

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB176

School Boards Have The Responsibility To Deliver Quality Education

Dr. Walt Chappell

It is essential that SB176 passes into law this Session. Over the years, so many terms and conditions have been added to the statutes that it has become very difficult for superintendents and local school boards to effectively manage their teachers and non-instructional staff.

In most other places of employment, salaries and wages are the only negotiable items. The employer sets the company policies and job description. The employee either accepts these conditions of employment or chooses to work elsewhere.

In many Kansas school districts, the annual negotiation of teaching and staff contracts has become an adversarial battle with the local school board. The employees keep asking for more restrictions on when and under what conditions they will teach our children, clean our schools or prepare lunches. They also have gone to impasse over whether they should be allowed to come to teach in whatever causal clothes they choose to wear.

Education is a labor intensive service. In fact, 80% or more of each school district's expenditures are for employee salaries, wages and benefits. So, decisions made by local boards and district superintendents about how employees are assigned to provide quality education are crucial to increasing productivity, lowering costs and improving instruction.

Under the current Kansas statutes, contracts have been negotiated to allow teachers to receive a salary without teaching any students one third of each day. Their classrooms sit empty during their planning period, and "professional community" daily meetings with other teachers.

Allowing teachers and staff to be paid for not teaching while students are in the school building increases class size, leaves classrooms unoccupied by students for several hours each day and greatly increases the costs of providing a quality education.

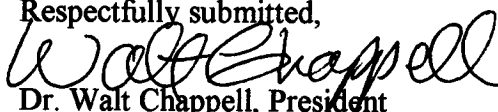
The fact is, the amount of local, state and federal tax dollars spent to educate Kansas K-12 students has doubled since 1998. Last year, the total was \$6.1 billion dollars. Unfortunately, NAEP, ACT and SAT scores remain flat with only 1/3rd of Kansas students testing proficient.

Since the Montoy case was decided in 2005, the Legislature has increased funding to local districts by \$1 billion dollars. With that money, school boards hired 6,241 new employees. Yet with so many restrictions on how these employees will agree to work, there has been no improvement in test scores. In many schools, you can hear a pin drop within 15 minutes after the students are dismissed at the end of the day. Those who need tutoring find no teachers to help.

There have been numerous efforts to raise test scores and control spending. The legislature appointed a 2010 Commission. Then there was the Governor's School Efficiency Task Force which held meetings in 2012. In 2014, the K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission met and sent their recommendations to the legislature this January.

Now, it is time for action. Passing SB176 is a step in the right direction to increase employee productivity, lower operating costs and improve student achievement.

Respectfully submitted,



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