

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Clay Aurand at 9:05 A.M. on March 12, 2008 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:
Benjamin Hodge- absent

Committee staff present:
Theresa Kiernan, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Dianne Rosell, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Dale Dennis, Kansas State Department of Education
Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Janet Henning, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:
Heather Morgan, Juvenile Justice Authority
Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools
Senator Laura Kelly
Bill Pollock, parent
Austin Vincent, Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas
Valory Harrison, Teaching Parents Association
Jamie Runyan, parent
Written testimony - Jim McDaniel, Superintendent, Kaw Valley USD 321
Written testimony - Rebecca Creech, parent
Written testimony - Todd Thalmann, parent
Written testimony - Lisa McKinney

Representative Phelps requested a "Point of Personal Privilege" from the Committee. Representative Phelps introduced Ruksana Kibria, Professor and Chair, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and advised she was visiting and observing at Fort Hays State University.

SB 401: School districts; pupils receiving education services while residing at a psychiatric residential treatment facility.

Theresa Kiernan, Senior Assistant Revisor, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, gave an overview of **SB 401**.

Heather Morgan, Juvenile Justice Authority, spoke to Committee members with an explanation and background of **SB 401**.

Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools spoke to Committee members in support of **SB 401**. Ms. Gjerstad advised the bill was a technical clean-up and encouraged the Committee to amend the bill by adding the youth placements which prior to July 1, 2007 were specifically listed in statute for school finance. (Attachment . 1)

A question and answer session followed the presentations. Chairman Aurand advised Committee members that any Committee member who wanted to pursue this bill with amendment should also be prepared to include a fiscal note.

The Chairman closed the hearing on **SB 401**

SB 399: Mandatory attendance of kindergarten; age of eligibility

Theresa Kiernan, Senior Assistant Revisor, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, gave an overview and explanation of **SB 399**.

Senator Kelly spoke to Committee members in support of **SB 399**. Senator Kelly stated she had introduced the bill to do two things:

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Education Committee at 9:05 A.M. on March 12, 2008 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

- Lower the age at which children are required to attend school in Kansas from seven years old to six years old
- Mandate kindergarten attendance

Senator Kelly stated that because kindergarten attendance is not currently required in Kansas, there was absolutely nothing a teacher could do to get the children into the classroom. Each day they miss, puts the child further behind their peers and sets them up for failure in years to come. (Attachment #2)

Written testimony was submitted by Jim McDaniel, Superintendent, Kaw Valley USD #321, in support of **SB 399**. (Attachment #3)

A question and answer session followed the presentation.

Bill Pollock, parent, testified before Committee members in opposition of **SB 399**. Mr. Pollock told Committee members that it is his belief that government has gradually taken the responsibility of educating children away from parents. The result is that each generation seems to be less responsible than the last. (Attachment #4)

Austin Vincent, Legislative Liaison, Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas, spoke to Committee members in opposition of **SB 399** and stated this bill is a further encroachment upon the constitutionally protected discretion of parents to determine the education of their young children. (Attachment #5)

Valory Harrison, Teaching Parents Association, spoke to Committee members in opposition to **SB 399**. (Attachment #6)

Marci Laffen, a parent and registered nurse, spoke to Committee members in opposition to **SB 399**. (Attachment #7)

Jamie Runyan, parent, educator, and concerned citizen, spoke to Committee members in opposition to **SB 399** and urged Committee members not to legislate educational policy based on isolated incidences, especially legislation that would have a far reaching impact on many families. (Attachment #8)

Written testimony was received from Rebecca Creech in opposition to **SB 399**. (Attachment #9)

Written testimony was received from Todd Thalmann in opposition to **SB 399**. (Attachment #10)

Written testimony was received from Lisa McKinney in opposition to **SB 399**. (Attachment #11)

A question and answer session followed the presentations.

The Chairman closed the hearing on **SB 399**.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 A.M. The next meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2008.



House Education Committee
Rep. Aurand, chair

S.B. 401 – Funding for students in special placements

Submitted by: Diane Gjerstad
Wichita Public Schools

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Last year Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) changed the federal interpretation for reimbursements for students in custody by JJA or SRS in Level V and VI facilities. Last session the statute was amended to add the new terminology required by the feds to add “PRTF” (psychiatric residential treatment facility). The bill before you today is a technical clean-up.

We would encourage the committee to amend this bill by adding the youth placements which prior to July 1, 2007 were specifically listed in statute for school finance. When the statute was amended last year we did not know what facilities would ultimately be called “PRTFs”. What has happened is -- facilities like Salvation Army in Wichita -- are now classified as both a PRTF and a YRC II. The students on the PRTF side are counted as two times the base or actual costs; while the students on the YRC side just get the base. The cost of educating the students is quite high – after the change made last year we are only able to receive additional funding for the students in the PRTF half the facility – not the YRC side.

Salvation Army YRC is serving an especially intensive population of sexually abused and now predatory or potentially predatory kids. These young people cannot be served in a regular high school. The cost of serving the students in the YRC is just as high as those in the PRTF.

We recommend the committee amend the bill to reinsert the named facilities which had been previously listed in statute, as follows: on page 6 after line 32, new (4) “*youth residential center*” means the Forbes Juvenile Attention Center, Salvation Army/Koch Youth Services, Clarence M. Kelley Youth Center, Trego County Secure Care Center, St. Francis Academy at Ellsworth, St. Francis Academy at Salina and King’s Achievement Center.

Mr. Chairman, by adding the facilities which had been listed in statute prior to July 1, 2007 the committee would be restoring the policy to fund what we used to refer to as Level V and VI facilities at the same funding level as before.

House Education Committee
Date: 3-12-08
Attachment # 1

LAURA KELLY

SENATOR, 18TH DISTRICT
WABAUNSEE AND SHAWNEE COUNTIES



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

Testimony to the
Legislative Educational Planning Committee
Regarding Mandatory Kindergarten
August 13, 2007

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

RANKING MINORITY: WAYS AND MEANS

MEMBER: COMMERCE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENTJOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
POLICY OVERSIGHTJOINT COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS,
BENEFITS AND INVESTMENTSJOINT COMMITTEE ON
CHILDREN'S ISSUESKANSAS CAPITOL RESTORATION
COMMISSIONCHAIR: SHAWNEE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE
DELEGATION

Mister Chairman, Members of the Committee:

During to 2007 session, I requested that the Senate Education Committee introduce a bill that would do two things: lower the age at which children are required to attend school in Kansas from seven years old to six years old and mandate kindergarten attendance.

I did so as a result of a conversation I had with a kindergarten teacher at a Title I school here in Topeka. She expressed frustration with the fact that many of the children in her class were enrolled but not attending. Because kindergarten attendance is not currently required in Kansas, there was absolutely nothing she could do, beyond pleading and persuasion, to get those kids into the classroom. Each day they missed, put them further behind their peers and set them up for failure in years to come.

As many of you know, when the hearings were held during the regular session, concerns were raised about requiring kindergarten attendance for all children, including those who might be home-schooled or whose religious community had its own system of education. It was decided at that time to study this issue in more depth during the interim. I appreciate your willingness to put this topic on your agenda and give it the thorough review it deserves.

I remain a strong advocate for mandatory kindergarten attendance and for lowering the age of compulsory attendance from seven to six, with the appropriate exemptions. Our state is focusing much of its resources and energy on early childhood development and education. Last year, we allocated more funds for Early Headstart because we know that investment in our very young benefits not only the children and the families, but our state as a whole. It makes little sense to me to spend money and time on school readiness skills for 3-5 year olds and leave a loophole in our laws that allows those children to take a sabbatical until they are seven.

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House Education Committee

PHO: Date: 3-12-08
Attachment # 2

Good morning. My name is Jim McDaniel and I am the Kaw Valley USD #321 Superintendent of Schools.

It is my honor to present to each of you who make up the esteemed Legislative Educational Planning Committee on the issues of lowering the mandatory school attendance age from 7 to 6 in Kansas and making kindergarten mandatory in our great state.

I believe Kansas Legislators and Kansas Superintendents have some things in common.....not the least of which is that our collective decisions provide the framework for success in education in our Kansas schools.

I would like to spend my time today presenting information that supports building a stronger framework for our schools that in turn will help all of us who care about our schools insure that our students, our Kansas public school children, exit with more likelihood of success.

Lowering mandatory school attendance from age 7 to age 6 and making kindergarten mandatory for all Kansas public school children is a step forward to insure that success.

I would like to give you some background information about myself.....before I became a stuffy old superintendent of schools, I was an elementary principal.....and before that, I was a self-contained elementary classroom teacher. My initial training for my Bachelors Degree taught me what we as educators must do to introduce reading and math readiness skills and to provide the spectrum of instruction to teach reading and math (as well as other core subjects) successfully on a developmental continuum.

It is the appropriately strong teaching on a developmental continuum that should guide our efforts in changing the framework to insure future success of Kansas learners. Improving and changing our framework for public school districts in Kansas by lowering our mandatory school attendance age from 7 to 6 and making kindergarten mandatory will be a strong step toward a more healthy development of our Kansas children.

The healthy educational development of all young children benefits all of society by providing a solid foundation for economic productivity, responsible citizenship, and strong Kansas communities. This is my attempt at paraphrasing a purpose statement from a recent presenter, Dr. Jack Shonkoff, at the Kansas Health Foundation Leadership Conference in Wichita this summer.

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Attachment # 3

I have heard many well-qualified professionals outline why and how we build a strong learning framework for children during my time in education as a superintendent, a principal and as an elementary classroom teacher. The research and the implications of the research from Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Director of The Center on the Developing Child with the Science of Early Childhood Development at Harvard University are worthy of our attention today.

The research supports changing and improving our framework in our Kansas schools. For purposes of discussion, I will concentrate on the developmental continuum for success in school with one subject area: Reading. We all know that vocabulary and the development of vocabulary is a strong indicator of success with education.....for reading and for all subjects. When we study early growth in vocabulary, we find that a 3-year-old child from a low socio-economic status family has a vocabulary of about 400 words. A 3-year-old from a middle SES family has a vocabulary of about 600 words, and a 3-year-old from a high SES family has a vocabulary of about 1200 words.

The only equalizer, the only intervention to attempt to level the playing field for these early learners is providing sound educational experiences for all children.

I could talk today about the merits of and the advantages of many programs from birth through age 5 (such as Parents as Teachers, well-developed Pre-schools, etc.) that are very beneficial on a developmental continuum; however, today we are focusing on other framework issues: lowering the mandatory attendance age in Kansas from 7 to 6 and making kindergarten mandatory.

So.....when we concentrate on all Kansas families some of whose 3-year-olds have a 400 word vocabulary, some of whose 3-year-olds have a 600 word vocabulary, and some of whose 3-year-olds have a 1200 word vocabulary, depending on where they fall on the SES ladder, we begin to think about what we can do in education to insure that all children will be successful. In our Kaw Valley USD #321 schools, we are committed to strong foundational framework. We have elementary attendance centers in four communities: Delia, Emmett, St. Marys, and Rossville. We utilize a Parents As Teachers program to serve families throughout our district. In addition, we began efforts in the 2006-2007 school year to implement our version of what we call "Universal Pre-School." All 3-year-olds and all 4-year-olds who will attend any of our four elementary attendance centers are invited to attend 5-day/week. ½-day. 3-year-old and 5-

day/week, ½-day, 4-year-old Pre-school sessions. It is our goal to service all 3 and 4-year-olds with quality Pre-school at the attendance center where they will attend elementary school. This is our link in our district to take our 3-year-old learners from the socio-economic status spectrum and begin to support the building of that vocabulary and other essential skills to promote learning success in a developmentally appropriate, language rich, caring environment. I share this with you only so you will know our district's commitment toward taking 3-year-olds from where they are to where we want them to be as successful learners.

We know that throughout Kansas, families have a spectrum of services from ages birth to 5, the pre-kindergarten years. Some families have stay-at-home moms who choose many developmentally appropriate activities with their children, some families choose daycare that provide a varied spectrum of developmentally appropriate activities, and many choose available Pre-school opportunities for their 3 and 4-year olds in both public school and private settings. Many things happen developmentally with a child from birth to age 6, and many factors and choices produce the variables that hand public schools in Kansas our spectrum of students that we work with each school year.

What remains a constant is a window of opportunity that we have to do something about creating a strong framework and foundation for educational success.

Dr. Shonkoff speaks of building a new integrated science of early childhood development. He speaks of a convergence of findings from neuroscience, developmental psychology, molecular biology, economics and program evaluation research.

In an effort to synthesize and summarize the most powerful findings from Dr. Shonkoff's research, I site 3 areas as impactful for today's consideration:

- #1. Brains are built over time.
- #2. Neural circuits are wired in a bottom-up sequence.
.....and perhaps most important of all:
- #3. the capacity for change decreases with age.

This is what I mean when I speak of a "window of opportunity" to change, to add to, to educationally develop each child's vocabulary and other essential readiness areas for learning. We have not yet spoken of another important aspect of learning success (present in all quality kindergarten classrooms) that of building the confidence of the learner and supplying the

environment to promote a willingness to learn with a comfort factor for each child to work with a trained adult to grow and become capable. Dr. Shonkoff tells us “the interaction of genes and experience shapes the architecture of the developing brain and the active agent is the ‘serve and return’ nature of children’s relationships with the important adults in their lives.”

Let’s return to our “window of opportunity” that Dr. Shonkoff speaks of.....from birth to age 6, our brain has a window to establish brain circuit connections.....if the connections are not established, your window is closed. Remember: brains are built over time. From birth to age 6, our brains and our skills are built with the myriad of exposure we have from multiple sources and stimuli. This experiential base with our vocabulary development is vitally important to reading success. Our ability to relate a written word on a page to something previously experienced becomes extremely critical to success with reading.

From age 6 to 14, our brain circuits are decreasing dramatically. We are working during this window to provide meaning to connections we establish from birth to age 6.....then, after age 14.....it is ALL downhill with the capacity to change.....remember, the capacity for change with our brains decreases with age.

I introduce this greatly simplified and synthesized research from Dr. Shonkoff to help frame what, I, as a public school educator, will say next.... For Reading instruction, which is key to success with all learning, we have a charge.....we have a challenge to do our job right!

We must exit strong readers if we expect to exit strong and capable students from our Kansas schools. We know, in education, that we have a developmental reading continuum on our K-12 educational ladder.

- Our quest in kindergarten through grade 2 is to **LEARN TO READ**.
- Our quest grades 3 through 12 is to **READ TO LEARN**.

We know if we do not have a reader by 3rd grade.....we can and will do as much as we can with interventions; however, try as we might, the research tells us, we will have minimal gains. Basic principles of neuroscience and human capital formation indicate that later remediation will produce less favorable outcomes than preventive intervention.

Our best bets for quality, targeted services rest with creating and implementing strong framework decisions for our Kansas children and their families.

We know that our window to create a reader is dependent on strong things happening during the **“LEARNING TO READ”** kindergarten through 2nd grade window.

Kansas needs mandatory kindergarten to insure success for our learners. Kansas children need qualified, well compensated, kindergarten teachers working with small group sizes and high adult-child ratios in a language rich environment, with a developmentally appropriate curriculum in a safe, warm, and responsive physical setting.

Mandatory kindergarten and lowering the mandatory attendance age from 7 to 6 creates a framework for success for our Kansas children.

Kansas school districts have many federal mandates from our federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Our schools in Kansas utilize the Quality Performance Accreditation model provided by the Kansas State Department of Education to successfully guide our efforts to answer state and federal educational mandates.

As a Kansas School Superintendent, I embrace the many mandates of NCLB and Kansas QPA. Even so, certified staff and classified support staff must work very hard and very smart to successfully answer the many mandates.

I challenge each of you.....I invite each of you on this committee to take a look at examples of our 3rd grade Reading passages and the accompanying questions on our Kansas State Department of Education Reading Assessments. These “outcome assessments,” that are a mandate of NCLB and Kansas QPA, provide the framework for what we as educators must do. These assessments let us know, in no uncertain terms, where we need to take all learners. They tell us exactly where all learners must be if 100% of learners are to be proficient readers by the year 2014.

If you accept my invitation to review these outcome Kansas assessment tools, you will better understand my passion for what I have shared with you today.

Kindergarten through 2nd grade is our **“LEARNING TO READ”** window. I believe 3rd grade Kansas State Reading Assessments are very appropriate. We Kansas educators embrace the challenge of getting all our learners proficient in Reading and Math.

I ask each of you to embrace the challenge of providing a better framework for Kansas educators to do our work.

Please support lowering the mandatory school attendance age from 7 to 6 and mandatory kindergarten for all Kansas public school children.

This positive step forward will improve our schools and our state.

Thank you for the pleasure of presenting on these issues. I would be happy to address any questions you may have.

Bill Pollock 785-474-3417

Powhattan, Kansas 66527

Kansas House Education Committee

SB 399

Mr. Chairman, members of the education committee and guests, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee on these issues that are vital to the future progress of Kansas and the Nation.

The first issue is responsibility. The premise that this bill is based on is that parents are not responsible enough to know when their child is ready for formal education. Responsibility is taught by giving responsibility, not by taking it away.

Over the years government has gradually taken the responsibility of educating children away from the parents. Even the act of providing textbooks removed the responsibility of the parents to make the effort to see that their children had the required books. The result is that each generation seems to be less responsible than the last. The solution is to give more responsibility, not less.

The second issue is the question of when formal education should begin. I first became interested in this issue while an education student at Washburn University.

Just to give you a brief history of my experience, I graduated from college in 1968 with a major in physics and in 1985 desired to become a teacher of math and physics. It was during this time that I learned of the research work of Raymond and Dorothy Moore, he is known for reorganizing colleges and universities and highly-successful work- study programs, she is a world-class curriculum and reading authority, and both are child specialists. What impressed me the most about their research was the number of studies they cited which supported their conclusion, which was that it is better for the child if they begin their formal learning later rather than early.

One study that was reported on occurred in Michigan's elite Grosse Pointe School District. An experiment was undertaken to introduce 4 and 5 year olds into school. 'Parents literally fought to have their children accepted'. After fourteen years the study was called off with the following results. 1) Nearly one-third of the early

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Attachment # 4

entrants turned out to be poorly adjusted. 2) Only about one out of twenty was judged to be an outstanding leader at the end of the experiment. 3) Nearly three out of four were considered entirely lacking in leadership. The staff concluded not only that the experiment was a failure in terms of sending children to school early, but also that for many of these children it was a very real personal experience in failure, a destruction of their self-image.

Another interesting incident that they report is that of James T. Fisher who grew up before compulsory education. His father sent him to work on a friends cattle ranch at age eight, at age 13 he enrolled in school and by age 16 he had completely over taken the boys of his age.

Writing papers and reports is a big part in some college classes. I believe that I used the Moore's research in at least one paper in ever education class that I was required to take, at no time did any of the education instructors say that their information was wrong. However, one did say that it didn't match the education agenda.

Over the years I have tried to be aware of any new studies which would invalidate their findings but I have found none.

Evidence shows that it is better to start formal schooling late rather than early. There was a reason former legislators set the required school attendance age at 7.

During the Senate hearing on this bill, which I was able to attend, a brain developmental specialist testified as to the rapid brain development of young children. What seems to be overlooked, is her statement to the effect that this brain development occurs best in a consistent, not erratic, predictable, loving environment So I would ask you to visualize the difference between a classroom of five or six year olds and a loving family. Also pleasant learning requires the integration and cooperation of all the senses, so all the senses need to be reasonably well developed, which usually does not occur before age eight.

The teacher who testified in the Senate hearing stated that she had no data to back up her feelings that the mandatory attendance age should be lowered. Are we ready to risk the future well being of our children on feelings when we have many

studies available that indicate better educational results are obtained when formal learning begins later?

The costs may not be significant in dollars but how do you account for the damage done when students, because of immaturity are unable to succeed in school.

As a committee you would not consider a law that required all children to walk at five months of age because not all children develop at the same rate. So why do you consider a law that would force all children to be in a formal educational program before they are ready?

I would urge you NOT to lower the compulsory attendance age from 7 to age 6.

Thank you.

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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 399
BEFORE THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON MARCH 12, 2008

Fundamentally, SB 399 is a further encroachment upon the constitutionally protected discretion of parents to determine the education of their young children.

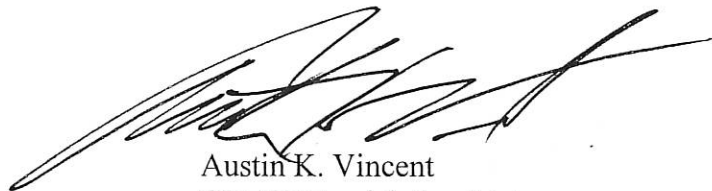
SB 399 is a "one-size-fits-all" approach to early education. Any parent of more than one child knows that children are quite diverse. This is especially true of young children, whose readiness for formal education ranges widely.

There is no substantial evidence of long term benefit of early childhood education programs. See attached study summaries and United States General Accounting Office testimony before U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education.

Practical Questions:

- Under the language starting on Page 7, line 36, does the objecting parent free his child from the requirement to start the child at age six, or does the parent just have the option of starting the child in kindergarten or first grade?
- What if the parent gives an "unsatisfactory" reason for the objection, or no reason at all? What does the administrator do? What does the parent do if the administrator does not like his reason?
- Will passage of SB 399 cause school administrators to hunt for all six-year olds in their districts, including home-educated students?
- Has anyone asked SRS for a fiscal note on enforcement of the lower compulsory attendance requirement?

Respectfully Submitted,



Austin K. Vincent
CHECK Legislative Liaison

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 5

Resources Related to Compulsory School Attendance for Young Children
(and Early Childhood Education)

provided by
Brian Ray, Ph.D., President

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February 8, 2005

Descriptors or Keywords: early childhood education, ECE, compulsory attendance, school age, entrance age, entry age, research

Boss, Judy, & Boss, Kathy. (1994). Is mandatory schooling inherently unjust? The Educational Forum, 58(3), 264-275.

Cryan, J. R., Sheehan, R., Wiechel, J., & Bandy-Hedden, I. G. (1992) Success outcomes of full day kindergarten: More positive behaviors and increased achievement in the years after. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 7 (2), 187-203. (Find preschool attendance and full-day kindergarten are positively correlated with academic achievement, desired student behavior, and low grade retention but does not provide evidence of long-term effects beyond part way into second grade. The study is a correlational design and does not establish cause and effect. Also find that it is risky to enter kindergarten too young as a "summer child.") (Descriptors: early childhood education, entrance age, compulsory age, academic achievement, grade retention, research)

Currie, Janet, & Thomas, Duncan. (1994). Does Head Start make a difference? Labor and population program working paper series 94-05, draft. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED382352) (States that Head Start attendees made gains in test scores compared to non-attenders but the gains of blacks were quickly lost while some of the gains of whites persisted into adulthood.)

Lee, Valerie E., & Loeb, Susanna. (1994). Where do Head Start attendees end up? One reason why preschool effects fade out. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED368510) (Reports that Head Start's positive effects often fade out over time and suggests that one reason may be that those who attend Head Start may be later exposed to lower quality schooling than are others not attending Head Start.)

Lee, Valerie, & Others. (1989). Are Head Start effects sustained? A longitudinal followup comparison of disadvantaged children attending Head Start, no preschool, and other preschool programs. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED309880) (Finds that the positive effects of attendance in Head Start are diminished over time.)

Moore, Raymond S. (1982). Research and common sense: therapies for our homes and schools. Teachers College Record, 84(2), 355-377. (Discusses and interprets research on early childhood education, importance of interaction with mother, lack of necessity of formal education [schooling] for the very young.) (Descriptors: early childhood education, formal schooling, age.)

Moore, Raymond S. (1985). It depends on your aim. Phi Delta Kappan, 67(1), 62-64. (Early childhood education. Article is a reply to Parsons' article, p. 61-62. Similar to Moore's 1982 piece in Teachers College Record volume 84. "And reviews by the Hewitt Research Foundation of more than 8,000 studies have failed to turn up any replicable research suggesting that normal children should be schooled before age 8" (p. 63). Comments that the Perry Preschool Project "... has for years focused more attention on the home (through weekly home visits) than has the typical early childhood education program" (p. 63).) (Descriptors: early childhood education, formal schooling, age, academic achievement.)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (1997, February 10). Personal communication between Brian D. Ray, Ph.D. and Pat Spahr, Information Development, NAEYC. The NAEYC has no policy statement on mandatory attendance by young children in educational or school programs; NAEYC is interested in their mission statement that deals with the quality of programs (of which developmentally appropriate practices is one aspect) and promoting such and they recognize and respect the broad range of choices in education; as of 2/12/97, NAEYC still has no policy statement on home education. NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington DC 20009-5786.

Parsons, Cynthia. (1985). Let children start school when they're ready! Phi Delta Kappan, 67(1), 61-62. (Early childhood education. Followed by Moore's article, p. 62-64. Ages should not be the criteria for when children should start formal schooling; their abilities should.) Descriptors: early childhood education, formal schooling, age.)

Ray, Brian D. (1994). A nationwide study of home education in Canada: Family characteristics, student achievement, and other topics. (Available from the National Home Education Research Institute, PO Box 13939, Salem OR 97309, 107 pages, \$12.) (Finds no statistically significant relationship between age at which formal education of child began and academic achievement. Examines three physical/mental limitations (i.e., nearsightedness, farsightedness, and attention deficit disorder) and several independent variables. Age at which formal education began explains only 1.2% of variance in academic achievement scores; this is statistically significant but of no practical significance. Studies 2,594 children from 808 families across Canada.)

Ray, Brian D. (1997). Strengths of their own Home schoolers across America: Academic achievement, family characteristics, and longitudinal traits. (Available from the National Home Education Research Institute, PO Box 13939, Salem OR 97309.) (Finds no statistically significant relationship between age at which formal education of child began and academic achievement. Studies over 5,000 children from over 1,600 families).

"The End" ###

ERIC Digest

Lasting Benefits of Preschool Programs

Lawrence J. Schweinhart

EDO-PS-94-2
January 1994

GAO

Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Children and Families,
Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate,
and the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and
Families, Committee on Education and the Workforce,
House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, March 26, 1998

HEAD START

Research Insufficient to Assess Program Impact

Statement of Carlotta C. Joyner, Director
Education and Employment Issues
Health, Education, and Human Services Division



Head Start: Research Insufficient to Assess Program Impact

Messrs. Chairmen and Members of the Subcommittees:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss what is known about Head Start's impact on children and their families. I also want to discuss the adequacy of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) current research plans to provide additional information on Head Start's impact.

For the past 30 years, Head Start has provided a comprehensive set of educational, health, mental health, and social services to low-income preschool children—an array of services generally not offered by other programs when Head Start began. Its ultimate goal is to improve the social competence of preschool children in low-income families. Head Start defines social competence as children's everyday ability to deal with both their current environment and later responsibilities in school and life. During these 30 years, the program has served over 15 million children at a total cost of more than \$30 billion. Head Start's funding has grown substantially in recent years, and further increases have been proposed. For example, between fiscal years 1990 and 1997, funding more than doubled—from \$1.5 billion to almost \$4 billion. The administration's goal now is to expand the program's annual enrollment to one million children by 2002.

Although Head Start has long enjoyed both congressional and public support, opinions about the program's impact have been divided. We define impact as differences in outcomes, such as improved school readiness or health status, caused by Head Start participation. Implicit in this definition is the concept that differences found would not have occurred without program participation. Conflicting information on program impact and the focus on results-oriented program performance information required by the Government Performance and Results Act (Results Act) of 1993 have renewed interest in the outcomes and impact of the current Head Start program. In response to this interest, in a 1997 study,¹ we reviewed the research literature on Head Start to determine what was known about the impact of the current program.

In my statement today, I will discuss the results of that research review, HHS' current initiatives to assess program impact, and possible ways to improve HHS' efforts. This discussion is based on our past work and our assessment of information from HHS about its new and planned initiatives, although we have not independently reviewed these initiatives.

¹Head Start: Research Provides Little Information on Impact of Current Program (GAO/HEHS-97-59, Apr. 15, 1997).

In summary, the Head Start program has provided comprehensive services to millions of low-income children and their families—services that in the program's early years participants probably would not have otherwise received. Little is known, however, about whether the program has achieved its goals. Although an extensive body of literature exists on Head Start, only a small part of that involves program impact research. Because of these research studies' individual and collective limitations, this body of research is insufficient for use in drawing conclusions about the impact of the national program.

HHS has the following initiatives it describes as impact assessments: (1) development of performance measures focusing on program outcomes, rather than just processes; (2) a national longitudinal study of a representative sample of Head Start children and their families (Family and Child Experiences Survey—FACES); and (3) a collaborative effort with the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). These efforts are headed in the right direction for Head Start to evaluate the impact of its program. It is unclear, however, whether these efforts will meaningfully compare the outcomes achieved by Head Start children and their families with those achieved by non-Head Start children and families, leaving unanswered questions about Head Start's impact.

Background

Since 1965, Head Start's primary goal has been to improve the social competence of children in low-income families, that is, their everyday ability to deal with both their current environment and later responsibilities in school and life. This considers the relationships between cognitive and intellectual development, physical and mental health, nutritional needs, and other factors. Head Start delivers, or provides access to, a wide range of services—educational, medical, dental, nutrition, mental health, and social services. HHS administers the Head Start program through its Head Start Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Public and private nonprofit agencies that receive their funding directly from HHS provide Head Start services at the local level. These agencies include public and private school systems, community action agencies, government agencies, and Indian tribes. In fiscal year 1996, about 1,400 local agencies, called grantees, received Head Start grants. Grantees are required to obtain additional funding from nonfederal sources to cover 20 percent of their program costs. Head Start grantees work with various community sources to provide services. For example, some grantees

coordinate with public health agencies to obtain health services, while others contract with local physicians. Although all grantees operate under one set of performance standards, they have a great deal of discretion in implementing those standards, resulting in programs that vary.

In addition to providing services to children and families, Head Start sees one of its roles as a national laboratory for child development. Consequently, Head Start uses much of its discretionary research funding for demonstrations and studies of program innovations. The amount of funds allocated to research, demonstration, and evaluation has represented about 2 percent of the Head Start budget over the years. About \$12 million (about 0.3 percent of the Head Start budget) was so allocated for fiscal year 1997.

The main focus of the program's research, according to Head Start Bureau officials, has been to improve the program by exploring ways to maximize and sustain Head Start benefits. In addition, Head Start funds studies designed to answer questions on the effectiveness of new or innovative service delivery strategies. Such studies typically involve special program efforts and demonstration projects conducted on a trial basis at a few Head Start sites that focus on practices or services not typically found in regular Head Start programs.²

The passage of the Results Act in 1993 has heightened the importance of the type and direction of this research. The Results Act is designed to hold federal agencies accountable for achieving program results. The act specifically requires that agencies clearly define their missions, establish long-term strategic goals as well as annual goals linked to them, measure their performance according to their performance goals, and report on their progress. Agencies are also expected to perform discrete program evaluations and to use information from these evaluations to improve their programs.

The Results Act encourages a focus on delineating desired outcomes and developing performance measures to assess achievement of those outcomes. In addition, the Results Act focuses on objective and systematic assessments of the manner and extent to which programs achieve their intended objectives. In assessing outcomes, we are referring to achieving program purposes, such as promoting child wellness. As noted, we define

²The term "regular" Head Start refers in this testimony to programs that operate within the scope of established Head Start program options and under normal Head Start requirements. Regular programs are to be distinguished from demonstrations and other special programs that serve populations or offer services not normally found in Head Start.

impact as differences in outcomes caused by Head Start participation. Essentially, impact evaluations are the only way to answer the question, "Is this program making a difference?" Impact evaluation is a form of program evaluation that assesses the net impact of a program by comparing its outcomes with an estimate of what would have happened without the program. This form of program evaluation is used when external factors are known to influence the program's outcomes; it isolates program contributions from other factors that may affect the achievement of program objectives. The most reliable way to determine program impact is to compare a group of Head Start participants with an equivalent group of nonparticipants. The preferred method for establishing that the groups are equivalent at the outset is to randomly assign participants to either a Head Start group or a comparison group, although other methods are valuable for estimating a program's net impact.

Evaluation of Past Research

In 1997, we reported the results of our work on identifying what existing studies suggest about Head Start's impact. To conclude that impact has been demonstrated, one would expect to see either (1) a sufficient number of reasonably well-designed individual studies whose findings could appropriately be combined to provide information on national impact or (2) at least one large-scale evaluation using a nationally representative sample. After locating and screening 600 studies and consulting with many early childhood researchers and officials at the Head Start Bureau, we identified only 22 studies that met the criteria for inclusion in our analysis.³

Of these 22 studies, many had individual methodological and design weaknesses, such as noncomparability of comparison groups, which raised questions about the usefulness of the findings. In addition, no single study had used a nationally representative sample so that findings could be generalized to the population of Head Start children.⁴ Because of our findings, we recommended that the Secretary of HHS include in HHS' research plan an assessment of the regular Head Start program's impact. This type of assessment is especially important because a large amount of funds are devoted to the Head Start program and other programs are competing for shrinking federal resources. Furthermore, the number of

³Our basic criteria were that Head Start participation took place in 1976 or later, that the studies compared Head Start participation with no preschool or some other kind of preschool, and that tests of statistical significance were reported. We limited our review to the current Head Start program, that is, the program in 1976 or later because of the substantial program changes occurring in the early to mid-1970s.

⁴In the late 1970s, HHS contracted for a national evaluation of the educational services component of Head Start. The study was implemented but never completed.

other early childhood programs for low-income families has been growing. Thus, the Congress needs to know with some certainty whether the federal investment in Head Start is making a difference.

In commenting on our earlier report, HHS said that the existing research on Head Start's impact was substantial and that the Department's strategy to expand this research was appropriate for determining both the program's impact and its quality. HHS also indicated plans to evaluate the feasibility of conducting impact studies such as we recommended.

HHS supported its claim that the existing research was substantial by noting the findings from a 1985 research synthesis of studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s and two more recent studies. We disagreed, however, that findings drawn from studies more than 20 years old adequately support claims about the current program's impact. As noted, the current Head Start program operates in an environment that has changed in the last 20 years, when other, non-Head Start comprehensive early childhood services were not as available. Similarly, the findings from the two more recent studies did not support conclusions about program impact that can be generalized to the national program. Even though these two studies were larger than others we had found, both had significant methodological limitations.

Current Initiatives

HHS' current initiatives reflect its opinion that a randomized control group is not necessary to measure Head Start's impact. The current initiatives HHS describes as assessing impact include (1) the development of new performance measures, (2) a longitudinal study called FACES, and (3) a collaborative effort with NCES.

More specifically, HHS has described its performance measures as methods for annually—and over longer periods—assessing the quality and effectiveness of programs. As required by the Results Act, these measures will focus on both the program's results and the methods used to achieve these results. Throughout its history, Head Start's quality assessment efforts have focused on process indicators such as the number of teachers with degrees. Head Start measured these indicators by monitoring grantee compliance with mandatory performance standards. The new performance measures will begin to shift the focus from processes to the outcomes that Head Start children and their families are experiencing. This is an important effort, not only to improve program performance, but also to begin to lay a foundation for possible impact evaluations that could

assess the net impact of the Head Start program. It will allow Head Start to define and assess program outcomes, such as improved language skills, that it could then use to compare Head Start participants' outcome results with those of a control group to determine impact.

Another HHS initiative, FACES, is a study of a representative sample of Head Start children and their families intended to show whether Head Start is reaching its goal of improving children's social competence. According to HHS, for the spring 1997 pilot, data were collected from a sample of 2,400 families with children enrolled in 160 randomly selected centers in 40 Head Start programs nationwide. The full study will collect data from 3,200 families at program entry, exit, and at the end of kindergarten. HHS will conduct a more comprehensive validation substudy of 120 families. Researchers will use well-established and widely used scales, assessments, and observational protocols and specially tailored questionnaires to collect data on children's vocabulary, emergent literacy and mathematical skill, perceptual-motor development, and social and communicative competence before and after Head Start participation.

Head Start officials describe FACES as a way to draw conclusions about Head Start's impact in part because it will use nationally normed instruments.⁵ In addition, some of the FACES data elements will be the same as those in a Department of Education national household education survey.⁶ This will allow for comparing certain FACES results with a nationally representative sample of low-income children. It is not clear from our work so far how HHS will use the nationally normed data. According to HHS officials, the study will not compare Head Start children and their families with a randomly assigned control group of other children and families or with any other group.

In addition, the Head Start Bureau is collaborating with NCES on its Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. This study, implemented in fall 1997, after a 5-year planning effort, is collecting data on a nationally representative sample of kindergarten children in public and private schools, according to an NCES official. The Head Start Bureau has participated on the planning committee and provided some funding for this study. The study will

⁵Norms are obtained by administering a test to a sample of people and deriving the distribution of scores for that group. Some of the tests used by Head Start have been normed using samples selected to represent the national population for a particular age group.

⁶In 1993, the survey interviewed parents of a national probability sample of 4,423 3- to 5-year-old children, including 2,000 4-year-olds. Among these 4-year-olds, 244 from low-income families were reported to be attending Head Start; another 181 from low-income families had never attended any center-based preschool program.

collect data from parents and children, including descriptions of children's preschool experience and standardized tests in areas such as achievement and psychomotor development. This database will be available as a public-use tape for Head Start as well as other researchers. Head Start could use this database to compare groups of children in non-Head Start preschool programs with those in Head Start programs to assess program impact.

Improvement on Initiatives

Head Start's initiatives are headed in the right direction because of their increased focus on outcomes and research that could be expanded to compare outcomes for children in Head Start with those for similar children and families not served by the program. It is not clear how or whether Head Start will make these comparisons, however, using nationally normed tests or comparison group data from NCES. In addition, either of those research designs provides a much weaker basis for drawing conclusions about impact than a study with randomized assignment. For example, if Head Start uses NCES data for comparisons, the results could provide some indication of program impact. Some question will always remain, however, about the degree to which preexisting differences in the groups may have affected study results. True experimental designs, also called randomized trials, eliminate such questions. Randomized trials are comparison group studies that randomly assign study participants to either a treatment or control group. In the case of Head Start, these studies would require recruiting more eligible children than the program can serve. From these recruits, some would be randomly assigned to Head Start; the rest, the unserved children, would constitute the control group. HHS officials cited ethical considerations of assigning children to an unserved control group as one of the difficulties in conducting randomized trials.

Randomized trials, however, could be appropriately applied to Head Start research as long as Head Start lacks the resources to serve all eligible preschool children.⁷ While acknowledging the difficulties of random assignment, some early childhood researchers with whom we spoke

⁷In our 1997 report, we discussed several alternative research designs that use random assignment. We stated that a research design that randomly accelerates or delays rather than withholds services could be used. This would involve selecting a study group and randomly assigning some children to Head Start the first year, while the remainder would serve as a control group. The control group would receive Head Start services the following year. Another strategy that could be used to study specific parts of the program would be to use an alternative treatment design. In this case, some randomly assigned participants would receive the full Head Start program, while others would receive partial services. For example, if the study interest is in school readiness and cognitive issues, the control group might receive only nutritional and health services.

suggested that Head Start conduct randomized trials to study regular Head Start programs because this type of study provides the most conclusive information on program impact. In fact, the evaluation of the Early Head Start program, now under way, has randomly assigned potential participants to Early Head Start or a control group that has not received Early Head Start services. Control groups of randomly assigned participants are important to determining impact because they prevent mistakenly attributing outcomes to program effects when these outcomes are really caused by other factors. For instance, a recent evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Program, a demonstration project involving comprehensive early childhood services like those of Head Start, found positive changes in the families participating. The study had a control group, however, and researchers discovered that the control group families also had similar positive changes. They concluded therefore that the positive changes could not be attributed to the program.

Conclusions

Although impact research can be costly and time consuming, the federal government has made a considerable financial investment in the Head Start program; therefore, Head Start warrants a close examination to determine what the public is getting for its investment. Head Start has devoted substantial resources to research and evaluation activities, including some long-term studies and studies involving comparison groups. Although these have been worthwhile efforts, they have not sufficiently focused on evaluating results. HHS is taking steps that may help lay the groundwork for efforts to evaluate the net impact of Head Start program services. Identifying performance measures is an important first step in building a research and impact evaluation base for Head Start. In addition, this effort could yield a set of common measures upon which a body of research, including impact research, could be built. Similarly, the information gained in FACES should be extremely useful, especially to the extent that it is nationally representative.

HHS efforts, however, do not include plans for a research study or set of studies that will definitively compare the outcomes achieved by Head Start children and their families with those achieved by similar non-Head Start children and families. Although definitive results could take years to obtain, questions about Head Start's impact will remain unanswered unless these plans are expanded.

**Head Start: Research Insufficient to Assess
Program Impact**

Messrs. Chairmen, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or members of the Subcommittees may have.

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Senate Bill No. 399 does not benefit the state, the parents, or the children of the state of Kansas

- I. Bill No. 399 does not benefit the STATE
 - A. Expense to the state.
 1. More Space and Operational Expenses
 2. More Employee Expenses
 3. More Educational Materials Expenses
 - B. State education statistics are not likely to be improved from the implementation of this bill, and may even decline, which would poorly impact the state's reputation regarding Kansas as a good state academically in which to raise children.
 1. Studies show that there is no long term increase in academic results in states that have a younger mandatory attendance age.
 2. Some studies even show a slowed long-term progress academically and another study shows reported elevated behavioral problems long term in schools with lower mandatory attendance age.
- II. Bill No. 399 does not benefit the parents of the state of Kansas
 - A. Parents' rights are being taken away
 - B. Parents' judgment is devalued and rendered meaningless.
 - C. Parents' relationship with their children is diminished.
- III. Bill No. 399 does not benefit the children of the state of Kansas
 - A. Both national and international studies show that there are no long term academic benefits to early mandatory attendance age.
 - B. Children are not born ready for entrance into a classroom setting; rather it requires time to prepare them for classroom instruction. The amount of time required for preparedness varies among children- socially, verbally, cognitively, physically and emotionally.

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 6

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Marci Laffen, RN

Andover, KS

State of Kansas Bill of Rights Article 1. Equal rights. All men are possessed of equal and inalienable natural rights, among which are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness.

Definition of Liberty from Merriam-Webster's website: the quality or state of being free: **a:** the power to do as one pleases **b:** freedom from physical restraint **c:** freedom from arbitrary or despotic control **d:** the positive enjoyment of various social, political, or economic rights and privileges **e:** the power of choice 2 **a:** a right or immunity enjoyed by prescription or by grant : PRIVILEGE **b:** permission especially to go freely within specified limits 3: an action going beyond normal limits: as **a:** a breach of etiquette or propriety : FAMILIARITY **b:** RISK, CHANCE <took foolish *liberties* with his health> **c:** a violation of rules or a deviation from standard practice

Oxford's definition of Liberty: • noun (pl. liberties) 1 the state of being free from oppression or imprisonment. 2 a right or privilege. 3 the power or scope to act as one pleases.

I believe this change of wording from "kindergarten to 1st grade" to just "kindergarten," and the change from age 7 to 6, infringes on Kansas parents' liberty and freedom to determine when it is best for their child to start school.

I believe this change is something that attempts to force every child into the same mold, and not all children are ready at the same time for school, based on their developmental age and individual needs.

I believe that our culture already sees a drastic crisis of poor parental involvement by parents in their children's education. I think that putting children in school even earlier and sooner than they are ready will only compound this problem. I think it will further deteriorate the bonds of those parents with their children, and further distance them.

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 7

Testimony to the
Kansas House of Representatives Education Committee
Regarding Senate Bill 399
March 12, 2008

Committee Chairperson Aurand, Vice-Chairperson Horst, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jamie Runyan, and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today, as a concerned citizen and educator, in opposition to Senate Bill 399.

I hold a Bachelor's Degree from Emporia State University in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. I also hold a Master's Degree in Special Education, in the area of Behavior Disorders, from Fort Hays State University. Although I have had the opportunity to work with children at all levels of development, most of my work has been with young children. I have been a full-time teacher in the public school systems in Belleville, Salina, and Chapman. I have been a substitute teacher in the public school systems in Abilene, Ulysses, and Ottawa. My husband and I have home schooled our three children, and most recently, I have taught Kindergarten during the previous two school years at Heritage Christian School in Topeka.

It has been my privilege to work with many children and parents in a variety of settings over the years, and it has been my experience that a great majority of parents are doing everything in their power to make sure that their young children's educational needs are met. In order to justify a need for legislation like SB 399, I would assume that there must be a great number of six-year-olds in the state of Kansas who are being deprived of an appropriate education. I find no evidence that this is the case in Kansas. As recorded in testimony supporting this bill, there may be a few incidences of children not receiving services in some of our larger cities, but I truly believe these cases are extremely rare and should be dealt with on an individual basis. Yet you are being asked to mandate that all children in the state must be enrolled in a program by age six, or their parents have the burden of requesting an exemption and stating a reason for the request from the district in which they live. This mandate would totally ignore the individual rate at which children develop and are ready for programs. It would also result in a severe erosion of parental rights.

I'm very concerned that little by little, bit by bit, the right and privilege to parent precious little ones is being eroded by those who think they know better than parents what is best for their children, resulting in a complete disregard of what is best for the majority of young children. I implore you not to legislate education policy based on isolated incidences, especially legislation such as this that will have a far reaching impact on so many families who are doing it right and doing an exemplary job of providing for the needs of their children.

Very sincerely,



Jamie K. Runyan
Topeka, Kansas

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 8

Dear Members of the Kansas House of Representatives,

March 11, 2008

As you consider and hear input on the bill which recently passed the State Senate, SB 399, I urge you to hear *the heart of a mother* on this issue of reducing the compulsory education age from 7 to 6 years of age.

There are many important things to present when we begin to talk about our children's education. I could reference formal studies which show the **lack of long-term educational benefit** to children who are forced into starting school early (age 5-6) and even some statistics indicating a detrimental effect on these children. If education isn't really the issue or doesn't really appeal to your sense of judgment, I could appeal to your political side and ask you to **consider the tax burden** already being felt by Kansas residents through educational tax increases we've had to shoulder in recent years and consider what the ramifications would be of this decision on our taxes.

However, some of you are parents yourselves and all of us had a mother. So instead I **appeal to your sense of family**. I have a son who was adopted from another country when he was 6 years old. He came to America not knowing one word of English and having had no formal education in his native language. At six years of age he could only count to five. However, because he turned 7 just days after school started, he was off to first grade having only heard English spoken around him for four months. Today he is three quarters of the way through 2nd grade, and my sweet 8 year old is spelling better than some adults, is writing, reading detective books to me at night and loves Math the most. This is a child who started school as a completely blank slate but he was ready to learn.

You may be thinking, "oh - but that is a special case", to which I counter that **each child is a special case**. Each child has a story and each child develops differently. Some children are ready for school at a young age and can't get enough of learning, other children need time to develop to that point, and still others have truly unique circumstances.

Who knows a child better than their own parent? Can you honestly propose to leave a formal statement on your record that says you know what is best for each individual child better than those who are closest to them? With the passage of this bill into law, that is exactly what you would be saying - "I know each child's story and stage of life better than his or her mother or father does."

That is why I suggest to you that the parental right to make choices in the interest of each individual child as they see fit should continue to be upheld, and **this rights-encroaching bill should never even be released from the committee** to which it is assigned.

Many friends urged me to come before you today to share this passion with you in person and I almost did, but my twins (who will turn 6 this summer) have a preschool musical performance at 9am on Wednesday, March 12th and I promised them I would be there. Please protect my right to determine what will be the best for them next August.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Creech
Stilwell, KS

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 9

Clay Aurand - Senate Bill 399 - Compulsory Age Reduction

From: Todd Thalmann <tmann@everestkc.net>
To: <aurand@house.state.ks.us>, <colloton@house.state.ks.us>, <craft@house.state.ks.us>, <crow@house.state.ks.us>, <donohoe@house.state.ks.us>, <faber@house.state.ks.us>, <flaharty@house.state.ks.us>, <hill@house.state.ks.us>, <hodge@house.state.ks.us>, <horst@house.state.ks.us>, <huebert@house.state.ks.us>, <loganbill@house.state.ks.us>, <mah@house.state.ks.us>, <otto@house.state.ks.us>, <palmer@house.state.ks.us>, <phelps@house.state.ks.us>, <powers@house.state.ks.us>, <rhoades@house.state.ks.us>, <spalding@house.state.ks.us>, <storm@house.state.ks.us>, <trimmer@house.state.ks.us>, <winn@house.state.ks.us>, <wolfb@house.state.ks.us>
Date: 3/10/2008 10:16 PM
Subject: Senate Bill 399 - Compulsory Age Reduction

To the Honorable Members of the House Education Committee –

As I understand it you are currently considering legislation recently passed by the Kansas Senate. This legislation, Senate Bill 399, would reduce the compulsory age for school attendance from the current age of 7 to the proposed age of 6. I believe this is a poor decision for the Kansas Legislature to enact and will explain the reasons for my position in the following paragraphs.

As you may already know, there is data that suggests starting children at younger ages does nothing to enhance or improve their education as they move through the school system. According to the 2005 NAEP, test scores of children from states which have low compulsory school attendance ages (5-6) did not score any higher than children from the other states, and in some subjects their average was actually lower. Additionally, a report published February 6, 2007 by the Goldwater Institute examines Stanford 9 test scores and finds Arizona kindergarten programs initially improve learning but have no measurable impact on reading, math, or language arts test scores by fifth grade. The data show that students in schools with all-day kindergarten programs have statistically significant higher 3rd-grade test scores but there is no impact on 5th-grade scores. This finding is consistent with previous research. Forcing children into school early delivers short-term benefits at best.

With this data in mind, it would be prudent to ask “what are we trying to accomplish?” Constituents of each representative on the Education Committee have no doubt voiced their concern, and in some cases outrage, as the taxpayers in Kansas were forced to endure dramatic school funding increases over the past several years. Reducing the compulsory age can do nothing but further strain already overstretched budgets. Will the next legislative item be to increase funding (again) for our schools now that more students are compelled to attend? I believe it is safe to say that additional funding generally does nothing to increase and sustain the overall education of our youth. However, it may make one feel as though one is accomplishing something.

Some have commented that there are “at risk” children that this bill would help, by giving them a safe place to go and get them out of neglectful or abusive home situations. Please don’t turn our educational institutions into State Sponsored foster care, nor into day care facilities. This is vastly opposed to the tenets of our educational system and we have other social service institutions within our government that are designed to handle these situations. This is not a teacher’s job!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this bill is a further erosion of parental rights. Not all children are developmentally ready for the educational system at age six. In fact, many do not function well in the institutional system at all. They are then labeled as “special needs” or “developmentally challenged” and fight to shake that label their entire life. Many times these “special” children simply need to have the opportunity to develop to the point of being ready for learning. Lowering the compulsory age will

House Education Committee

Date 3-12-08

Attachment # 10

only serve to exacerbate that situation further. If I understand current law, and I'm no expert, there is nothing that precludes a school district from offering additional programs should the residents of that district have a need. Allowing a school district to provide an optional program for at risk youth, rather than mandating all six year olds and older must attend (or opt out) would seem to make more sense. The opt out clause always forces those responsible parents to take the extra initiative rather than having those who need the service step forward.

In closing, please do not move this legislation out of committee. It is an erosion of parental rights to educate their children in the manner they chose, and it is an additional burden on the taxpayers of Kansas that empirically will have no long term benefits to the education of our children.

Thank you for your consideration and for taking the time to read this email.

Sincerely,

Todd Thalmann
15711 W. 85th Street
Lenexa, KS 66219

David Crum - SB 399

From: LISA MCKINNEY <mclisa1017@sbcglobal.net>
To: David Crum <crum@house.state.ks.us>
Date: 3/11/2008 10:58 PM
Subject: SB 399

Dear Representative Crum,

I received the following testimony from a veteran homeschool friend & thought you might be interested in reading it. Had I been able to come to the meeting in the morning, I'd of had copies for everyone there.

Thank you for standing with my family and others.

Lisa McKinney

I am the mother of twins who were born prematurely. I will call them "Jim" and "Joe." For whatever reason, Jim had gestational signs of being much more premature than Joe. All of Jim's physical abilities were much slower at developing than were his brother's. When Jim and Joe were old enough to begin school at the age that their older siblings had been ready, I did not start them in school. I knew that they would not progress well in their learning, primarily because their motor skills were not as finely developed at that age as their siblings had been. Writing skills would especially be hindered, particularly in written language skills and written math. It would have caused them a lot of mental and physical stress had I forced them to begin school just because of their age.

I speak as an experienced homeschooling mother with 28 years of success and several children who have now been graduated from college with a 4.0 grade average. One of our sons is a Navy officer and another has finished most of his requirements for a Ph.D. in Math at the age of 24. I am a believer in the freedom of teaching one's children at a young age while the child is able to learn even more easily than at an older age. Yet, at the same time, I believe even MORE firmly that the early teaching must be done voluntarily by the decision of the parents. In our experience, had I been mandated to force Jim to perform at the same level as Joe, or had both of them been forced to enter school at the same age as others, their learning experienced would have become a disaster.

House Education Committee
Date 3-12-08
Attachment # 11