



**Senate Education Committee
Senator Schodorf, Chair**

S. B. 450 – School Finance plan

*Submitted by Diane Gjerstad
March 7, 2012*

Madame Chair, members of the committee:

We applaud this bi-partisan plan because funding Kansas schools should not be partisan. The current formula has been successful in increasing student achievement, increasing graduation rates, and successfully targeting student groups with the greatest academic challenges. We believe the current formula, as SB 450 does, is the best strategy to reach the Governor's goals of increasing fourth grade reading and increasing the percentage of students who are college or career ready.

During the historic economic downturn, the Wichita Board of Education attempted to protect schools from direct cuts. But three years of reductions has impacted every school, every function of the district. The loss of \$54m in operational budgets has challenged the Board of Education as new attendance boundaries were drawn and decision to close five schools.

The base per pupil has been reduced about 15% for all school districts which impacts funding for the regular classroom and all the costs associated with running a school. Along with the base cuts, districts eligible for state aid because of lower property valuations lost capital outlay and LOB state aid. Districts with the greatest need have had the greatest cuts.

- **Capital outlay state aid** eliminated for three years – *Wichita's loss \$4.6m each year*
- **LOB state aid** prorated – *Wichita's loss \$3.5m*

The consequences of multiple funding reductions for the Wichita Public Schools have reduced operating budgets by - \$54.4 million dollars.

- 279 positions eliminated
 - 139 teachers, 34 paraprofessional, 81 operations support, 25 administrators (a 35% reduction in central office administration)
- Wages frozen since 2009
- Expectations for student achievement continue to increase each year

Madame Chair, we rise in support of SB 450 which would turn the tide from cuts to greatly needed additional revenue for Kansas school districts. Passage of this bill will send a positive signal to Kansas educators: your work is appreciated and valued.

*Sen Ed
3-7-12
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