

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on February 8, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Michele Alishahi, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Laura Kelly
Lynette Poolman, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
Nancy Armstrong, USD 501 teacher
Dr. Tony Sawyer, Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools
David L. Miller and Andrew Schmucker, representing Amish
and Mennonite congregations in the Hutchinson area
Senator Chris Steineger
Josh Shald, President, Washburn University Student
Government Association

SB 207 – Mandated attendance of kindergarten; lower age of eligibility to six

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, distributed a balloon of **SB 207** showing amendments needed to accomplish the intent of Senator Laura Kelly, the author of the bill. (Attachment 1) She went on to say that the bill lowers the age at which a child would be eligible to attend from age six to age five, lowers the age at which a child would be required to attend school from age seven to age six, and would require children to attend kindergarten.

Dale Dennis, Interim Commissioner of Education, informed the Committee that a very high percentage of children eligible to attend kindergarten currently attend; therefore, the bill would affect a small percentage of children. He confirmed that all school districts must offer kindergarten, but there currently was no requirement that children must attend kindergarten.

Senator Laura Kelly testified in support of **SB 207**. She explained that she requested the bill after participating in a roundtable discussion with teachers at a recent KNEA meeting. During the discussion, Nancy Armstrong, a USD 501 teacher, commented that Kansas needed to make kindergarten mandatory. Senator Kelly noted that, before that discussion, she did not know that kindergarten was not mandatory. After the meeting, she called the six school superintendents in her area to confirm that they would support a bill to make kindergarten mandatory, and all of them agreed that the bill would be a good idea. She commented, "I firmly believe that, if we as a state are going to invest as much as we do and are pushing to do even more on early childhood development and education, then it makes absolutely no sense for us to have a loophole in our law that allows parents to not start the education of their children young enough so that, when they get into the first grade and beyond, they are falling so far behind."

For the Committee's information, Lynette Poolman, representing the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, gave an overview of the science of brain development from birth to age five. She explained that a neural tube begins developing on the 16th day of conception, that the brain begins to fuse at the spinal cord on the 28th day, and that the brain is the only organ that is unfinished at birth. She noted that the only way that the brain begins to develop and grow after birth is through life's experiences. She then explained how brain cells interact, and she discussed how developing neurons are changed by what a child experiences. She emphasized that it is very important that children from birth to age five are in predictable, nurturing, non-chaotic environments because their experiences and relationships tell their brain how to grow, and the foundation for later in life is formed. In conclusion, she noted that increasing isolation, decreasing resources, and electronic care giving combine to make it more difficult for families to provide optimizing experiences for children. (Attachment 2)

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:35 p.m. on February 8, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Nancy Armstrong, a kindergarten teacher in Topeka (USD 501), testified in support of **SB 207**. In her personal experience, the reasons parents gave for not sending their child to kindergarten all related to inconvenience. In her opinion, the inconveniences they cited do not validate the expense school districts incur to employ student improvement teams and reading and math specialists needed to tutor these students in an attempt to bring their knowledge base up to the level of first grade students who did attend kindergarten. She emphasized that all students need to come to first grade with the strong foundation that kindergarten provides and that it was time for Kansas to join other states which have recognized the need to get their students off to the best start possible. (Attachment 3)

Dr. Tony Sawyer, Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools, testified in support of **SB 207**. He pointed out that one of the critical challenges for educators is a child's lack of prior knowledge when entering school. He contended that changing the mandatory age for school attendance to six would ensure that all parents understand the importance of their child attending kindergarten. He noted that maximizing school participation will give school staff more time to prepare students for a promising academic experience in this age of standards-based instruction and high stakes testing. (Attachment 4)

Senator Schodorf called attention to written testimony in support of **SB 207** submitted by Terry Forsyth, Kansas National Education Association. (Attachment 5)

David L. Miller and Andrew Schmucker testified in opposition to **SB 207** on behalf of the Amish and Mennonite congregations in the Hutchinson area. Mr. Miller explained that he became interested in the bill after reading an article in the *Hutchinson News* earlier in the week. He noted that the article indicated that the number of children at risk was relatively small, perhaps several hundred. He explained that his community has a population of approximately 500, and some members of his community recently moved to Lyndon. Those members also opposed the bill. A member from Lyndon was present but did not speak. Mr. Miller went on to say that he met with several members of the Amish community to prepare a written statement expressing their concern that it is sometimes not in the best interest of every child to make a uniform ruling. He informed the Committee that a group of Mennonites known as the Church of God in Christ consisting of 3,000 to 4,000 members asked that he also express their opposition to the bill. Mr. Miller then introduced Mr. Schmucker, who is a high school teacher and the parent of three children age 6 and younger.

Mr. Schmucker read the prepared statement which clarified that the Amish-Mennonite community did not desire to deprive any child of the opportunity to attend kindergarten in cases where that is clearly in the child's best interest; however, the community has serious reservations about mandating kindergarten for every child in the state because disagreement exists among educational professionals regarding the benefit of early childhood educational programs. In addition, the statement explained that the community's Christian school does not offer kindergarten; but instead, the school has identified specific readiness criteria that is verified by testing before a child enters first grade at the school. Parents are allowed to make the determination of overall readiness, and any family that desires to send their children to kindergarten has the option to send them to a public school. The community requested that the bill be amended to exempt children in religious communities such as theirs from mandatory kindergarten attendance. (Attachment 6)

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 207** was closed.

SB 212 – Kansas Youth Civil Service Credit Act

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, explained that **SB 212**, introduced by Senator Chris Steineger, would establish the Kansas Youth Civil Service Credit Act, which would be a program similar to other state service scholarship programs. It would be administered by the State Board of Regents. A qualified student would be a resident of Kansas who is under the age of 25. The basis is providing volunteer service or military service, and the awards are based on need. The service scholarship could be awarded for two years or its equivalent. The student could go to school on a full-time or part-time basis, and the service obligation would be one year. A student could actually complete a service obligation prior to being awarded the credit. The State Board would have the authority to adopt rules and regulations in their administration of the act.

Senator Steineger explained that approximately one year ago he noticed that assistance was given in Kansas

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:35 p.m. on February 8, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

only to persons who joined the military services. The intent of the bill was to give incentives for public service for persons who are not in military service but who join the U.S. Health Service, Peace Corps, or AmeriCorps. For every year served up to two years, young Kansans would get two years of free college tuition at any Regents college, community college, or Washburn University. (Attachment 7)

Josh Shald, President of the Washburn University Student Government Association, testified in support of **SB 212**. He observed that national service is becoming increasingly more important in addressing the needs of a changing America. Through the bill, Kansas would have an opportunity to send its young people outside the classroom to make a difference in all parts of the country. Further, the skills and knowledge gained through national service could be used by these individuals to improve local communities. He explained that he had committed to the AmeriCorps Teach for America program after he receives his bachelors degree, and having this type of state recognition for his service would provide an incentive for him to return to the state to serve his local community and the state. (Attachment 8)

Senator Schodorf called attention to written testimony in support of **SB 212** submitted by Lorrie Beck, Group Leader, The Organization of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. (Attachment 9)

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 212** was closed.

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

The next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2007.

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
GUEST LIST**

DATE: February 8, 2007

NAME	REPRESENTING
Ron Harbaugh	Topeka Public Schools
Diane Gjerstad	Wichita Public Schools
Scott Frank	Leg Post Audit
Josh Shald	Washburn Student Government Assn.
David L Miller	Amish Mennonite Church
Rudy J. Overholt	Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church
Berni Fulle	Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church
Joseph Andrew Schumaker	Pittsburg Amish Mennonite Church
Lawrence Overholt	Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church
Ernest Mast	Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church
Allyn M. Nisky	Amish Mennonite Church
Brenda W. Nisky	Amish Mennonite Church
Christy Campbell	Little Gov't Relations
Karl Wenger	Kearney & Associates
Doug Bowman	CEECD
Val DeFever	SPE
Katie Gates	Lanna Kelly
BILL REARDON	USD 500
Deddie Wellshear	United School Administrators

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
GUEST LIST**

DATE: 2/8/07

NAME	REPRESENTING
Carrie Bowen	WU School of Nursing
Dani Demoret	WU SON
Nicole Mirsch	WU School of Nursing
Krystle Neal	WU SON
Rachel Cisneros	WU School of Nursing
Deb Crowl	Emporia Child Care
Felicia Cradick	Washburn University School of Nursing
Ballee Williams	Washburn School of Nursing
Bill Pollock	
Holly Turner	Children's Learning Center / Kansas Assoc. for Educ. Young Children
Charity Shumann	WU SON
Beth Sheehy	WU School of Nursing
Tabitha Wilson	WU School of Nursing
Lisa Schwarz	WU SON
Angela Seagraves	WU School of Nursing
Laura Kelly	Senate
Christina	KNEA
Nancy Gunstony	Quincy Elem. Teacher
Lynell Padman	Kansas Public's Cabinet

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
GUEST LIST

DATE: 02/08/07

NAME	REPRESENTING
Nancy Barr	University of Ks. School of Nursing
Lindsey Amundson	University of Ks. School of Nursing
Maggie Apodaca	University of Kansas School of Nursing
Michelle Alexander	University of Kansas School of Nursing
Courtney Kasun	University of Kansas School of Nursing
Erica Irwin	University of Kansas School of Nursing
Ashlee Moore	KU School of Nursing

SENATE BILL No. 207

By Committee on Education

1-29

9 AN ACT concerning school districts; relating to kindergarten; amending
10 K.S.A. 72-1107 and K.S.A. 2006 Supp. 72-1111 and 72-53,106 and
11 repealing the existing sections.
12

13 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

14 Section 1. K.S.A. 72-1107 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-
15 1107. (a) Subject to the provisions of subsection (b), any child is eligible
16 to attend the elementary grades in the school district in which the child
17 resides or in a school district which has entered into an agreement in
18 accordance with and under authority of K.S.A. 72-8233, and amendments
19 thereto, with the school district in which the child resides if (1) for the
20 ~~1994-95 school year, the child will attain the age of six years on or before~~
21 ~~September 1 of the school year and (2) for the 1995-96 school year, the~~
22 ~~child will attain the age of six years on or before September 1 of the~~
23 ~~school year and (3) for any school year commencing after the 1995-96~~
24 ~~school year, the child will attain the age of six years on or before August~~
25 ~~31 of the school year;~~

five

26 (b) any child who has completed a kindergarten course entered and
27 attended in this state in accordance with the provisions of subsection (d)
28 or who was a resident in another state and who, while residing in such
29 other state, had entered and was in attendance in first grade in such state
30 or who had completed in such state a kindergarten course maintained by
31 a public school district or by an accredited private, denominational or
32 parochial school shall be eligible to attend first grade in this state, re-
33 gardless of age;

34 (c) subject to the provisions of subsection (d), any child is eligible to
35 attend kindergarten in the school district in which the child resides or in
36 a school district which has entered into an agreement in accordance with
37 and under authority of K.S.A. 72-8233, and amendments thereto, with
38 the school district in which the child resides if (1) for the 1994-95 school
39 ~~year, the child will attain the age of five years on or before September 1~~
40 ~~of the school year and (2) for any school year commencing after the 1994-~~
41 ~~95 school year, the child will attain the age of five years on or before~~
42 ~~August 31 of the school year;~~

43 (d) any child who was a resident in another state and who, while

Senate Education Committee
2-8-07
Attachment 1

Revisor of
Statutes

1 residing in such other state, had entered and was in attendance in kin-
2 dergarten in such state shall be eligible to attend kindergarten in this
3 state, regardless of age.

4 Sec. 2. K.S.A. 2006 Supp. 72-1111 is hereby amended to read as
5 follows: 72-1111. (a) Subject to the other provisions of this section, every
6 parent or person acting as parent in the state of Kansas, who has control
7 over or charge of any child who has reached the age of ~~seven~~ six years
8 and is under the age of 18 years and has not attained a high school diploma
9 or a general educational development (GED) credential, shall require
10 such child to be regularly enrolled in and attend continuously each school
11 year (1) a public school for the duration of the school term provided for
12 in K.S.A. 72-1106, and amendments thereto, or (2) a private, denomi-
13 national or parochial school taught by a competent instructor for a period
14 of time which is substantially equivalent to the period of time public
15 school is maintained in the school district in which the private, denomi-
16 national or parochial school is located. If the child is 16 or 17 years of
17 age, the parent or person acting as parent, by written consent, or the
18 court, pursuant to a court order, may allow the child to be exempt from
19 the compulsory attendance requirements of this section.

beginning with attendance in kindergarten

20 (b) If the child is 16 or 17 years of age, the child shall be exempt
21 from the compulsory attendance requirements of this section if (1) the
22 child is regularly enrolled in and attending a program recognized by the
23 local board of education as an approved alternative educational program,
24 or (2) the child and the parent or person acting as parent attend a final
25 counseling session conducted by the school during which a disclaimer to
26 encourage the child to remain in school or to pursue educational alter-
27 natives is presented to and signed by the child and the parent or person
28 acting as parent. The disclaimer shall include information regarding the
29 academic skills that the child has not yet achieved, the difference in future
30 earning power between a high school graduate and a high school drop
31 out, and a listing of educational alternatives that are available for the child,
32 or (3) the child is regularly enrolled in a school as required by subsection
33 (a) and is concurrently enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution,
34 as defined by K.S.A. 74-3201b, and amendments thereto. The provisions
35 of this clause (3) shall be applicable to children from and after July 1,
36 1997 and shall relate back to such date.

37 (c) Any child who is under the age of ~~seven~~ six years, but who is
38 enrolled in school, is subject to the compulsory attendance requirements
39 of this section. Any such child may be withdrawn from enrollment in
40 school at any time by a parent or person acting as parent of the child and
41 thereupon the child shall be exempt from the compulsory attendance
42 requirements of this section until the child reaches the age of ~~seven~~ six
43 years or is re-enrolled in school.

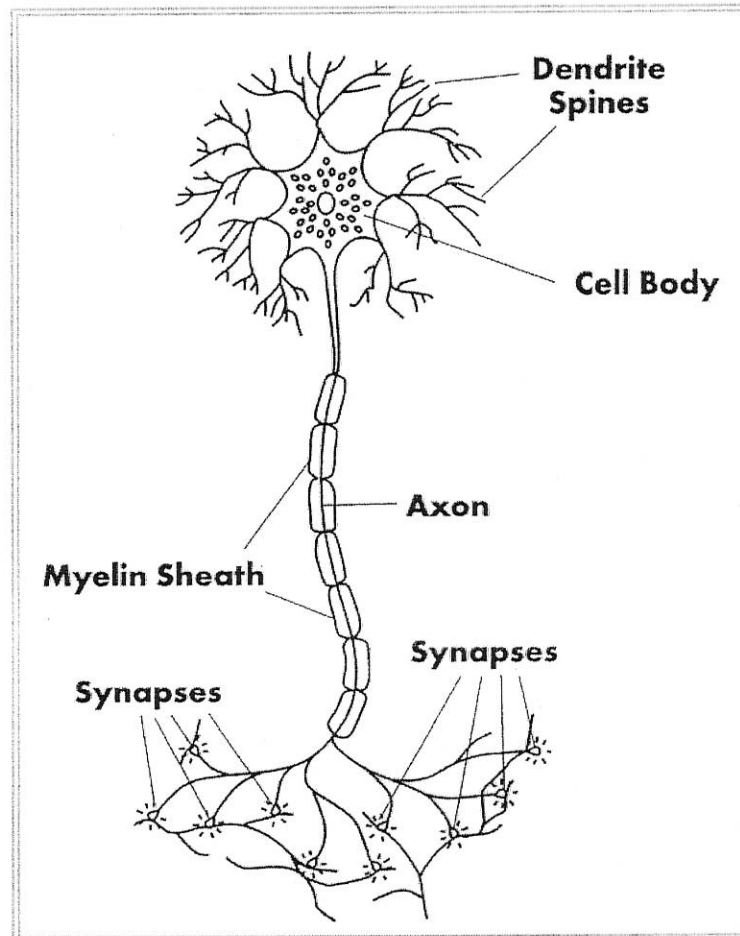
The Brain Matters

The human brain is the organ responsible for everything we do

- The brain allows us to love, laugh, walk, talk, create or hate
- For each of us, our brain's functioning is a direct reflection of our experiences
- The brain allows us our humanity



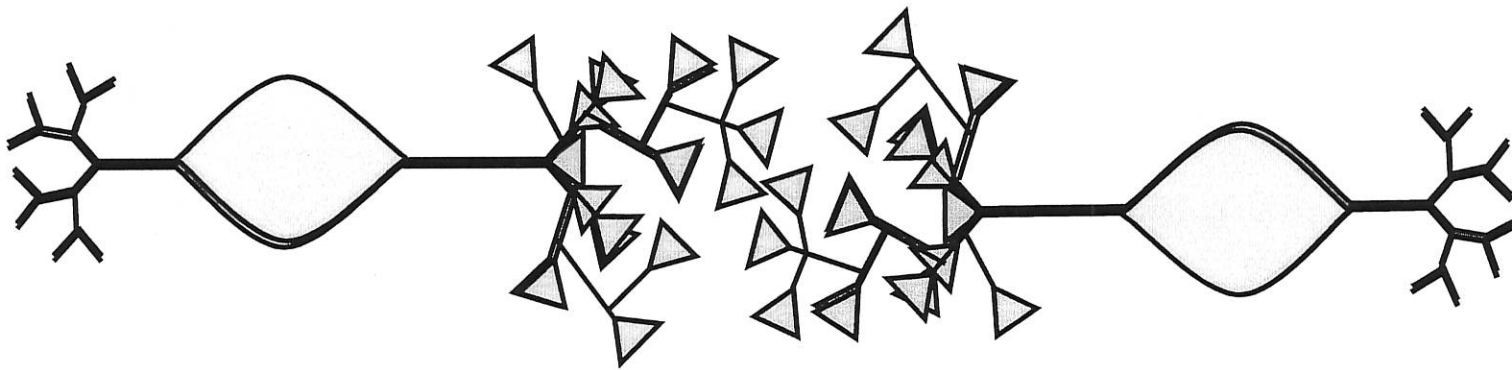
Neurons: The building blocks of the brain



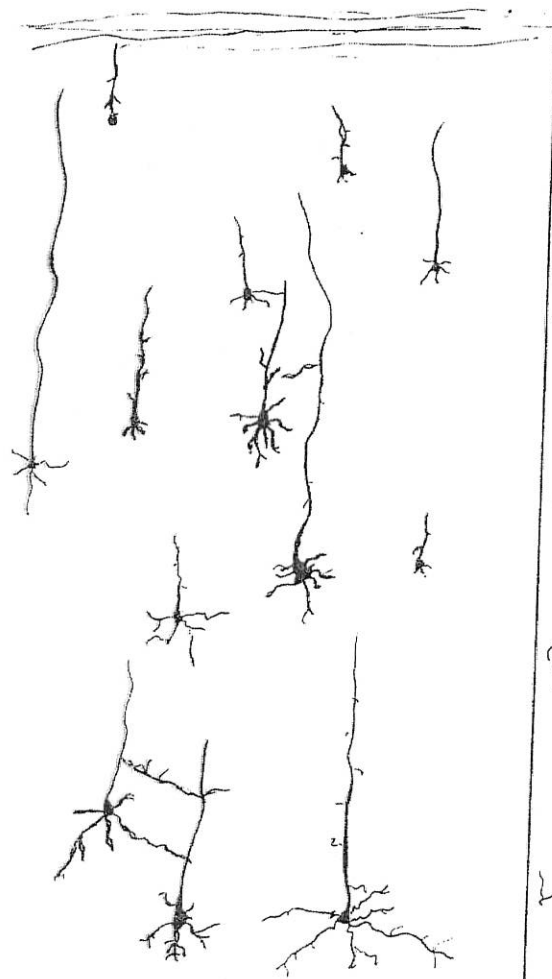
Somatosensory Bath

- Touch, taste, sight, smell, sound and movement in the caregiver-infant interaction
- These sensory cues play a major role in providing the patterned, repetitive sensory stimulation and experiences that help organize key areas in the brain

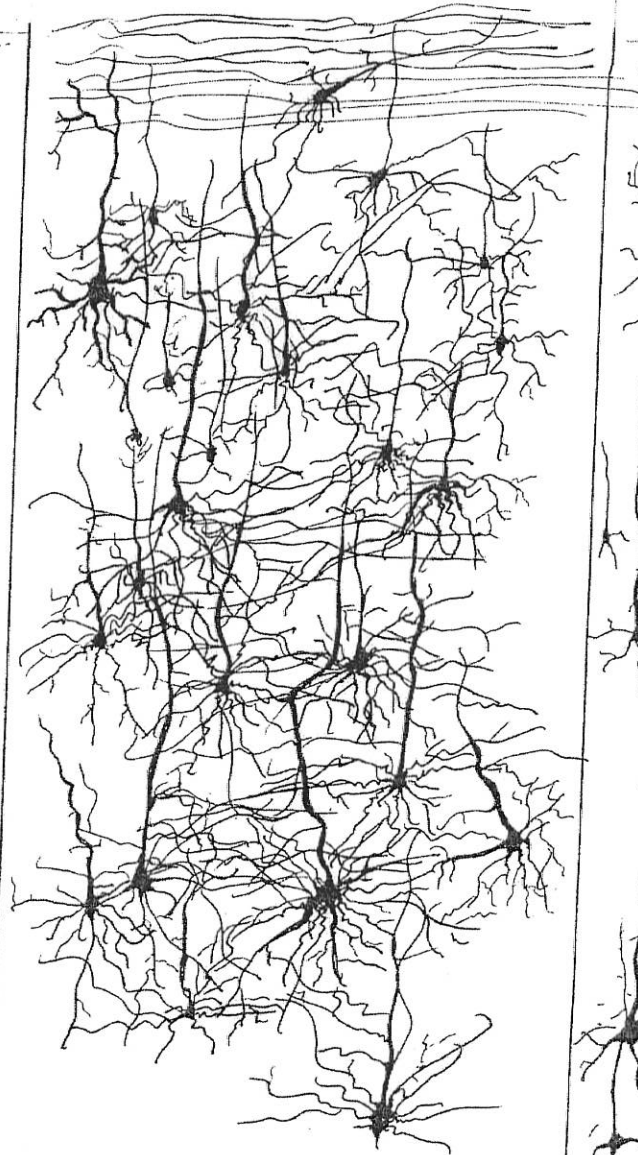
Synaptogenesis



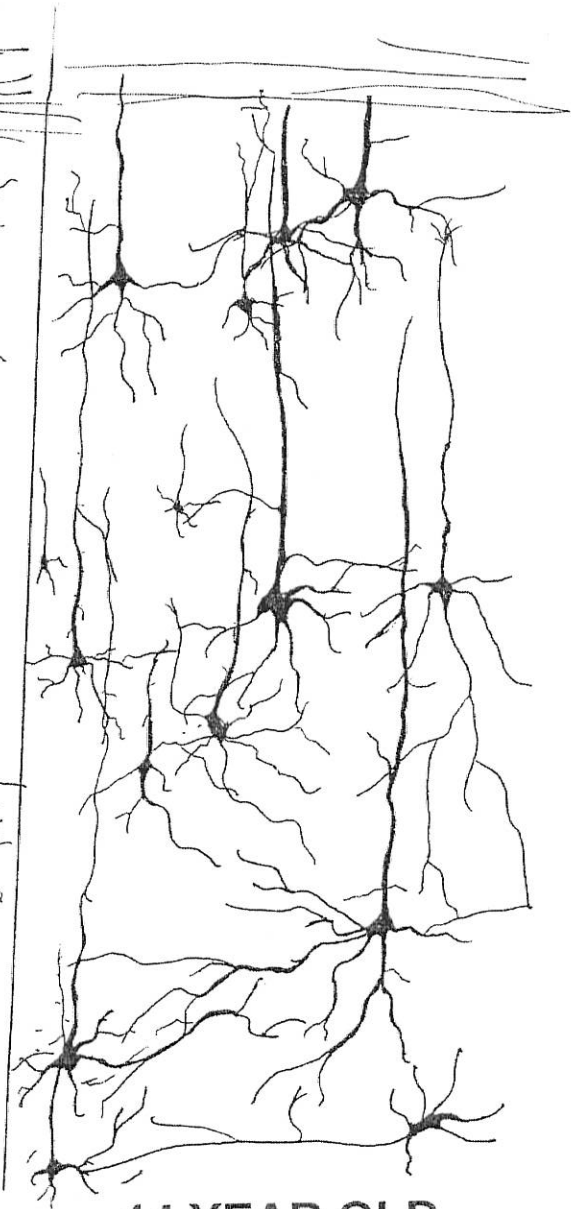
Developing neurons make connections
with each other.



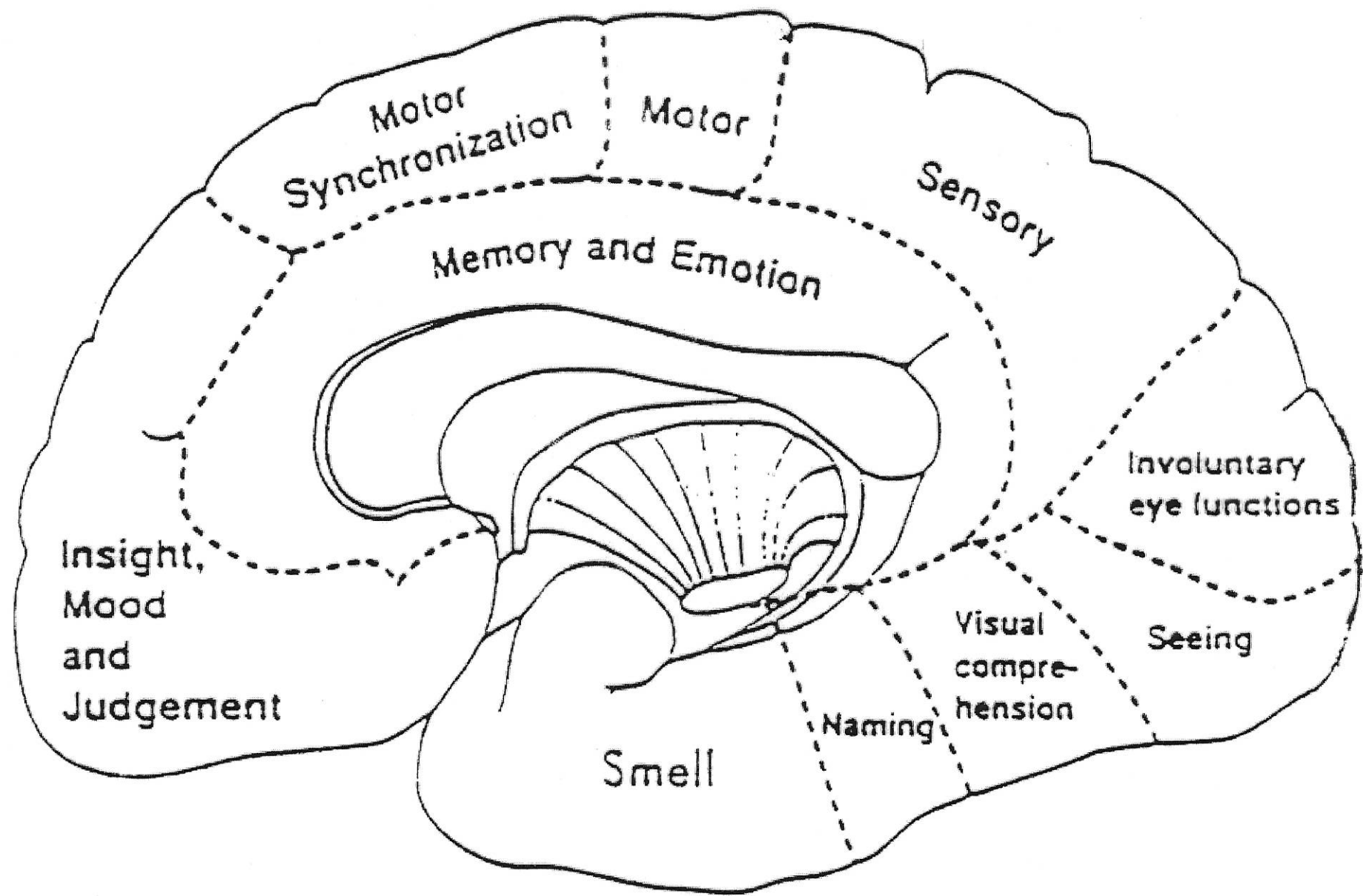
BIRTH



TWO YEAR OLD



14 YEAR OLD



Experience matters

Why ?

Experience changes the brain

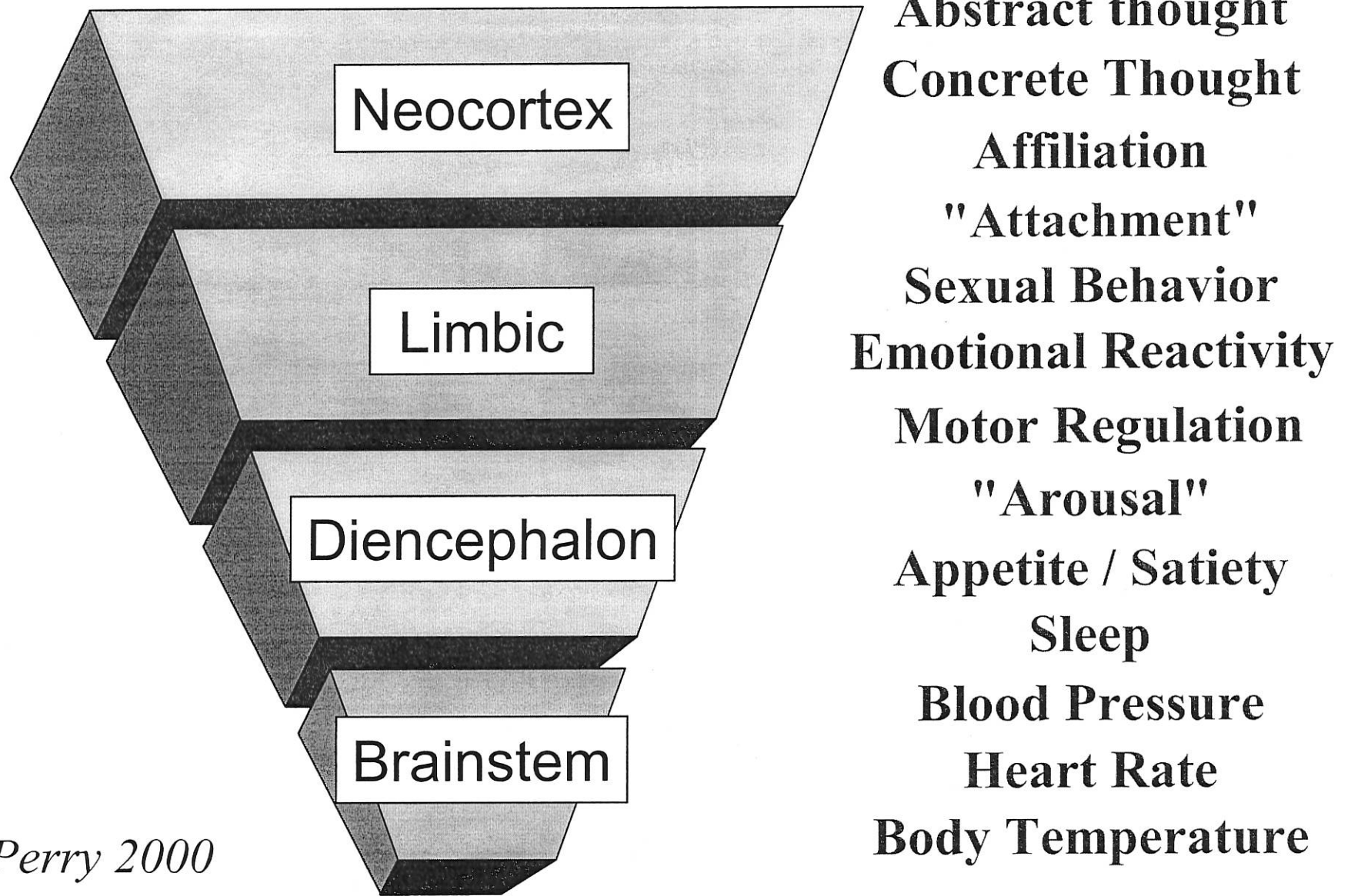


Perry-2000

KANSAS CITY
BRAINCHILD
good beginnings last a lifetime



Sequential Development



Perry 2000

How Nurture Becomes Nature

**At conception,
genetic potential is
unexpressed...**

➤ **Experiences occur
in utero and
throughout life.**

**Genes are activated
by chemical
signals...**

➤ **All experience is
translated into
chemical signals.**



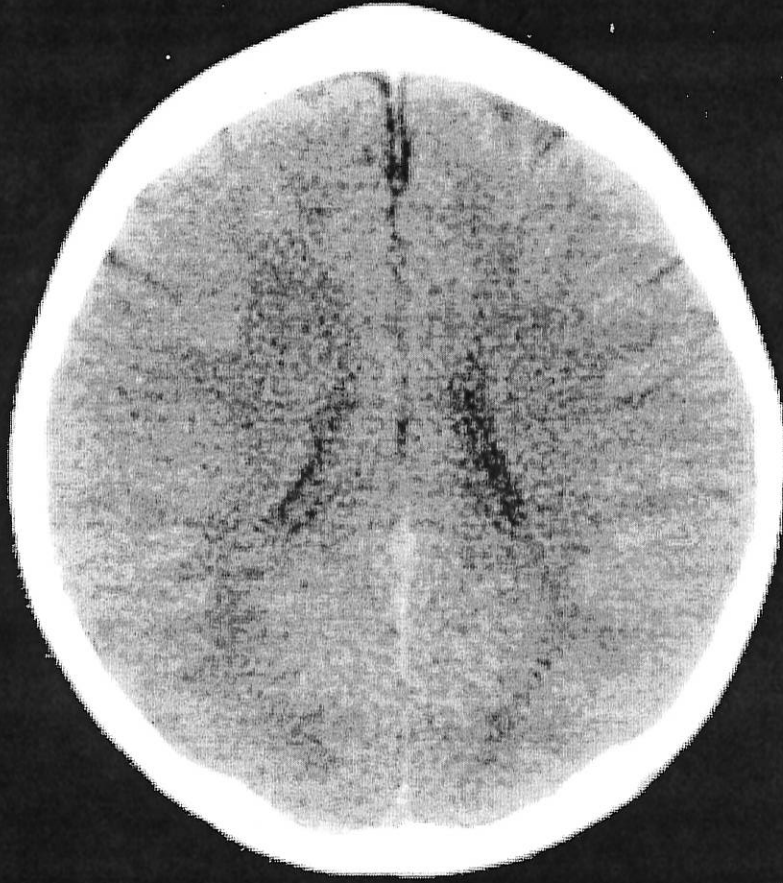
How Nurture Becomes Nature

**Genetic expression
depends upon
experience derived
chemical signals...**

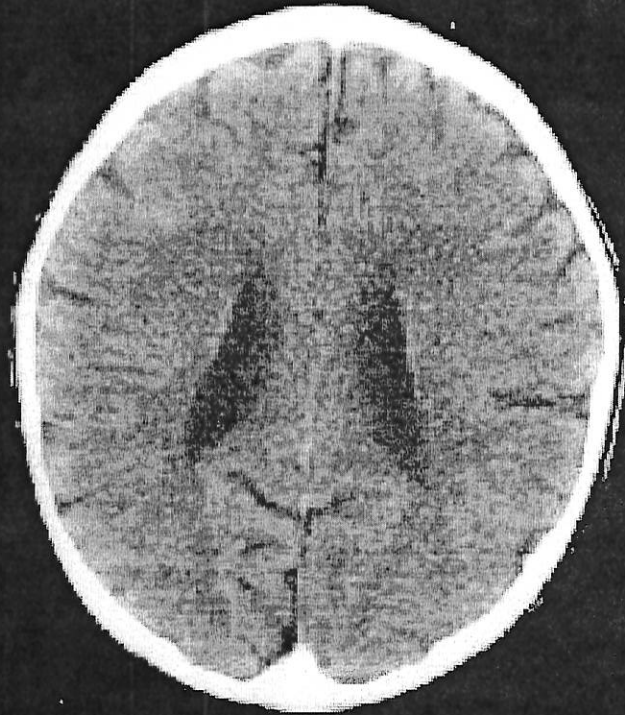
- **These chemicals
activate or shut off
genes.**



3 Year Old Children



Normal



Extreme Neglect

© 1997 Perry, D. D., M.D., Ph.D.

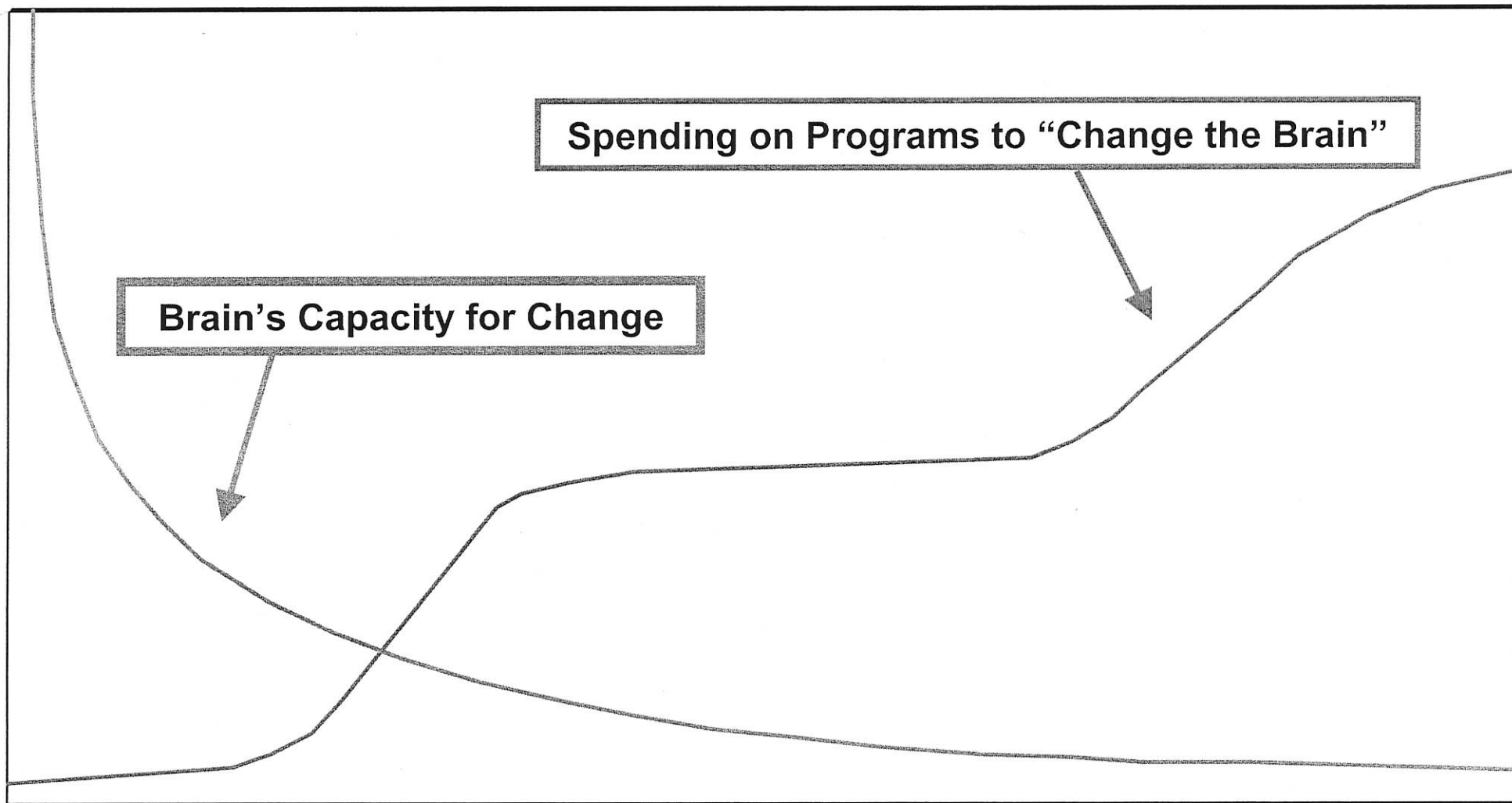
Perry 2000

What are We Doing ?

There has never been a time in the history of humankind that we have asked a single adult to provide the ongoing and continuous needs of multiple children with so little support.

What are We Doing ?

Increasing isolation, decreasing resources and electronic caregiving combine to make it more difficult for families to provide optimizing experiences for children.



0 **3 yrs.** **10** **50**

Public Education
Early Childhood Programs

Juvenile Justice

Criminal Justice

Mental Health/ Substance Abuse

AGE

Nancy Armstrong
Quincy Elementary
Kindergarten Teacher

Comments For Bill 207

I have been teaching kindergarten at Quincy for 6 years. I feel mandatory kindergarten is the next step the State of Kansas needs to make to validate the importance of education in this State. With the "No Child Left Behind" act, education has taken on a new face that has attracted a lot of attention. With the State of Kansas now allocating more money each year to schools, this Bill just brings the cycle of education to full circle. The State is funding half-day kindergarten. It just seems to me mandating it validates the money being spent on it.

As State law is today, it is the parents choice to send their child to kindergarten and there are families every year who make the choice not to. The reasons I have heard personally to why they chose not to was because of inconvenience. The school schedule doesn't fit into their life schedule so they just don't want to mess with it until the "have to". Or, that the bus doesn't pick up or drop off close enough to the house and they would have an infant they don't want to get up so early in the morning and take them out and wait on the bus. As these may seem valid in their minds, I feel these excuses do not validate the expense school districts endure to employ student improvement teams and reading specialists and math specialists needed to tutor these students in an attempt to bring their knowledge base up to the level of the first grade students who did have kindergarten. Why should the school district (ultimately the State) foot the bill for extra staff and extra resources for these students? Answer: Because **No Child Should Ever Be Left Behind.**

It is time for the State of Kansas to join the other states who have recognized the need to get their students off to the best start possible. Students attending kindergarten have a strong foundation of basic concepts in reading, math, social studies and science as outlined in the Kansas Curricular Standards for kindergarten as adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education. For first grade teachers to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind making adequate yearly progress with all students, all students need to come to first grade with the strong foundation of learning that kindergarten provides.

Letter to the Senate Education Committee
Thursday, February 8, 2007
Room 123 South 1:30 p.m.

Committee chairperson Schodorf, Vice chairperson Vratil, Senator Laura Kelly and distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee:

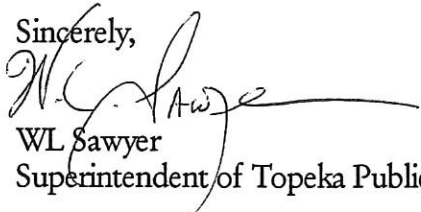
I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank you for your consideration of amending K. S. A. 72-1107 and K. S. A. 2006 Supp. 72-1111 which changes the mandatory age for school attendance from age 7 to age 6. In this the age of standards-based instruction, high stakes testing and increased accountability, time to accomplish our goals has never been more important.

One of the critical challenges that educational organizations experience is the lack of prior knowledge that children possess upon entering our schools. More than ever before it is incumbent upon our community to ensure that our laws are aligned with our expectations. By changing the mandatory age of school attendance to six we ensure that all parents understand the importance of having their children attend kindergarten. Maximizing school participation at the earliest possible age, gives our teachers, our guidance counselors, our nurses and our administrators more time to prepare our students for a promising academic experience.

The Topeka Public Schools as well as the 296 other districts in our state, are comprised of professionals who want to succeed. Our recent academic results are a testimony to the fact that we are trying to do everything we can with our existing resources to ensure student progress. The extent to which you, our legislators support our efforts by aligning the law with state and federal expectations, is the extent to which we will continue to increase our effectiveness.

We thank you for considering this bill and look forward to continually working with you to make the future brighter for all the children that we humbly serve.

Sincerely,



WL Sawyer
Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools

Senate Education Committee
2-8-07 Attachment 4



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Terry Forsyth, Testimony
Senate Education Committee
February 8, 2007

Senate Bill 207

Madame Chair, members of the committee my name is Terry Forsyth and I represent the Kansas National Education Association. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to share our support for **Senate Bill 207**.

The issues that surround the topic of kindergarten are perennial ones before our Legislature and for good reason. What we know is that kindergarten is no longer a socialization year in school. Kindergarten is the first building block of a good education. To spend so much time, effort and money on early childhood education and ignore the necessity of kindergarten by currently mandating a starting age of 7 for school attendance is tantamount to the two steps forward and one step back shuffle. We cannot afford this dance with our children's education.

Mandatory kindergarten makes good sense for at-risk students. Students who come to school without the benefit of high quality pre-schools or a highly educated parent at home with the time and skills to provide a strong academic beginning get that strong start in kindergarten. At this time kindergarten gives teachers the time to make a real difference with children.

Mandatory kindergarten makes sense for children who are not at-risk. Teachers in kindergarten classrooms have the benefit of time to provide children with more extensive and extended learning opportunities. The social and educational opportunities provided to children give them a solid start for the academic world of first grade and beyond.

Kindergarten makes a difference in student learning. This Legislature and others before you have frequently tried to expand primary grade investments because you know instinctively and from research that an early investment is an investment that pays big dividends.

We know that children who get a strong start in the early years do better throughout their schooling.

We urge you to support this bill.

*Senate Education Committee
2-8-07
Attachment 5*

February 6, 2007

We are here, first of all, to express gratitude for a political climate in which legislators are sensitive to insuring the welfare of children. We also believe that children ought to be treasured, protected, nourished, and taught well at every stage of development. Furthermore, we have no desire to deprive any child of the opportunity to attend kindergarten in cases where that is clearly in the child's best interests. We do, however, have serious reservations about the wisdom of mandating kindergarten for every child in our state. We object primarily on the basis of our belief that, for a variety of reasons, making participation in a formal kindergarten program compulsory may actually be settling for second-best.

We note that disagreement exists among education professionals regarding the benefit of early childhood educational programs. Specifically, the long term academic benefits are in question. One local and very successful first grade teacher in the public school system, Mary Louise Krenzin, observed that after the first six weeks of school, no difference is apparent between those who have attended kindergarten and those who have not. Dr. Melva Kauffman, who was trained at Columbia University and had a long career in instructing future teachers, believed that children benefit from having their parents' signature of values, and that this is often compromised when children are prematurely removed from stable, two-parent homes to a setting that has a much higher ratio of children to adults. The variation in the maturity level of children at any designated age also means that earlier efforts at formal education may initiate, for some children, a sense of frustration and hopelessness that cannot be overcome without remedial intervention. The necessity for remediation would certainly be a second-best scenario by anyone's standards.

In our community, we believe readiness for the classroom is happening without mandated kindergarten. Our private Christian school does not, in fact, offer a kindergarten class at this time. However, we have identified specific readiness criteria that is verified by testing before a child enters first grade at our school. The school also provides parents with materials to facilitate adequate preparation. While our school administration reserves the right of refusal to admit children who are not determined to be prepared for first grade, the administration does not mandate the attendance of all who seem academically ready. Parents are allowed to make the determination of overall readiness, including readiness in other developmental areas, such as emotional and physical maturity. This allowance for parental control, together with the offer of help in determining academic readiness, is invaluable to us. Any family who desires kindergarten for their child has the option of sending him or her to the public school in our area. We believe that for the state to "rescue" our children from the current situation would be misguided—another second-best option.

In conclusion, we would like to suggest that the proposed legislation be reconsidered. If the status quo that now exists must be altered, we petition for an exemption for us and for others with similar concerns. In other words, if kindergarten for all must be legislated, we desire freedom from its burdens for all for whom classroom kindergarten truly does not seem to be the best possible option.

Corresponding to the need for children to have adequate opportunities for growth and development, we believe that protection from unnecessary or potentially harmful interventions is important also. Making a rule or passing a law is easier than making the investment of time and energy that is necessary to discover and implement creative solutions beyond the rule of law. We would like to believe that all of us here share this commitment to finding creative solutions.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of all the citizens of Kansas and for your consideration of our specific concerns.

Prepared by representatives of the Amish Mennonite community of Reno County, Kansas.

Contact Person: David L. Miller (Phone: 620-567-2123, P.O. Box 73, Partridge, KS 67566)

*Senate Education Committee
2-8-07 Attachment 6*

CHRIS STEINEGER
 SENATOR, SIXTH DISTRICT
 51 S. 64TH ST.
 KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66111
 (913) 287-7636
 senatorchris@kc.rr.com



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

STATE CAPITOL BLDG., ROOM 181-E
 TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1504
 (785) 296-7375
 steineger@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Youth Civic Service Credit Act SB 212

- SB 212 gives incentives to Kansas' youth to give public service by joining one of five groups, either the US military, Peace Corp, AmeriCorp, and get college tuition paid for.
- For every year served up to two years, young Kansans get free tuition at any Regents institution including community colleges.
- **Reciprocal Responsibility, A Real Commitment Needed** – Kansas must stress the themes of citizenship and reciprocal responsibility. Performing national or community service is not a private act of charity, but a moral obligation of citizenship, like voting and respecting the law. This ethic of public service and responsibility should not just be encouraged at events like those held at high schools across the state, but should be broadly reflected in public policy, with "giving something back" commonly expected of those who receive public benefits. We now have a chance to fulfill our obligation to Kansas youth and can "give something back" while simultaneously promoting the advancement of Higher Education.
- **Education is the key to KS Economic Success** – This legislation hinders the brain drain by giving incentives to the most experienced Kansas youth to stay for a higher education. With this bill, we are keeping the best brains here at home.
- **More options not Less: Military, VISTA, US Health Service, AmeriCorps and PeaceCorps** – As the nation's most intensive experiment in national service and reciprocal responsibility, the AmeriCorps and PeaceCorps programs should be at the center of efforts to promote civic activism and community service in Kansas youth.
- **Service Part of Public Activism** – National and community service is an important part of the broad, decentralized, civic effort needed to address America's problems in the 21st century.

Senate Education Committee
 2-8-07
 Attachment 7

Legislative Testimony

SB 212

February 8, 2007

Testimony before the Senate Education Committee on the Kansas youth civic service credit act by Josh Shald, President of the Washburn Student Government Association

Chairperson Schodorf and members of the committee,

I am Josh Shald and I am the president of the Washburn Student Government Association at Washburn University here in Topeka. I am testifying today in support of SB 212. This bill gives a new and exciting initiative for Kansas university students like myself to serve their country and community. National service is becoming increasingly more important to addressing the needs of a changing America and through this bill Kansas has the opportunity to send its young people out to make a difference in all parts of the country.

As president of the student body at Washburn, I have observed the increasing interest of university students in philanthropic work, especially in broad national programs like VISTA and the Peace Corps. However, it is financially challenging for academically ambitious students who are committed to completing a college degree to take time to serve in these capacities while saving for an undergraduate or graduate program. The ability to receive a scholarship for their continuing education after serving in these civic programs will give more young Kansans the opportunity to serve their nation and their state.

A further benefit of this civic service credit is its ability to attract these ambitious and service-oriented students back to Kansas. People chosen for these service programs are passionate and driven to serve and enticing them back to our state and its educational institutions will provide a great advantage to Kansas communities economically. Further, the skills and knowledge gained through national service can be used by these individuals to better our local communities.

The modern university experience is becoming more and more about performance outside of the classroom. Students feel a passion and obligation for national and community service. The type of scholarship proposed will reflect the state's resolve to encourage and expand this growing desire of Kansas youth to serve their nation and receive a quality Kansas post-secondary education.

After I receive my bachelors degree, I have committed to the AmeriCorps Teach for America program and have been assigned to Phoenix, AZ. Having this type of recognition of service and educational aid available to me in my home state would provide an incentive to return and continue to serve my local community and state. I know of many Kansas students like myself that would receive enormous benefit from a civic service credit like the one being proposed in this bill and am excited to see my state take a vested interest in national service and continuing education for its youth.

Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions.

The Washburn Student Government Association, or WSGA, is the executive and legislative organization of the student body of Washburn University of Topeka. WSGA represents the issues and concerns of the over 7,000 students enrolled at Washburn University. It is overseen by a generally elected president and vice-president and 32 student senators.

Senate Education Committee
2-8-07 Attachment 8

Dear Senator Steineger:

After nearly 25 years as a Peace Corps Volunteer (Lesotho, Southern Africa; 1981-1983), I more fully understand the contribution I made and the impact my 2-year service had in my life and those around me.

Today, it's obvious we Americans are blessed; we are a rich country. Not necessarily in the monetary sense, but with a heritage rich in freedoms and opportunities. I think it should be a requirement that every American, every Kansan, should spend time in a volunteer role helping those in a developing country. We would then have a better understanding of, and appreciation for, our own country and eyes would be opened as to the needs of others around the world. All our volunteer actions combined would go a long way toward ending poverty and the ills poverty breed: strife, war, terrorism, and unrest. We would be "giving something back" to our community, our state, and to our country.

Peace Corps Volunteers strive to make peoples around the world understand Americans on a personal level. Volunteers are then seen as caring and selfless individuals instead of the common world-wide perception that all Americans are selfish, thoughtless, and whiney babies!

This bill would provide wonderful incentives for our youth to pursue civic service, and then keep our Kansas youth in the state to pursue higher education. Well-educated citizens are the foundation of a great state and a great nation.

I support the Civic Service Bill and applaud your efforts. My best as it moves through committee and to the Senate.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Beck
Group Leader
The Organization of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
Wichita

Senate Education Committee
2-8-07
Attachment 9