



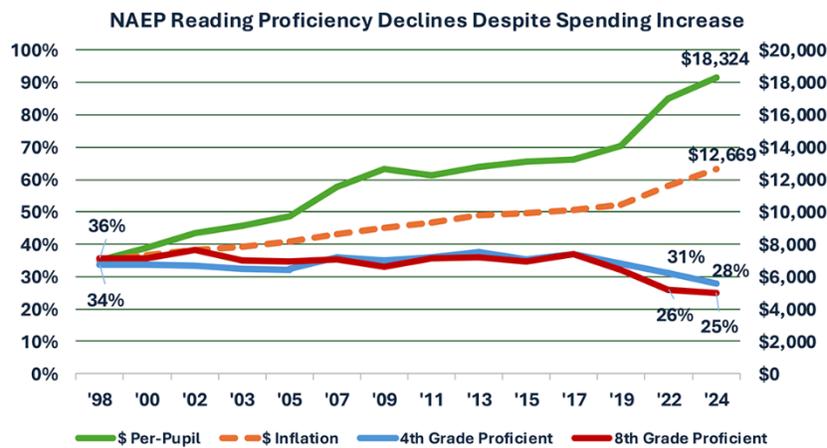
Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate this opportunity to present written testimony in support of SB 48, which requires school districts to demonstrate improvement in academic performance and comply with state and federal laws to maintain accreditation.

Over the past two years, I have crisscrossed the state of Kansas, visiting with school board members and providing training to help improve student outcomes. Many of them express frustration at the lack of focus on improving student outcomes at the administrative level and with fellow board members.

As explained in my February 6 testimony on SB 49, many superintendents will not allow board members to conduct the legally required needs assessments in each school. K.S.A. 72-1163 says local school boards “shall conduct” these meetings, but most often, they are expected to approve staff-prepared reports in a few minutes at a board meeting with no direct input from teachers and principals.

Board members must identify the reading and math proficiency barriers and the budgetary changes to overcome them at these meetings, but they are most often not allowed to do so. It’s no wonder that proficiency levels have declined despite large funding increases. The 2024 results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that only 28% of 4th-graders and just 25% of 8th-graders are proficient in Reading, and in both cases, they are much lower than a decade ago.



Source: KSDE, NAEP, BLS

There is some disagreement over whether “shall conduct” means board members are to conduct meetings with teachers and principals. Still, why would anyone want to prevent school board members from hearing directly from teachers and principals, given that the ACT, NAEP, and the state assessment all show declines in student outcomes over time?

The State Board of Education is legally required to have an accreditation system based on academic improvement, but the current system does not have such a requirement. SB 48 rectifies the State

SB 48 Proponent Testimony – written only
Accreditation requirements
Senate Education Committee
Ward Cassidy – Executive Director
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Board’s failure to require improvement by mandating the revocation of accreditation for a district that does not show improvement in student outcomes.

Further, two state audits (in 2019 and 2023) found that school districts are not spending At Risk funding on “above and beyond” services as required by state law. The State Board of Education knows that school districts are ignoring the At Risk law but continues accrediting districts even though their accreditation system requires legal compliance. That is further evidence of the need for SB 48.

Finally, Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution says, “The Legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools, educational institutions, and related activities which may be organized and changed in such manner as may be provided by law.”

Since the State Board of Education, up to this time, has chosen not to require academic improvement, it seems that students’ only hope for getting the education they need to be successful after high school is for the Legislature to approve SB 49.

Thank you for your consideration.