

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dwayne Umbarger at 1:40 p.m. on March 14, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Hensley (excused)

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. Bart Goering, Superintendent, USD 230, Spring Hill
Chris Clarke, Legislative Post Audit

Others attending: See Attached List

Briefing on Charter Schools (continued from March 5, 2002)

Dr. Bart Goering, Superintendent, USD 230, Spring Hill, addressed the Committee on the experience of their elementary charter school which was one of the first charter schools in the state which began in 1998. The charter school was a school within a school with 140 students out of 575 participating. The school was based on implementing the best practices in curriculum and instruction. If these practices proved to be academically effective, they were implemented with other teachers and students in the non-chartered school. The key components of the school consisted of required volunteer time from the parents, vertical teaming, student led conferences, uninterrupted blocks of time for learning, looping and thematic instruction. Three years of data did show a small but significant increase in standardized test scores and Kansas Assessments over the students not participating in the charter school.

In 2001-2002 Spring Hill was approved for a charter school in the high school. The key components of the charter are increased academic offerings for all students; flexible/innovative uses of time; combining technology with meeting academic standards across the curriculum, like video production and broadcasting; increased opportunities for character education; focused staff development including mentoring; and increased parent involvement. (Attachment 1)

In discussion, Mr. Goering, stated they would not have been able to do the innovative and creative things they did without the additional funding, but that it is not necessary for them to have the title of charter school to do the things they are doing. Many of these new practices have been adopted throughout the schools in their district. The additional funding received for the charter school ran out in the third year at the grade school.

Chris Clarke, Legislative Post Audit, provided a copy of the *Performance Audit Report on School District Budgets* and the *Proposed Budget Format: USD 501 Topeka, a Performance Audit Supplement*. These booklets will be on file in the Legislative Division of Post Audit at 800 SW Jackson, Topeka, Kansas. Chris advised that the audit arose out of concerns about the general level of accountability in school district budget documents. They were hard to read, it was difficult to know how much money districts were taking in and how that money was being spent, and they didn't allow for comparisons. The Legislative Audit Committee was asked to determine what changes are needed in budget documents to address those concerns, and show how a revised budget format could be used to improve accountability. The findings are reported in the post audit reports listed above and in Chris Clarke's testimony which is attached. (Attachment 2)

Questions were answered for the Committee as time allowed.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.