

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on January 13 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present:       Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
                                      Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
                                      Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research Department  
                                      Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:     Senate President Dick Bond

Others attending:            See Attached List

### **Senator Bond's Education Proposal**

The joint meeting of the House and Senate Education committees was called to order by Representative Tanner, House Education Chairman. He made a few brief remarks and called on Senator Bond to present his education proposal.

Senator Bond thanked the committees for meeting jointly to hear his proposal. He submitted an attachment entitled, "First in Class: Kansas Public School Reforms for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (Attachment 1)

Senator Bond told of the input from various members of staff and others who had helped make up the proposal he offered today. He mentioned Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner and Avis Swartzman, Revisor. He also mentioned the unexpected media attention the proposal has received, although the electronic media has tended to focus exclusively on uniforms. There have been surprising reactions from people at meetings, parties and on the street. Many think that it is the right track to take and it would be a good thing. It will be a challenge to see if people can accept change.

Senator Bond stated that Kansas does not have mountains or seashores, but Kansas could have the best educational system in the nation. He believes that with this proposal issues such as the voucher issue and the charter school issue would disappear, as well as other problems related to education.

Beginning with the attachment, Senator Bond went through the 10-point plan, highlighting certain areas. He believes the first point, all day kindergarten, may be one of the most important. Children who attend all day kindergarten seem to have higher abilities than children who do not attend all day kindergarten. A bill will be introduced that will implement a five-year phase-in of state support for full-time kindergarten. This will enable schools to come on board gradually.

With regard to mandatory dress, Senator Bond stated that no new bill would be introduced by him. He is certain a bill could be passed in the legislature similar to Senator Emert's bill, **SB368**. Clothes are being worn by both students that are not conducive to a learning environment.

Senator Bond stated that he would like to have the committee hear John Rios, Argentine School District, an inner city district with gangs and other social problems. There is great racial diversity in the district. Since a dress code was put into place, there has been 95% compliance and it has made a very positive difference in the children's academic performance.

The fiscal note, the Senator noted, cannot be correct as it is very high. After the initial purchase of clothing, there are clothing exchanges where clothes can be purchased at less cost.

The third point of the proposal dealt with lengthening the school year. This nation has one of the shortest school terms of any industrialized nation. Kansas, being a major agricultural state, has fewer than 10% of the state's children living on farms. If this nation wants to compete globally, it will have to be done. He emphasized that he did not mean one world, but to compete globally. This would entail curriculum planning and staff development along with other actions, including a pilot grant program.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 313-S Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on January 13, 2000.

In addressing point four, competency testing for all graduating seniors, Senator Bond stated that many students cannot read, write, articulate or do simple math. Businesses have to train graduates to do the work required of them. In speaking with Dale Dennis, Education Commissioner, the Senator learned there are minimum competency tests available at a minimal cost. All Kansas students should be required to meet a minimum competency test for high school graduation. Testing would begin in the tenth grade.

The fifth point entailed merit pay for teachers. Senator Kerr's bill, **SB 328**, endorses this proposal. Two of the greatest problems in Kansas education deal with the need for more money and teacher tenure. It is very difficult to remove incompetent teachers. Few private sector employees have such rights. In many cases of teacher longevity, the district is paying for mediocrity.

Point six, dealing with the speaking of Spanish, faces opposition, in Senator Bond's opinion, because of prejudice and other factors. Spanish is the most spoken language in the western hemisphere, with approximately 400 million Spanish speaking people. A great opportunity exists for economic growth for our nation with our Spanish speaking neighbors in the southern hemisphere. The Senator would like to see a bill introduced to set standards for Spanish language proficiency by 2002.

Addressing community service as being vital to education, the seventh point of Senator Bond's plan would have students participating in community service. A bill would be introduced in the Senate similar to **HB 2304** by Representative Benlon. Interaction of students and adults would benefit the community in positive ways. A program of community service could be established by 2002.

Point eight, dealing with a current events curriculum, would help students to better understand the world they live in and would encourage development in critical thinking. A Resolution will be introduced in the Senate directing local school boards to incorporate a weekly study of current events into the curriculum.

The ninth point made by Senator Bond, early childhood education, would add 1 million in funding to the four-year-old at risk program. This would be done by bill introduction. In the long term, this would save the taxpayers the cost of remedial education, welfare and crime.

The last point in Senator Bond's proposal, technology infrastructure, would provide a pipeline of knowledge to the front door of every school in the state and leave no one behind, whether in the smaller school districts or the larger districts. Every school would be connected to a statewide computer network. A savings would be realized by the state purchasing in bulk and a bill requiring the state to contract for a statewide infrastructure technology system for school districts would be introduced.

Senator Bond, listened to comments dealing with concerns and answered questions on the ten point proposal.

Chairperson Lawrence stated the cost will make it difficult, knowing this is a tough year for new programs to be implemented. There are a number of things it would be easy to dismiss because the legislature cannot afford them.

Chairperson Lawrence asked for bill introduction for bills dealing with all day kindergarten, Spanish language proficiency and community service. She called for a motion.

Senator Oleen moved the bill introductions, seconded by Senator Langworthy.  
The motion carried.

The Senate portion of the meeting was adjourned.

