



Making public schools great for every child

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House Committee on Education
February 9, 2012

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I appreciate this opportunity to talk with you today about three licensure-related issues in House Bill 2634.

In section 1, the State Board would be required to automatically grant a Kansas teaching license to certain applicants: those seeking endorsements at the secondary level to teach science, technology, engineering, math, and career technical education and those who have participated in the teach for America program.

We strongly object to this section for several reasons:

- First and foremost, decades of research clearly shows that professional preparation is essential to quality teaching. Content is important and so is pedagogy related to that content. Just knowing a subject is not sufficient to be able to teach it, especially to secondary students.
- The majority of this section duplicates current efforts. The State Board already has in place an effective process for those with content expertise in the 5 areas listed [STEM and CTE] to become licensed in Kansas. It is called the Restricted Teaching License.
- Teach for America participants have graduated college. They have little or no educational background. The analogy I would make is to an emergency long-term substitute. Simply having been a long-term sub for two years is NOT equivalent to professional preparation.
- Kansas students show evidence of learning because for generations they have been taught by well-prepared teachers. Our licensing system is strong and the State Board has resisted all efforts to weaken it. Now is NOT the time to lower our preparation standards!

In section 2, The State Board, subject to appropriations, would be required to award “performance incentives” to one teacher or one group of teachers per school district. We have several concerns about this proposal:

- At best, it is an inadequate recognition of the quality work of Kansas teachers. Limiting the award to one per district makes a mockery of the efforts of Kansas educators in every school building in this state.
- Limiting the award to teachers does a disservice to the collaborative nature of schools. Many people are responsible for the success of students, particularly those who are at-risk.
- Fiscal incentives alone don’t work. Recent research in Tennessee showed that even \$15,000 bonuses failed to increase student test scores.

<http://www.performanceincentives.org/news/detail.aspx?pageaction=ViewSinglePublic&LinkID=561&ModuleID=48&NEWSPID=1>

In sections 6-9, the State Board, again subject to appropriations, would administer grants for participants in mentor programs. These sections completely miss the point of what mentoring programs accomplish.

- Mentoring is not a “program” that a new employee “attends,” as described in section 45. Mentoring is a process. It involves a relationship between a new employee and a trained, experienced mentor and a series of intentional interactions between them.
- The grants, as outlined, would pay the new employee. There would be no support for the district that designs and administers the program and there would be no support for the person who is the mentor.

Mentoring programs, for teachers and for administrators, can be essential components of a professional continuum that begins with preparation programs and continues with induction and mentoring, leading to professional licensure and accomplished practice. Recognizing their importance for teachers and administrators is an improvement over the current law. Reducing them to a way to pay for seat-time and not support districts and mentors is not.

We urge you to strike sections 1, 2, and 6-9 from HB 2634. They do not produce accountability and they do not enhance educator licensure or student learning.