

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 1:36 p.m. on February 16, 2004 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Lana Oleen (excused)

Committee staff present:

Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research  
Kathie Sparks, Legislative Research  
Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Steinlicht, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards  
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association  
Diane Gjerstad, Wichita School District  
Cindy D'Ercole, Kansas Action for Children  
Tom Hawk, Retired Superintendent, Manhattan, Kansas

Others attending:

See Attached List

### **SB403--Schools; school finance; education first plan**

Mark Tallman, KASB gave testimony on **SB403**, the Governor's Education First plan. KASB believes that the state needs to significantly increase the amount of funding for public education, not because our schools are bad, but to keep them strong and make them better. Mark said KASB believes that the Governor's Education First proposal should be the beginning, not the end, of a plan to develop the Kansas economy. KASB supports providing health insurance to school district employees, however, oppose the new mandate on school districts.

Mark explained attachments to his testimony. One provided a comparison of total school district expenditures for all sources, compared to Kansas personal income. This shows that Kansans are not paying any higher percent than they were in the early 1990's. The next attachment shows Kansas ranking 7th in the nation on national assessment tests. All of the states that did better on the assessment tests spend more on education than Kansas. The next charts show that other states are improving their test scores at a faster rate than Kansas. The concern is that other states are catching up. In the early 90's Kansas was about 3% below the national average of per pupil spending; now Kansas is about 6% below average. ([Attachment 1](#))

Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association, believes **SB403** is a move in the right direction in school funding, but believes that the funding levels in this proposal do not go far enough in addressing the needs of our schools. KNEA believes that voluntary all-day kindergarten will help close the achievement gap; they believe quality at-risk intervention programs are essential for students already in the school system that are falling behind; they believe the increases in the bilingual weighting factor will help meet the needs to integrate immigrant and limited English proficient students into our society; and they believe if Kansas wishes to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind, additional funds are critical. ([Attachment 2](#))

Diane Gjersted, Wichita Public Schools, addressed the issues most critical in the Wichita School District. In Wichita, poverty, as measured by free and reduced lunch, has increased from 51% to 64%; non-English speaking students have increased by over 1800 students, for a total of 5111 students, representing 64 languages; and their special education population has grown by over 1500 students. The district has cut expenses and Wichita School District is now faced with cutting classroom teachers when expectations placed on schools are higher than ever with No Child Left Behind. Wichita Public Schools support and believe that the Governor's Education First plan is practical and targeted. ([Attachment 3](#))

Cindy D'Ercole, Kansas Action for Children, commended the Governor's proposal to improve education

CONTINUATION SHEET

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and her significant recognition that investing in early education programs is one of the most effective and cost efficient ways to further improve the Kansas education system. (Attachment 4)

Tom Hawk, retired superintendent, Manhattan USD #383, spoke in support of **SB403**. He outlined five central points why Kansas needs increased revenue for education: 1) rural Kansas is facing a serious population decline; 2) Kansas is losing too many young teachers in the first five years of their career; 3) keeping people in your towns and in Kansas by offering good schools with confident, enthusiastic professional teachers and principals; 4) costs; and 5) if schools are not funded, they will be forced to merge or consolidate. (Attachment 5)

Written testimony in support of **SB403** was provided by Gary Norris, Superintendent USD #489, Hays. (Attachment 6)

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30. The next meeting is scheduled February 17, 2004.