

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Dwayne Umbarger at 1:40 p.m. on February 7, 2001 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. John Morton, Superintendent, USD 373, Newton
Mr. Winston Brooks, Superintendent, USD 259, Wichita
Dr. Milt Pippenger, Superintendent, USD 457, Garden City
Mr. John Severin, Superintendent, USD 415, Hiawatha
Mr. Jerry Cullin, Superintendent, USD 220, Ashland

Others attending: See Attached List

Continued hearings on School Finance on Base State Aid Per Pupil, Local Option Budget, At-Risk Weighting, Special Ed and Correlation Weighting

Dr. John Morton, Newton School District, offered his testimony ([Attachment 1](#)). Dr. Morton pointed out the disparities in funding that exist between school districts, questioning how all could be held to the same standard. It was discussed that if the formula for funding was to be changed, maybe we should look at the threshold for low enrollment weighting and try to determine realistically what constitutes the minimum level of programming. His district has not discussed a tax increase, but he believes this is a probable answer to raising more money for education and he believes that an increase would be supported in his district.

Mr. Winston Brooks, Superintendent, Wichita School District, gave testimony in ([Attachment 2](#)). The district has a strong commitment to school improvement and student achievement. This can be backed up with the number of awards and recognitions the schools have received in the recent years. Mr. Brooks stated that 10 percent of all students in Kansas attend the Wichita Public Schools. They also have problems; their free and reduced lunch population has increased by 2 percent and the special education population has skyrocketed. Mr. Brooks gave some examples of specific problems in classrooms; different languages, number of special ed students, family problems, the difficulty in communicating with non-English speaking parents and one-parent homes. The parents are struggling as well as the children. Many are illiterate, non-English speaking, unemployed and they cannot help the children with school work. Addressing the disparity in the current formula, Mr. Brooks said that the local option budget has simply maintained the spending gap. He is not suggesting that the formula be changed at this time. He believes the formula that we have now needs to be adequately funded and then we need to get a group together to talk about how the formula could be changed so that it would be more equitable.

Dr. Milt Pippenger, Superintendent, Garden City, gave testimony found in ([Attachment 3](#)). In 1995, they began a program to become more fiscally responsible. They initiated curriculum driven budgeting, which involved approximately 150 people, operations audit where they asked the business people to come in and audit the school district and cost accounting procedures have been implemented. Since then they have made significant changes in their budget reallocating priorities. They have also worked toward student achievement and they also have awards and recognitions to back that up as Wichita does. Their basic concern is finding teachers. They were 18 short at the beginning of the school year. They see a big need to get teacher salaries up as they are losing teachers to the business sector. Their dream is to develop a career ladder making teaching an attractive career concept. They have developed before and after school

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programs, summer school and hired social workers to assist families. Their drop out rate has lowered from 13 to 8 percent. Their special education population has increased and it is difficult to get teachers to take on the added responsibility of teaching these children. They want to be able to provide a higher salary for teachers who go into Special Education.

Mr John Severin, Superintendent, Hiawatha School District offered his testimony outlined in (Attachment 4). This is a rural area and they have had a declining enrollment and have had to reduce programs and personnel. They feel a great need for increase in base salary for teachers as they are no longer competitive with surrounding schools. They have also had an increase in special education students.

Mr. Jerry Cullen, Superintendent, Ashland gave testimony outlined in (Attachment 5). His school district has the same problems, but also being in a rural setting, it costs more for travel expenses and repairs because of the mileage involved to get services. His district does not want a tax increase either, but would support a tax increase if that is what it takes to continue excellence in K-12 education.

Chairman Umbarger thanked all the conferees for coming and assured them that their testimony would be studied and not taken lightly.

Meeting was adjourned 2:37 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2001 at the regular time, 1:30 p.m.