

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 1:35 p.m. on January 26, 2004 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:  
Senator Janis Lee (excused)

Committee staff present:  
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research  
Kathie Sparks, Legislative Research  
Debra Hollon, Legislative Research  
Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Steinlicht, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:  
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB)  
Dr. Connie Briggs, Director Reading & Recovery Program  
Brian Young, Reading Recovery Research for Jones Institute

Others attending:  
See Attached List

Senator Umbarger informed the Committee that an unauthorized bill (**SB 345**), concerning school districts; transfers of territory by petition, was read into the Senate and referred to the Senate Education Committee. A duplicate bill has now been sent to the House.

### **Bill Introduction**

Mark Tallman, KASB, requested introduction of two bills. The first bill recommends a minimum number of hours in formal education or training for school board members. KASB believes that board members work hard to stay informed on all aspects of their responsibilities, but believes that educational governance in Kansas can be improved by requiring that all board members receive regular training on those subjects. The second bill concerns school district consolidations which would specifically authorize boards to hold joint meetings and take action on consolidation agreements within the territory of any of the affected school districts. (Attachment 1) Motion by Senator Teichman to introduce both bills, seconded by Senator Vratil. Motion carried.

### **Briefing - Jones Institute for Educational Excellence**

Dr. Connie Briggs, Director, Reading & Recovery Program at the Jones Institute at Emporia University, explained to the Committee that the program is an early literacy intervention program targeted at the lowest 20% of first grade students. The program provides one-to-one help for first grade students that are having the most difficulty in learning to read and write. The goal of the program is to dramatically reduce the number of first grade students who are having difficulty learning to read and write and to reduce the cost of these learners to educational systems.

The program was started in Kansas in 1993. Nationally one in five schools that serve first graders have this program available with excellent results. Dr. Briggs advised that Kansas has eight teacher training sites that serve 161 teachers in 69 school districts throughout Kansas. There are 25 teachers currently in training.

At the request of the Legislative Education Planning Committee (LEPC), Dr. Briggs and her graduate research assistant, Brian Young, conducted a "Sustained Effects Longitudinal Study" on Reading Recovery in Kansas. Studies in eight states showed that the majority of Reading Recovery students continued to perform within the average range of performance when compared to their peers in subsequent years. The purpose of this study was to document results in Kansas.

Brian Young, assistant research assistant, completed the study and published the results. Data was collected to determine the students that went through the program and were still attending school as fourth graders. Students were tested and it was determined that the reading recovery students were doing

## CONTINUATION SHEET

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nearly as well or better than a comparison group of students.

Dr. Briggs informed the Committee that 1,210 students were served last year in Kansas and 62% successfully completed the program and only 1% of those were referred to Special Education due to reading difficulties. Of those completing 12-20 weeks of the program, 78% reached average reading levels. None of those students were referred to Special Education. Some of those that did not complete the program moved or it was too close to the end of the year to complete the program. Dr. Briggs believes the potential savings are enormous given the high cost of Special Education services. Special Education services are three times as high as that of an average pupil. Dr. Briggs would like to see every first grade student in Kansas have the opportunity to participate in the Reading Recovery before being referred to Special Education. (Attachment 2)

During discussion Dr. Briggs confirmed that the cost per an average pupil in Kansas is \$6,758 and that the cost of Special Education is three times as much. A child diverted from Special Education by the Reading Recovery Program would be a savings of nearly \$13,516 for each year that the child would have received special education services. Dr. Briggs feels sure that if more funding were available, they would have the teachers to meet the demand to put more children in the program. Senator Teichman advised the Committee of the wonderful results in her school district.

Senator Oleen thanked Dr. Briggs for coming to share the results of the program with the Committee and requested that information be provided on what the Legislature support has been in the last year or two and what the Governor is recommending. Senator Downey wanted to know if figures were available to show the amount of money saved on special education in a school with the reading recovery program vs. a school without the program. Dr. Briggs advised that studies were done in Michigan and Massachusetts which show that school districts save about \$5,000 a year per student. Studies in Kansas schools have not been completed.

A motion was made to approve the minutes for January 20 and January 21 by Senator Schodorf. Seconded by Senator Teichman . Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2004.