



## Office of the Superintendent Renae Hickert

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*"USD 480 Challenges All to Achieve Educational Excellence"*

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony on HB2270.

At-risk funding has played a significant role in helping USD 480 meet the learning demands of our diverse student population. There are special programs funded or partly funded by at-risk funds that play a big role in keeping students in schools and on track for graduation.

### 1. Truancy Court

Truancy was a problem in USD 480. In collaboration with the city and the county, a program was developed and all three entities help fund it. At-risk funds pay for the district portion of this program. Truancy is a family issue in most cases. The program involves the parent and student taking life skills classes. Truancy staff monitor student grades, attendance and behavior. Students and parents appear in truancy court on a regular basis in front of a panel of representatives USD 480 staff, county commissioners and city council.

As a result, the truancy rate dropped significantly over the past four years.

- 2013 ---161 students in truancy program
- 2017 --- 35 year to date

In addition, the program has added a truancy prevention plan. Our truancy officers work with students who are close to becoming truant and their parents.

### 2. High School Alternative Program

Our high school alternative program is fully funded with At-Risk funds. Each year this programs targets high school junior and seniors students who are not on track for graduation or have unique circumstances that make attending traditional high school difficult. The program has helped students who have otherwise would have dropped out.

- 2014 -- 35 graduates
- 2015 -- 33 graduates
- 2016 -- 31 graduates
- 2017 -- 45 graduates (anticipated at this time)

### Other Benefits for At-Risk Funding

In addition to special programs, the infusion of at-risk funds has also helped us support our teachers to meet the varying needs of our students.

Lack of classroom space never allowed the addition of full day Kindergarten and finally, in 2014, the community overwhelmingly passed a bond issue which now makes it possible. Reducing at-risk funding will put this in jeopardy.

We are a second language majority district with many children living in poverty. At-risk funds provide additional paraprofessional support for students. Until the teaching shortage began to affect elementary education this funding had also helped us to keep class sizes manageable.

Free Lunch Designation vs. Poverty Rate

Free lunch verification is based on current income information provided by parents to the Food Service Department--not on government estimates. Parents have to reapply every year. The designation does not carry over from year to year. Free lunch verification is accurate and provides timely data.

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