

**House Education Committee  
February 9, 2012  
Testimony from Dr. George Griffith  
Superintendent Trego County USD #208**

**Testimony on HB 2634**

Mr. Chairman and House Education Committee;

Thank you for allowing me to express my opposition to HB 2634. **Specifically, I oppose the following sections: New Section 1: related to Teacher Certification, New Section 2: relating to Performance Incentives, and New Section 3: relating to Teacher Evaluations.**

The children in my district and across the state of Kansas deserve the best education possible provided by highly qualified teachers. However there are flaws in this bill that could and will likely cause the level of education in this state to decline. My opposition to this bill is based on the following reasons:

NEW SECTION 1: As a district in western Kansas, I appreciate the attempt to make it easier to obtain teachers in the areas of science, technology, engineering, math, and the career technical education areas. However, I believe the current certification process that provides for the transition to teaching is an adequate manner to meet this need. I am sure many of the individuals with a background in these specific fields could be great educators; however, lacking the knowledge of how to teach will impair their chance for success. If these individuals lack the training in teaching pedagogy and other teacher preparation courses, they will be set up to fail and our students will miss their opportunity to receive quality instruction.

NEW SECTION 2: Although I am not opposed to providing incentives for teachers who do an excellent job; I believe this should be determined by the local school boards and through the negotiated agreements with teachers. With the current funding situation, I do not see the funding for this program being adequate to reward the many excellent teachers across this state including the number of great teachers I have in my district. The intent of this incentive program is commendable but will fall short of motivating teachers who need to increase their performance to actually do so.

NEW SECTION 3: This section is the one I have the greatest opposition to for the following reasons:

1. With 50% of a teacher's evaluation being related to student performance, I see this as another step to increase the burden on the educators while decreasing the students and parental responsibility in the educational process. I believe a level of accountability is required; however, I see any percentage related to student performance on any single assessment should be 10% or lower. At this time, students currently have to be motivated to do well on the state assessments since little if any consequences result from doing poorly on these assessments. The problem is if students know a teacher's evaluation is related to their success or failure on the Kansas State Assessments; they could intentionally do poorly in order to harm a teacher's evaluation. I have seen this happen in more than one occasion with a student choosing to fail a class to try to get back at teacher.
2. The proposed 40% of the evaluation based on input from supervisors, peers, parent, and students needs to be completely changed. First and foremost having parents and students involved in this process will result in a decrease in the quality and performance of our students. In dealing with a number of "helicopter parents" over the past 11 years, the complaints I have received about teachers were not about a low level of expectations a teacher had for his or her students. The greatest complaints were against teachers who held their students to a higher level of expectation and the student and parents being upset that an A was not given even when it was not earned. This provision could lead to many teachers lowering their standards to maintain a positive feedback from parents and students. Another problem with this portion of the evaluation is the input from peers on teacher evaluations which could lead to an unfriendly working environment and undermine the team concept of education.

The vast majority of the teachers I have had the pleasure to work with truly care and do their best to meet the needs of our children. The achievement of students in Trego County USD #208 and across the state continues to improve as a result of our educators. As an administrator, I have used the current system of due process to remove an ineffective teacher. By properly evaluating my teachers and using the current system, I believe I can take the steps needed to remove an ineffective teacher when this need presents itself. Fortunately these instances have been few and can be addressed before a teacher earns the right to due process.

I have been informed of the suggestion to have the teacher evaluation ratings made public and I feel this would only make it difficult to work with a teacher that needs assistance and would violate a teacher's right to privacy. I hope this is not a consideration in any portion of the Governor's excellence in education proposal.

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Education Committee, I strongly urge you to not pass HB 2634.

Thank you again for considering my comments.