



Unified School District #337

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT

*P.O. Box 219 - 101 W Main St.
Mayetta, Kansas 66509-0219
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*John A. Rundle
Superintendent*

*Susan Pfrang
Curriculum Director*

*Denise Murray
Business Manager*

*Sherri Schulte
Treasurer*

Board of Education

*Pat Tuck
President*

*Cindy Broxterman
Vice-President*

Linda Hegemann

Ann Kelly

Jim O'Toole

Boone Smith

Jeff Stithem

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Education Committee:

Please accept and give full consideration to these following comments in opposition to HB 2504.

Royal Valley Schools, USD 337, comprises 169 square miles in southern Jackson County, located only 15 miles north of the State Capitol in Topeka. The 827 students, in grades Pre-K through grade 12 come from three communities; Hoyt, Mayetta and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Reservation. The diversity of this school district is extremely unique in the state of Kansas. Of the 827 students, 271 are Native American and an additional 22 are of other minority designation. As such, this makes Royal Valley with **35%, the rural school district** with the largest percentage of minority students in the state of Kansas.

The Royal Valley District has worked hard since 1971 to become a truly unified school district bringing together the three communities of the district. That meant unifying the Mayetta Indians and the Hoyt Cowboys into a single class 3A school district, the Royal Valley Panthers. A change in 1991, which moved all elementary students into a single K-4 building in Hoyt, moved grades 5-8 into the middle school at Mayetta and maintained the existing grades 9-12 high school at Hoyt has created a very compact and efficient local school district. Along the way the district worked hard at maintaining ties to the local culture of the community. Title VII Indian Education funds are used to maintain support for additional tutoring and educational assistance for all middle school and high school students both at the schools and also in the evenings at the Boys and Girls Club on the reservation. Impact Aid funding, overseen and recommended for approval to the local board of education by a Parent Advisory Committee, supports



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afterschool bus transportation for all district middle and high school students, in an effort to ensure access to both afterschool activities and athletics for students. A Native American Singers and Dancers performance group is also supported by Impact Aid funding. This cultural group practices regularly in the evenings at the Boys and Girls Club and then travels once a month during the school year to share the Prairie Band Potawatomi heritage in performances at area schools, local or regional recognition events and for tribal meetings or conferences.

HB 2504 would make every effort to wipe out the past 45 years of progress. Once again it would cause re-identification of the district and these three local communities. In all likelihood it would encompass a Jackson County configuration that would mean a new district of approximately 2350 students. No longer would the 293 minority students of the Royal Valley district be a significant part of this new consolidation. Instead of a 35% representation they would make up only 12% of the district population. Many students would lose the very essence of what makes their current school district and their own personal education successful, their identity, their culture and their distinctiveness. Students could lose the ability to create special projects within their community, to attend and participate in culturally distinctive field trips and to hold unique community events as part of their educational experiences.

While there are many other items in HB 2504 that might be found to be objectionable, this "bigger is better" blanket assumption of the bill is that which concerns me the very most as Superintendent of USD 337, Royal Valley. This bill has nothing to do with helping our local students. It actually has great potential to decrease the diverseness of education for our students. A decision to become a larger entity should be strictly a local decision and in no way driven by state legislation. As has happened in the recent past, let the locally elected



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representatives be the decision-makers for any desired or needed change in district configuration. Do not legislate this from the state level.

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