



**Senate Education Committee  
Senator Steve Abrams, Chair  
SB 169 – Kansas Reads to Succeed Act**

February 25, 2013  
*Submitted by: Diane Gjerstad*

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

Teachers are as frustrated as the student and family when a student arrives in their classroom struggling to read. We would encourage the committee to rework this bill by removing the punitive retention sections and redirecting the funding to a comprehensive, research based teacher training model.

Retention as an intervention strategy is quite expensive. Texas estimated the cost of retaining 4.8% of total enrolled in 2006-07 was more than \$2 billion dollars. Retention without a significant alteration in instruction is not likely to be effective. In other words, more of the same will not help those students who struggle to read.

Currently under the act \$5m would be allocated annually to qualifying not-for-profit organizations awarded by the Children's Cabinet. We agree with providing research based interventions and training, but believe grants will result in inconsistent training, lack fidelity of implementation and would not provide literacy coaches. Coaches are a best practice which assists teachers through practice, observation, feedback and embedding strategies into classroom instruction. While useful a grant process is analogous to pilots – a few are funded with mixed results and the majority receives no support at all.

Instead of a few schools winning a limited number of grants we suggest a highly ambitious teacher training program using language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling program referenced in SB 44. This instruction would provide each grade level teacher the understanding of the building blocks for the acquisition of reading. For the students who don't learn it easily, reading is rocket science.

Critical to prevention of grade retention and poor reading skills is effective classroom instruction in general education. This begins with high quality preschool and Kindergarten programs. Several states that have mandated retention have also increased funding for preschool, all day K and literacy coaches. The best alternative to retention is early identification of students who are struggling to read, researched based interventions, and progress monitoring. The classroom teacher's training in literacy is essential.

Today's bill is an opportunity to build capacity throughout the entire system. Today we have a choice – a plan with good intentions impacting a few or a build a legacy of literacy instruction for every classroom.

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Attachment 15