



Senate Education Committee
Senate Abrams, Chair
S.B. 224 – changes in weightings

Presented by Diane Gjerstad
Wichita Public Schools
March 12, 2013

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

The impact of this bill is simply stunning. Districts with large populations of students who have the greatest needs to reach the achievement levels of their peers would receive severe cuts. The bill would decrease by 31% at risk and high density at risk, and eliminate virtual, non-proficient, vocational and English language learners.

Under this bill Wichita Public Schools state aid would be reduced by over \$30,000,000. A district with over 8000 non-English speaking students would not have funding to help them learn English. A district with poverty over 74% would face significant reductions in programs that help level the educational playing field. The bill would eliminate technical programs for the district whose graduates are critical to fill high skill jobs in the state's aviation cluster.

Why are the weightings in place? The 2006 *Cost Study* by Legislative Post Audit concluded the formula did not adequately recognize the cost difference to raise a student from poverty or ELL or special education to the same high levels of academic success of their peers. LPA found at risk weighting was insufficient at 19% and recommended 48%. They further found children who live in urban poverty – extreme poverty, lacking a cohesive family structure, exposed to crime and substance abuse --- have greater learning deficits and obstacles to overcome to be successful. LPA recommended high density at risk be funded at 24%, yet has only been funded at 10%.

At-risk funding in WPS funds the \$6.2m portion of all day K not funded by the state. Affluent districts have the option to charge their parents the unfunded portion. With 74% poverty we do not have the option to charge fees. This bill would place all day K on the budget cut list for the students who need early childhood the most, while their affluent neighbors continue to receive all day K. Loss of at risk funds would jeopardize learning centers in the seven comprehensive high schools for students needing to complete credit hours; the two Metro High Schools which serve students who have not been successful in a comprehensive setting; and additional staff who work directly with students needing extra academic support to be successful.

Federal law requires districts to provide services to English language learners (ELL). Those requirements include instruction, curriculum, transitional, interpretation, record keeping, placement, assessment and other support. Title III provides some money but does not come close to the entire costs. The Office of Civil Rights closely monitors ELL services and we have been audited by ORC. The Wichita Public Schools has over 8000 students who speak nearly 90 languages and dialects in their homes. ELL funding is critical to support these students in our goal to assist them to be productive, valued, income tax paying citizens in our state.

This bill does not support the Governor Brownback's Road Map to improve fourth grade reading proficiency or to increase the number of high school graduates who are college or career ready. Mr. Chairman, S.B. 224 would dramatically shift funding away from the students who have the greatest needs as recommended by the Legislative Post Audit Cost Study. We urge the committee to not reduce the weightings.

Senate Education Committee
Date 3-12-13
Attachment 4