowley	Central	352.0	86	23.76%	169	96.5
392	Osborne	Osborne	352.7	115	31.68%	131	13.9
438	Pratt	Skyline	352.5	84	23.08%	110	31.0
222	Washington	Washington	353.5	78	21.14%	64	(17.9)
272	Mitchell	Waconda	348.4	105	28.23%	34	(67.6)
322	Pottawatomie	Onaga	360.5	90	24.19%	251	178.9
256	Allen	Marmaton Valley	362.0	128	34.32%	198	54.7
429	Doniphan	Troy	367.5	89	23.36%	66	(25.8)
298	Lincoln	Lincoln	364.1	120	30.93%	173	44.2
310	Reno	Fairfield	373.6	138	35.38%	234	69.6

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**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

			9/20/05 FTE	9/20/2005	2005-06	2005-06	2005-06
					Percent	Total	Percent Difference
USD#	County Name	USD Name	inc 4yr at risk	Free Meals	Free Meals	At Risk Students	Free Meals/At Risk Students
463	Cowley	Udall	368.7	76	19.44%	103	35.5
406	Doniphan	Wathena	380.0	77	19.49%	85	10.4
358	Sumner	Oxford	381.7	88	22.22%	110	25.0
398	Marion	Peabody-Burns	390.2	123	30.67%	200	62.6
498	Marshall	Valley Heights	379.9	102	25.37%	102	0.0
507	Haskell	Satanta	377.5	154	38.31%	235	52.6
388	Ellis	Ellis	377.6	86	21.29%	86	0.0
481	Dickinson	Rural Vista	394.5	106	26.17%	220	107.5
208	Trego	WaKeeney	398.0	83	20.05%	81	(2.4)
350	Stafford	St. John-Hudson	395.8	123	29.50%	185	50.4
281	Graham	Hill City	390.6	66	15.79%	85	28.8
393	Dickinson	Solomon	405.8	115	27.51%	226	96.5
335	Jackson	North Jackson	404.0	72	17.14%	104	44.4
419	McPherson	Canton-Galva	400.4	81	19.19%	125	54.3
270	Rooks	Plainville	391.8	97	22.82%	144	48.5
423	McPherson	Moundridge	415.0	41	9.62%	46	12.2
344	Linn	Pleasanton	409.5	168	39.16%	78	(53.6)
286	Chautauqua	Chautauqua	416.0	127	29.26%	149	17.3
448	McPherson	Inman	422.5	47	10.78%	143	204.3
282	Elk	West Elk	412.5	187	42.60%	200	7.0
237	Smith	Smith Center	426.5	104	23.58%	63	(39.4)
294	Decatur	Oberlin	432.5	119	26.74%	150	26.1
338	Jefferson	Valley Halls	436.5	96	21.33%	107	11.5
427	Republic	Belleville	439.5	108	23.74%	159	47.2
366	Woodson	Woodson	437.5	159	34.49%	190	19.5
274	Logan	Oakley	410.0	129	27.68%	163	26.4
421	Osage	Lyndon	447.0	90	19.23%	126	40.0
223	Washington	Barnes	387.1	74	15.74%	145	95.9
329	Wabaunsee	Alma	452.0	64	13.59%	190	196.9
307	Saline	Ell-Saline	453.5	66	13.95%	194	193.9
328	Ellsworth	Lorraine	452.3	159	33.33%	108	(32.1)
235	Bourbon	Uniontown	455.5	167	34.79%	272	62.9
284	Chase	Chase County	467.5	123	25.57%	223	81.3
494	Hamilton	Syracuse	459.0	197	40.62%	263	33.5
452	Stanton	Stanton County	454.4	187	38.32%	275	47.1
467	Wichita	Leoti	456.4	150	30.61%	246	64.0
504	Labette	Oswego	468.5	173	35.31%	193	11.6
339	Jefferson	Jefferson County	478.2	53	10.66%	139	162.3
226	Meade	Meade	478.2	116	23.20%	144	24.1
487	Dickinson	Herington	509.7	143	27.13%	248	73.4
376	Rice	Sterling	501.7	150	28.36%	87	(42.0)
258	Allen	Humboldt	511.2	179	33.33%	194	8.4
374	Haskell	Sublette	495.4	233	43.39%	181	(22.3)
330	Wabaunsee	Wabaunsee East	523.0	129	23.58%	199	54.3
439	Harvey	Sedgwick	528.5	89	16.27%	137	53.9
442	Nemaha	Nemaha Valley	498.4	74	13.53%	80	8.1
355	Barton	Ellinwood	477.6	134	24.23%	295	120.1
342	Jefferson	McLouth	541.3	101	18.23%	170	68.3
206	Butler	Remington-Whitewater	539.0	98	17.53%	103	5.1
380	Marshall	Vermillion	541.7	106	18.69%	74	(30.2)

**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

			9/20/05 FTE	9/20/2005	2005-06	2005-06	2005-06
					Percent	Total	Percent Difference
USD#	County Name	USD Name	inc 4yr at risk	Free Meals	Free Meals	At Risk Students	Free Meals/At Risk Students
251	Lyon	North Lyon Co.	555.7	121	21.27%	82	(32.2)
239	Ottawa	North Ottawa Co.	550.5	133	23.17%	198	48.9
505	Labette	Chetopa	560.5	266	45.70%	239	(10.2)
346	Linn	Jayhawk	560.3	180	30.56%	170	(5.6)
243	Coffey	Lebo-Waverly	577.5	155	26.01%	225	45.2
252	Lyon	Southern Lyon Co.	586.0	133	21.70%	139	4.5
246	Crawford	Northeast	588.5	285	46.34%	439	54.0
327	Ellsworth	Ellsworth	595.8	109	17.67%	96	(11.9)
288	Franklin	Central Heights	600.1	122	19.71%	233	91.0
254	Barber	Barber Co.	592.5	155	24.72%	224	44.5
341	Jefferson	Oskaloosa	583.6	184	29.35%	26	(85.9)
378	Riley	Riley County	628.0	80	12.35%	210	162.5
431	Barton	Hoisington	627.8	194	29.44%	236	21.6
389	Greenwood	Eureka	639.4	175	26.52%	140	(20.0)
408	Marion	Marion	635.2	154	23.19%	225	46.1
215	Kearny	Lakin	636.5	188	28.27%	251	33.5
325	Phillips	Phillipsburg	632.5	149	22.37%	165	10.7
240	Ottawa	Twin Valley	633.7	125	18.74%	204	63.2
102	Gray	Cimarron-Ensign	632.6	190	28.44%	285	50.0
430	Brown	Brown County	662.5	276	40.29%	277	0.4
356	Sumner	Conway Springs	558.1	81	11.74%	135	66.7
211	Norton	Norton	673.6	160	22.99%	185	15.6
449	Leavenworth	Easton	691.1	86	12.16%	110	27.9
410	Marion	Durham-Hills	668.9	121	17.07%	226	86.8
447	Montgomery	Cherryvale	680.6	233	32.68%	415	78.1
306	Saline	Southeast of Saline	691.4	92	12.87%	127	38.0
218	Morton	Elkhart	667.1	189	26.14%	204	7.9
101	Neosho	Erie-St. Paul	696.5	209	28.51%	304	45.5
205	Butler	Leon	711.5	155	21.06%	143	(7.7)
483	Seward	Kismet-Plains	685.0	331	44.91%	457	38.1
440	Harvey	Halstead	706.9	186	24.97%	215	15.6
420	Osage	Osage City	727.5	173	22.97%	263	52.0
372	Shawnee	Silver Lake	727.8	66	8.67%	120	81.8
377	Atchison	Atchison County	734.3	151	19.66%	232	53.6
484	Wilson	Fredonia	742.5	258	33.25%	285	10.5
499	Cherokee	Galena	737.0	394	50.77%	437	10.9
461	Wilson	Neodesha	742.0	229	29.21%	507	121.4
249	Crawford	Frontenac	743.0	181	23.06%	259	43.1
460	Harvey	Hesston	763.0	100	12.74%	126	26.0
357	Sumner	Belle Plaine	758.5	235	29.71%	438	86.4
273	Mitchell	Beloit	748.7	150	18.92%	117	(22.0)
364	Marshall	Marysville	754.2	147	18.38%	195	32.7
268	Sedgwick	Cheney	752.0	92	11.43%	332	260.9
247	Crawford	Cherokee	784.5	269	33.09%	481	78.8
323	Pottawatomie	Westmoreland	777.0	154	18.83%	194	26.0
289	Franklin	Wellsville	787.0	95	11.53%	135	42.1
436	Montgomery	Caney	817.5	221	25.91%	340	53.8
396	Butler	Douglass	828.3	151	17.30%	340	125.2
417	Morris	Morris County	837.0	257	29.30%	347	35.0
244	Coffey	Burlington	836.0	197	22.21%	197	0.0

1-4

**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

USD#	County Name	USD Name	9/20/05 FTE inc 4yr at risk	9/20/2005 Free Meals	2005-06 Free Meals Percent	2005-06 Total At Risk Students	2005-06 Percent Difference Free Meals/At Risk Students
405	Rice	Lyons	827.5	442	49.44%	298	(32.6)
404	Cherokee	Riverton	865.6	323	35.73%	491	52.0
361	Harper	Anthony-Harper	854.6	307	33.70%	371	20.8
287	Franklin	West Franklin	874.7	235	25.74%	451	91.9
508	Cherokee	Baxter Springs	859.0	316	34.57%	515	63.0
363	Finney	Holcomb	874.6	268	28.82%	386	44.0
415	Brown	Hiawatha	897.9	279	29.74%	403	44.4
441	Nemaha	Sabetha	906.5	161	17.04%	163	1.2
495	Pawnee	Ft. Larned	918.8	277	28.91%	159	(42.6)
337	Jackson	Mayetta	926.7	257	26.72%	320	24.5
466	Scott	Scott County	900.7	285	29.53%	360	26.3
340	Jefferson	Jefferson West	938.5	107	11.05%	215	100.9
343	Jefferson	Perry	956.5	169	17.05%	246	45.6
473	Dickinson	Chapman	963.4	205	20.69%	228	11.2
352	Sherman	Goodland	942.7	307	30.49%	297	(3.3)
315	Thomas	Colby	987.3	256	25.10%	448	75.0
407	Russell	Russell	989.5	291	28.53%	157	(46.0)
362	Linn	Prairie View	996.6	225	21.66%	301	33.8
400	McPherson	Smoky Valley	1,005.6	166	15.60%	215	29.5
312	Reno	Haven	1,055.7	263	24.06%	263	0.0
210	Stevens	Hugoton	1,022.3	386	35.28%	683	76.9
248	Crawford	Girard	1,051.0	307	27.86%	436	42.0
333	Cloud	Concordia	1,054.7	367	32.77%	578	57.5
321	Pottawatomie	Kaw Valley	1,085.0	222	19.47%	357	60.8
365	Anderson	Garnett	1,102.3	356	30.93%	231	(35.1)
336	Jackson	Holton	1,109.5	219	18.99%	323	47.5
331	Kingman	Kingman	1,064.0	292	24.96%	371	27.1
309	Reno	Nickerson	1,131.1	453	37.75%	482	6.4
382	Pratt	Pratt	1,177.8	339	27.41%	397	17.1
493	Cherokee	Columbus	1,188.5	456	36.80%	360	(21.1)
367	Miami	Osawatomie	1,185.0	458	36.67%	505	10.3
434	Osage	Santa Fe	1,204.8	278	22.24%	546	96.4
264	Sedgwick	Clearwater	1,234.3	158	12.22%	325	105.7
320	Pottawatomie	Wamego	1,280.6	209	15.63%	316	51.2
491	Douglas	Eudora	1,288.6	210	15.66%	679	223.3
379	Clay	Clay Center	1,327.2	299	21.71%	310	3.7
348	Douglas	Baldwin City	1,347.0	112	7.90%	350	212.5
203	Wyandotte	Piper	1,408.0	76	5.22%	307	303.9
257	Allen	Iola	1,428.0	564	37.90%	629	11.5
375	Butler	Circle	1,476.8	199	13.06%	311	56.3
503	Labette	Parsons	1,432.1	626	40.94%	662	5.8
416	Miami	Louisburg	1,472.8	124	8.07%	184	48.4
435	Dickinson	Abilene	1,468.0	334	21.30%	549	64.4
207	Leavenworth	Ft. Leavenworth	1,536.0	59	3.59%	155	162.7
409	Atchison	Atchison	1,557.8	648	39.37%	1,100	69.8
464	Leavenworth	Tonganoxie	1,640.7	201	11.78%	201	0.0
506	Labette	Labette County	1,638.2	469	27.48%	465	(0.9)
230	Johnson	Spring Hill	1,643.0	173	10.09%	383	121.4
353	Sumner	Wellington	1,638.0	588	34.29%	1,159	97.1
394	Butler	Rose Hill	1,683.5	204	11.74%	263	28.9

1-5

**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

USD#	County Name	USD Name	9/20/05 FTE inc 4yr at risk	9/20/2005 Free Meals	2005-06 Free Meals Percent	2005-06 Total At Risk Students	2005-06 Percent Difference Free Meals/At Risk Students
214	Grant	Ulysses	1,659.1	615	34.59%	744	21.0
445	Montgomery	Coffeyville	1,806.3	1,015	53.62%	1,093	7.7
413	Neosho	Chanute	1,831.4	613	32.18%	625	2.0
263	Sedgwick	Mulvane	1,858.3	278	14.47%	633	127.7
446	Montgomery	Independence	1,889.7	726	36.95%	738	1.7
234	Bourbon	Ft. Scott	1,879.2	775	39.38%	465	(40.0)
267	Sedgwick	Renwick	1,932.5	145	7.24%	301	107.6
368	Miami	Paola	2,004.7	333	15.81%	300	(9.9)
458	Leavenworth	Basehor-Linwood	2,062.7	126	5.91%	690	447.6
490	Butler	El Dorado	2,086.0	682	31.34%	1,083	58.8
469	Leavenworth	Lansing	2,150.5	157	7.08%	697	343.9
313	Reno	Buhler	2,129.5	400	17.88%	558	39.5
402	Butler	Augusta	2,131.2	492	21.78%	706	43.5
204	Wyandotte	Bonner Springs	2,191.5	509	22.12%	1,258	147.2
290	Franklin	Ottawa	2,380.5	723	29.22%	1,295	79.1
418	McPherson	McPherson	2,369.9	478	19.29%	625	30.8
262	Sedgwick	Valley Center	2,424.2	382	15.17%	612	60.2
465	Cowley	Winfield	2,415.0	793	30.99%	896	13.0
250	Crawford	Pittsburg	2,542.2	1,247	46.29%	1,363	9.3
470	Cowley	Arkansas City	2,748.6	1,360	46.77%	1,819	33.8
489	Ellis	Hays	2,869.5	692	22.97%	799	15.5
428	Barton	Great Bend	3,023.8	1,392	43.77%	1,530	9.9
450	Shawnee	Shawnee Heights	3,370.6	516	14.84%	937	81.6
345	Shawnee	Seaman	3,329.9	529	15.21%	750	41.8
373	Harvey	Newton	3,433.7	1,217	32.73%	1,488	22.3
231	Johnson	Gardner-Edgerton	3,647.8	526	13.61%	526	0.0
202	Wyandotte	Turner	3,660.5	1,338	34.59%	3,000	124.2
385	Butler	Andover	3,892.6	239	5.90%	622	160.3
453	Leavenworth	Leavenworth	3,940.2	1,570	37.86%	1,875	19.4
265	Sedgwick	Goddard	4,277.4	401	9.02%	802	100.0
480	Seward	Liberal	4,215.7	2,460	54.89%	3,369	37.0
261	Sedgwick	Haysville	4,434.1	1,154	24.77%	2,024	75.4
308	Reno	Hutchinson	4,542.1	2,149	44.99%	2,166	0.8
253	Lyon	Emporia	4,592.9	2,273	46.20%	2,760	21.4
383	Riley	Manhattan	4,913.7	1,126	21.82%	1,638	45.5
232	Johnson	DeSoto	4,930.0	404	7.76%	1,110	174.8
437	Shawnee	Auburn Washburn	5,103.3	813	15.27%	1,521	87.1
443	Ford	Dodge City	5,630.0	3,399	56.87%	4,502	32.5
266	Sedgwick	Maize	5,867.3	394	6.49%	1,170	197.0
475	Geary	Junction City	5,909.3	2,098	33.70%	3,634	73.2
260	Sedgwick	Derby	6,334.2	1,495	22.66%	2,122	41.9
305	Saline	Salina	7,066.2	2,533	34.23%	3,028	19.5
457	Finney	Garden City	6,859.4	3,366	45.46%	5,181	53.9
497	Douglas	Lawrence	9,855.4	2,175	21.11%	3,673	68.9
501	Shawnee	Topeka	12,607.4	7,206	54.01%	8,736	21.2
229	Johnson	Blue Valley	18,975.2	447	2.25%	4,252	851.2
500	Wyandotte	Kansas City	18,877.5	12,600	62.62%	18,347	45.6
233	Johnson	Olathe	23,422.0	2,843	11.59%	5,002	75.9
512	Johnson	Shawnee Mission	27,477.2	3,474	12.18%	10,103	190.8
259	Sedgwick	Wichita	45,497.2	26,787	55.07%	39,290	46.7

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**Compare Total At Risk Students to Students Receiving Free Meals**

			9/20/05 FTE	9/20/2005	2005-06 Percent	2005-06 Total	2005-06 Percent Difference
USD#	County Name	USD Name	inc 4yr at risk	Free Meals	Free Meals	At Risk Students	Free Meals/At Risk Students
			442,852.3	135,296	29.04%	200,627	48.3

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**I am testifying today to oppose changes for at-risk funding in SB 509.**

**Rawlins County USD 105**

Rawlins County USD 105 is the new school district formed from the Atwood and Herndon Consolidation in 2003. There are 354 students in USD 105. The Rawlins County School District has 45% economically disadvantaged students

**At-risk Services are needed before a student fails**

We must not wait for a student to fail before providing at risk services. Small towns used to have very stable population, but now we have students moving in and out of our schools during the year. These students tend to be those that need special services as they enter our district. With those services immediately available incoming students are off to a good start.

**At-risk students that are succeeding continue to need services**

At risk students can and do succeed. Because of their family situations many at-risk students can only continue to succeed with the support services of an at-risk program. The family and life structures that students need are missing in many at-risk families. Students may succeed one year on a specific test, but without on going services many cannot continue to be successful students.

**At-risk weighting based on economically disadvantaged student numbers provides a safety net of services available to help students before they fail and provides the continuation of the services that allow them to continue to succeed.**

Support needs to be available before failure and must be on going after success if economically disadvantaged students are going to succeed year after year.

**Successful test scores do not mean services are not needed**

USD 105 wants students to maintain successful scores. With intermittent services students would begin to "yo yo". If a student is successful one year and receive no help the following year the student may be failing by the next. Many economically disadvantaged students will need continued services to maintain continued success.

**At Risk services in USD 105**

At this time we have a certified teacher and 1 1/2 paras dedicated to providing at risk services to our students. If we lose at risk funds our district could not afford to maintain these positions.



Pattie Wolters

Rawlins County USD 105 BOE President

Senate Education Committee  
2-15-06  
Attachment 2



# Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

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Unified School District No. 500

## Testimony by USD 500 Before the Senate Education Committee on SB 509 February 15, 2006

Madame Chair:

Along with my written testimony, I have also included a copy of District 500's Legislative Priorities. As you can see, my district supports a broadening of the definition of an At-Risk child for the purpose of securing state funding. This endorsement is contingent on retaining the current method based on qualification for free lunch and then adding other students who are in need of At-Risk services. We are currently serving more students in our At-Risk programs than are provided for by state funding. SB 509, however, eliminates the free lunch criteria entirely. We feel this is counterintuitive to the empirical data contained both in the Augenblick & Myers study and in the Post Audit Report regarding the nexus between poverty and the need for At-Risk services. Based on the position in both reports, it seems unlikely that the Court would look favorably on any change in At-Risk funding that does not retain a family income trigger.

Finally, a caveat regarding At-Risk funding based on identification. In the 1990's, I requested a study by Legislative Research regarding modalities used by other states to fund At-Risk services. There was a pattern among many states to transition from family income criteria for funding to methods similar to those contained in SB 509. By the middle of the decade, most of these states had returned to a family income criterion. I asked Mr. Ben Barrett of Legislative Research to attempt to ascertain the reasons these



states discontinued the fund-those-who-need-the-services method. He later reported to me that in every state, overidentification had either diluted the funding for those who truly need the services (if block grants were used) or dramatically increased the aggregate costs of these state's At-Risk programs.

For these reasons, USD 500 would oppose SB 509 as it is currently drafted.

Bill Reardon, Lobbyist USD 500

## Legislative Goals 2006-2007

The Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education supports the findings of the Kansas Supreme Court that state adequate funding for public education has not reached a level that allows for a suitable education for all students across our state. The Kansas City Kansas Board of Education believes that suitable education reaches beyond the basic core areas of curriculum. Public education provides students access to experience the cultural, economic and democratic opportunities provided by our state and nation. We believe in the importance of continuous improvement for all students and believe the cost of improving schools is the responsibility of the state legislature regardless of geographic location.

The Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education proposes the following recommendations for the 2007 budget.

- 1) Establishment of a base budget that adequately funds a suitable education for all students, regardless of geographic location. An adequate base budget will allow for funding of competitive salaries and benefits for all staff members. Competitive salaries will assist in the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and administrators.
- 2) Maintain funding for continuation of an equalized LOB to be used by districts that choose to provide educational enhancements.
- 3) Increase support for at-risk students. At-risk funding should be increased to 0.25. At-risk funding should support the entire instructional program, including staff development focused on development of skills necessary to meet the ever increasing challenges of students identified as at-risk. Consideration should be given to expanding the methods used to identify students as at-risk without reducing support to current programs.
- 4) Full funding of Bilingual education programs. The state of Kansas should fully fund the additional cost associated with providing educational services for bilingual students. Annual audits are the appropriate safeguard to address the possibility of over-identification.
- 5) Full funding of Special Education programs. The state of Kansas should fully fund the additional cost associated with providing educational services for special education students. Annual audits are the appropriate safeguard to address the possibility of over-identification.
- 6) Funding for all day kindergarten. The importance and benefits of all day kindergarten have been recognized as increasing the chances of students' later academic success. All day kindergarten should be considered part of the general curriculum provided to all students in the state of Kansas.
- 7) Fully fund professional development programs that provide opportunities for staff members to develop skills necessary to meet the increased needs of students as well as the demands of No Child Left Behind. Continuous improvement of Kansas Public Education is dependent on the continual improvement of the instruction in every classroom in the state. It is therefore necessary for funding to

be provided to allow teachers and staff members to develop instructional skills required to meet the increasing demands of a constantly changing population.

- 8) The Taxpayers Bill of Rights commonly referred to as TABOR has proven to be detrimental to public schools and the statewide economy of a neighboring state. We believe that the adequate funding of base budget, appropriate funding for at-risk education, full funding of Bilingual and Special Education programs, along with funding for full day kindergarten will allow for local tax payers to determine the appropriate use of the LOB. In doing so local taxpayers will be provided control over the funding of enhancements to a State funded suitable education.
- 9) Any required provisions that establish the required percentage of educational funding be spent on classroom instruction, must be defined in a manner that will include all costs that are associated to the delivery of the schools instructional program. Such costs as counseling services, instructional support, professional development, technology, technology support and library service must be included in a fair definition of classroom instructional cost.
- 10) Funding for students placed in alternative educational programs based on behavior issues should match current funding levels provided for students assigned to Juvenile Detention Centers.
- 11) Additional funding to pre-school students should be made available. Additional funding should be targeted to pre-school students and families identified as At-Risk.



**School Finance Coalition, Testimony**  
**February 15, 2006**  
**Senate Bill 509**

Chairwoman Schordorf and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

On behalf of the **School Finance Coalition** I would like to express our opposition to **SB 509** in its current form. There are two major statutory changes in SB 509 dealing with the state's at risk weighting formula. The first change deals with how the state defines which students are at risk. SB 509 states that any student who is not proficient on the math and reading assessments would be determined to be at risk. This change will greatly increase the number of students determined to be at risk. On this issue our members have varying views and therefore you will hear individually from the various educational groups on the definitional issue.

The second issue in SB 509 would establish at risk funding as a categorical grant similar to special education funding. The current weighting formula allows each district to be able to count the funds once the district has identified the student.

The establishment of a categorical fund would establish a finite amount of funds for at risk each year. The School Finance Coalition is very much opposed to this concept. We believe districts must be assured that as at risk students are identified the resources will flow to meet student needs. Efforts to broaden the definition so that more students benefit from at risk dollars should not be accompanied with a systemic change that will serve to cap the amount of total dollars available.

We understand the varying arguments for broadening the definition. We believe it makes no sense, at a time when study after study has identified the state's at risk formula to be woefully inadequate, that Kansas change the law to make more students eligible and then place an artificial cap on the amount of dollars available.

Kansas Association of School Boards  
Kansas National Education Association  
United School Administrators  
Schools for Quality Education  
Schools for Fair Funding  
Wichita Public Schools  
Kansas City Kansas Public Schools  
Kansas Families United for Public Education

*Mark Desetti, KNEA*

*Senate Education Committee  
2-15-06  
Attachment 4*

KANSAS  
ASSOCIATION



OF  
SCHOOL  
BOARDS

1420 SW Arrowhead Road • Topeka, Kansas 66604-4024  
785-273-3600

Testimony on **SB 509**  
before the  
**Senate Education Committee**

by

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

February 15, 2006

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **SB 509**. We have joined with a number of other education organizations and school districts in opposition to the provisions of **SB 509** that would change at-risk assistance from a weighting to a categorical program.

In my testimony, I am speaking on behalf of both the Kansas Association of School Boards and the Kansas National Education Association to address the second issue raised in this bill: how to identify students for determining funding for at-risk programs.

Both KASB and KNEA support what might be called "poverty plus." That is, we believe funding should continue to be based on the number of students eligible for free lunch, but we support using additional criteria to identify other students who need special academic support.

Poverty is a widely accepted measure of student need. We believe that the number of students in poverty is an important factor in determining the challenges and costs a school district will face in helping students reach appropriate academic standards. National, state and local tests all indicate that lower income students are more likely to experience academic difficulties and fail to meet proficiency standards.

Of course, not all low income students are actually "at risk" of failing to meet standards, and some more economically advantaged students face difficulties in school. That is why we support broadening the criteria for determining at-risk funding to include other factors, such as failure to meet proficiency standards. One problem with this approach, however, is that districts risk being penalized for their success. In other words, if a district receives funding based on the number of students scoring below proficient and uses those resources to help students reach the standards, they would lose funding the next year because fewer students would be below proficient. But without on-going support, many students from disadvantaged backgrounds – both economic and otherwise – may fall behind. Therefore, using free lunch eligibility provides a "base of support" determined by the number of students more likely to need special assistance.

KASB and KNEA also agree on one other point: funding for at-risk programs remains far too low. This point was demonstrated by your Post Audit Cost Study, and we believe will be of particular interest to the Supreme Court. As discussions on school finance continue "behind closed doors" we think it is important to remember that a multi-year plan might well be "too little, too late" for many at-risk students. In three or four years, today's freshman class will already be graduated – or dropped out.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Senate Education Committee  
2-15-06  
Attachment 5*



## SB 509

Testimony presented before the Senate Education Committee

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United School Administrators of Kansas

February 15, 2006

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to address an important part of the Kansas school finance system. As this committee has often discussed, one of the confusing aspects of the **at risk** portion of the formula is that the definition under question in **SB 509** (pupils who are eligible for free meals...) is used primarily to develop a funding stream rather than to define the student population served. We agree that this method of developing a funding stream does not serve districts well who have children at risk of failure but who are unable to meet family income guidelines outlined in the national school lunch act. However, we are uncomfortable removing income guidelines (poverty) from the statutory definition of **at risk**. If the committee wanted to add to the existing definition, we would be pleased to work with you.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and the change to Quality Performance Accreditation in Kansas in 1992 caused educators and the general public to begin looking at the reasons why children did not do well in school. Through all of this time, the most consistent predictor of unacceptable student performance has been poverty. We believe it would be a mistake to remove the use of income guidelines from this statute, as we believe both educators and legislators need a reminder of our collective responsibility to children who don't choose their parents well.

That we all need such a reminder can be seen simply by looking at the lack of attention to the problems of children from birth to age three. We have known for years that potential learning problems detected and remediated in children from birth to age three is both developmentally and fiscally sound. Some problems ignored until school age are simply never fully corrected. Addressing such problems later is always more expensive.

Finally we would recommend that **at risk** funds continue to be a part of the weighted school finance formula. Our experience with categorical funds has been less than positive. If the legislature wants to increase the resources available for programs designed to help students not meeting performance standards (and we would support such an increase), a change in the current weighting factor would do that.

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