

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dwayne Umbarger at 1:40 p.m. on March 5, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senators Corbin, Hensley, Lee (excused)

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Destry Brown, Principal, USD 413 Chanute
Dr. Cal Cormack, Superintendent, USD 458, Basehor-Linwood

Others attending: See Attached List

Briefing on Charter Schools

Destry Brown, Principal, addressed the Committee on the Chanute Elementary Charter School, USD 413. The Chanute school is one of a few elementary charter schools. Their purpose was to provide an educational alternative to the traditional; to meet a need in the community to allow students to progress at their own rate; to keep special education kids in the mainstream all the time and to create a student centered school based on current research and learning.

Their reading program is set up in a 90 minute block for the entire school so that each child can go to his or her level reading class. The kids are actively involved for the entire 90 minutes in reading activities, such as actually reading or talking about comprehension. They switch reading activities every 15-20 minutes. The kids are neither bored nor frustrated and Mr. Brown feels that because of this the discipline problems have significantly decreased. Students that are reading significantly below grade level are given an opportunity for a very structured extra 20 minutes of individual tutoring every day. The goal is to have every child reading at grade level by the time they reach third grade. In the math program, they have a 60 minute split block every day so they can have more teachers and smaller class sizes. The kids are offered tutoring in small groups and individually, if needed. All students attend each enrichment class, such as Spanish, technology, creative writing, creative art and science for 30 minutes each week. They have character education in which they focus on a different character trait each month, such as respect, responsibility, cooperation, gratitude. These traits are re-enforced throughout the day, each week at the student council meetings and at the end of the month when they have character rallies.

Progress reports or report cards show outcomes for each content area and reflect the individual student's mastery for each outcome. This way the students know exactly what they need to know to move up to the next level. Students are included in parent-teacher conferences. The student identifies strengths and weaknesses and establishes goals for improvements.

Results in each area are very positive; 81% are reading at or above grade level; 90% are achieving at a highly proficient level; 95% of the parents are satisfied with the student-led conferences; 100% of the parents participated in parent-teacher conferences; 300 people attended the fall family reading night and as many are signed up for the spring family math night; no parents have asked to transfer a student to another school; the waiting list is growing; and the teachers are actively involved in the planning and monitoring of the charter school.

The Committee was impressed with the success of the charter school. Mr. Brown has shared with other schools in his district and was encouraged by the Committee to continue to do so. Mr. Brown believes that anything they are doing could be done in any other school. (Attachment 1)

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION at on March 5, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Dr. Cal Cormack, Superintendent, Basehor-Linwood USD 458 addressed the Committee on his virtual charter school which has been open since 1998. Their mission is to reach out to and serve students who are not being otherwise served by public education. Over 95% of the students currently enrolled were not attending a public school before enrolling in his school. Dr. Cormack stated that they could be considered a “drop-out recovery” program because they are successfully reconnecting students and families with public education. The intent of the charter school was to provide more choices for students and parents. The initial enrollment was 63 in the first year and now in the fourth year, enrollment is 350.

The Basehor-Linwood school is a virtual school in that they are on the internet and accessed by way of internet. They are using curriculum that meets state standards and being on the internet makes all resources accessible to parents, students and teachers. When students enroll, they agree to participate in the Kansas State Assessments, ITBS, and all local assessments. Many of the students were formerly home-schooled and did not participate in assessment tests. The school considers it a major accomplishment to get these students to participate so that their progress can be measured against what other students are doing in the state and nationally. Students and parents receive a computer with initial orientation and training at the time of enrollment and they receive textbooks from the district. They are required to pay a small leasing fee for the computer and pay textbook rental fees, the same as in the rest of the district. Progress of the students over the four years the school has been in existence is equal to or superior to other students in the school district. (Attachment 2)

A motion was made by Senator Oleen to approve minutes for February 14, 18 and 19, 2002. Seconded by Senator Emler. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned 2:30 p.m.