

Approved: February 10, 2009

Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Morrison at 3:30 p.m. on February 3, 2009, in Room 535-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Brenda Landwehr- excused
Representative Judy Loganbill- excused
Representative Melvin Neufeld- excused
Representative Louis Ruiz- excused
Representative Tom Sloan- excused

Committee staff present:

Renaë Jefferies, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Daniel Yoza, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Galligan, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Gary Deeter, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dr. Sharon Zoellner, Superintendent, DeSoto Public Schools

Others attending:

See attached list.

The committee minutes for January 28 and 29 were approved. (Motion by Representative Roth, seconded by Representative Trimmer)

The Chairman introduced Dr. Sharon Zoellner, Superintendent, DeSoto Public Schools, who provided a list of reports and other mandates that are considered by many school districts to be duplicative, redundant, or unnecessary (Attachment 1). She commented on various items on the list, noting that the requirement to retire buses after 20 years was arbitrary, that the May 1 deadline to notify a teacher about the following year's contract adds unnecessary complexity to a district's plans, that some federal requirements are needlessly repeated at the state level, and that some isolated incidents are used to create statewide policy.

Dr. Zoellner responded to a variety of members' questions:

- Requiring a district to purchase from the state catalogue rather than from local vendors is not only more expensive, but sometimes forces a district to accept poorer quality products.
- Gifted students are not included in federal regulations; however, Kansas children benefit from the state's gifted designation.
- National tests are a satisfactory indicator of a student's progress.
- Decisions about moving funds to different categories should be left to local school boards.

CONTINUATION SHEET

Minutes of the House Government Efficiency And Fiscal Oversight Committee at 3:30 p.m. on February 3, 2009, in Room 535-N of the Capitol.

- Quarterly reports could be streamlined so that the basic information is entered only once. For example, the at-risk report uses much of the same information as the school lunch report.

Mark Tallman, Executive Director, Kansas Association of School Boards, was asked to enter the discussion. He noted the disparity between federal and state requirements and the concomitant complexity of reporting requirements. He commented that statutory requirements often add further complexity for school boards.

The Chairman observed that committee discussion served to open the process and promote transparency in dealing with some of the issues. Dr. Zoellner said she was available for further legislative input. Staff Mary Galligan noted that if a legislative interim study is recommended, the Legislative Educational Planning Committee (LEPC) could deal with the issues raised by the committee. After further discussion the Chairman declared a consensus for making a final report on the issues discussed, a report that could recommend further study by the LEPC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2009.



Unified School District 232

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Dr. Sharon L. Zoellner
Superintendent of Schools

February 3, 2009

To: Government Efficiency and Oversight Committee
Representative Jim Morrison, Chairman

From: Dr. Sharon Zoellner, Superintendent

Re: Possible savings for school districts

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with you. The economic situation in the state is one that requires EVERYONE working together to find solutions. While school personnel realize that there will be a need to share in the situation with some budgetary cuts, we also feel there are many state requirements that could be reviewed to determine their necessity during this difficult time.

School districts around the state were contacted and asked what required paperwork and/or programs could be reviewed to garner some possible cost saving measures. Responses were received from 57 districts. The following list of items, while not exhaustive, provides a glimpse of the items that could be reviewed to save time and money:

1. Legislative post audit represents a duplication of accountability services. We have good federal and state accountability systems in place; therefore, watch dog groups like legislative post audit seem unnecessary. Many districts are required to comply with multiple audits from both the state and the federal level on a regular basis.
2. There are duplicate At-Risk lists that must be compiled. The free lunch list is still what funds are based on, but the actual list of qualifying students is much longer.
3. Reporting different lists on the principal reports for Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) and the Local Consolidated Plans (LCP) for the federal government. There is also duplication among the reports for English as a Second Language and the Migrant reports.
4. Tornado shelter report.
5. Kansas Career Pipeline and the requirements for changing the Vocational Programs this next year. This is resulting in retraining costs for staff and additional paperwork.
6. Seclusion Reports for Special Education (SPED). This was put in place due to an isolated incident in one district. It would be more cost effective to impose sanctions on individual districts rather than requiring everyone in the state to comply with a new set of rules due to the errors of one district.
7. Suspend the requirement that buses are taken out of service after 20 years. Many buses can be maintained and provide service much longer than 20 years.
8. KIDS Collection System requires an extreme amount of work to maintain.

Attachment 1
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9. Use the district independent fiscal audit in lieu of the state audit. These independent auditors could be trained to check all the student counts at the same time they are reviewing the finances of a district.
10. Individual Education Plan (IEP) Paperwork is incredibly time intensive.
11. Eliminate state assessments in disciplines other than those which are federally mandated.
12. Simplify the Parents As Teacher (PAT) grant application process. The additional Early Childhood Block grant should be incorporated into the KSDE grant instead of separate paperwork & administration time. The main goal of the PAT program is to serve children. Additional administration requirements take time away from that goal.
13. Reevaluate the need for some employment forms such as loyalty oaths.
14. Give districts the flexibility to draw money from all other funds until the finances are in better shape.
15. Provide a mechanism for the extension of the May 1 deadline to notify certified staff of their contract status. Districts need to have some flexibility to "wait and see" what the financial implications of the legislative session will be prior to reducing the teaching force.

As I shared at the beginning, this list is not exhaustive. There are many other items that should be reviewed for redundancy, need, and/or effectiveness. Some of those may not pertain to this committee or even in the legislature. Examples would include:

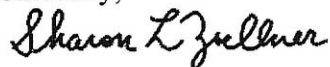
- Anti-bullying laws.
- The state's requirement for gifted education when it is not required by the federal government.
- Choosing a nationally normed test to take the place of our state assessments.
- Permitting those schools and districts which are meeting adequate yearly progress to be assessed on alternate years.
- Teacher tenure laws.
- Open ended timeframe for due process hearings in special education.
- Revisit the 1116 hour requirement in these times of deep cuts.

We must be willing to look at everything we are doing that may be able to be streamlined, re-evaluated, or eliminated as we work through this economic crisis.

School districts have proven their accountability with increasing student achievement over the past 5 years. To drastically reduce funding without reviewing some of the impediments to our mission would set us back to a level that may impact an entire generation of young learners.

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to speak with you today.

Sincerely,



Sharon L. Zoellner, Ph.D.