

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:40 p.m. on February 23, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Barbara Allen- excused
Chris Steineger- excused
Greta Goodwin- excused
Janis Lee- excused
John Vratil- excused
Pat Apple- excused

Committee staff present: Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: None

Miliken Family Foundation National Educators

Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Board of Education, introduced Matt Copeland, a language arts teacher at Washburn Rural High School (USD 437), and Stanley Bergkamp, a physics and chemistry teacher at Maize High School (USD 266). Both were recent recipients of an award for their excellence as teachers.

Mr. Copeland noted that he was totally surprised when he received the award on Tuesday, November 1, at an all school assembly. He went on to explain that teaching was “in his blood.” He is a sixth generation classroom teacher; four generations taught in Kansas. He noted that time, mainly time to collaborate with other teachers, was the resource that teachers need need the most. In addition, he is a firm believer that teachers must be treated as professionals and be given the academic freedom that they need to be able to teach the activities and ideas that best fit their students’ needs. More than anything else, he believes that it is important to individualize and personalize education for each and every student in the state. In his opinion, true education stems from the positive, adult relationships that students build with teachers.

Mr. Bergkamp noted that he almost did not attend the school assembly the day he was presented the award because it was during his planning period at the end of the day. He thought the school was going to receive an award and was completely surprised when a letter announcing his award was read at the assembly. He went on to say that the primary thing that teachers must have is nothing that can be legislated or taught. He feels that teachers must have passion. He noted that the teachers that really want to go into education and make a difference are the ones that are most passionate; however, if they get tied up in bureaucracy and the pressure to do well, they can become disillusioned and burnt out. He commented that what students remember most about classes later on in their lives is the relationship they built with their teachers in the classroom setting.

Senator Schodorf thanked Mr. Copeland and Mr. Bergkamp for taking the time to visit with the Committee. Senator Teichman commented that they had discussed important education issues – time, professionalism, small classrooms, passion for teaching, and mentoring.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2006.