

House Education Budget Committee HB 2397

Written Testimony by Cheryl L. Semmel, Executive Director
March 5, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to HB 2397. Accountability for preparing students for post-secondary education and the workforce has never been higher. At both the federal and state levels, Kansas has supported policies that increase expectations for student performance, establish rigorous goals for student outcomes and ensure each child receives a quality education.

We recognize that there is a lot of interest in discussing how education is funded and talking about the state's total contribution to education. However, as you consider HB 2397, administrators would encourage you to consider:

- When the State Board of Education and Board of Regents increases requirements and strengthens outcomes for schools and students, there are increased costs and they would likely still be covered by the statutes included in this bill.
- The potential loss of federal dollars should we not meet the requirements and expectations set forth in federal law.

Kansas requirements: curriculum and instruction

The State Board of Education and the Board of Regents have clearly stated roles in determining the academic requirements and measurable outcomes for students. When the State Board of Education and Board of Regents increase requirements and strengthen outcomes for schools and students, there are increased costs and they would likely still be covered by the statutes included in this bill.

K.S.A. 72-1101 delineates specific requirements for elementary education, but then states "...together with such other subjects *as the state board may determine.*" This same statement is carried forward and applied in 72-1103 and 72-1117. Certainly, there are other subject areas that the State Board has deemed necessary and appropriate; for example, career and technical education programs are important to a large number of our students. In fact, even the Board of Regents has included those courses in the menu of electives for Qualified Admissions.

Every seven years, the Kansas State Department of Education reviews and modifies the assessed standards. Reading, mathematics, writing and history are all either being reviewed or are scheduled for review this year. This review cycle coincides with the recent adoption of the **Common Core Standards**.

Kansas is one of forty-five states (not including territories) that have adopted these more rigorous standards. The Common Core standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our students need for success in college and the workforce. The State Department of Education (KSDE) is currently rewriting state standards for math and language arts and will be phasing in new state assessments over the next three years. This will require new textbook adoptions, instructional support materials and professional development.

At the same time, K.S.A. 76-717, Section 9(b) states that “the board of regents may prescribe a precollege curriculum which includes, *but need not be limited to*, four units of English, three units of mathematics, three units of social studies and three units of natural science.” Recently, the Kansas Board of Regents amended the Qualified Admissions criteria. Effective Fall 2011, high school freshman were required to meet additional math requirements prior to graduation to meet the Qualified Admissions criteria.

The point is that **when we increase requirements and strengthen outcomes for our schools and students, there is an increased cost.**

Federal requirements: goals and mandates

As administrators, we share your frustration that the funding for federal education programs has not been commensurate with the goals and mandates set forth in law. We recognize that this results in additional burdens on the state and on local school districts.

However, the decision to exclude federal requirements when determining the adequacy of the state’s provision for finance does not change the fact that school districts must comply with federal law. Failure to comply with federal requirements would likely result in a loss of federal funds and other sanctions.

The following two federal programs are examples of where we most often refer to being “under” funded:

- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** demands that 100 percent of our students demonstrate proficiency in math and language arts by 2014 – this includes our at-risk, special education, and non-English speaking students. The State Accountability Plan, approved by the U.S. Department of Education, establishes benchmarks that increase annually.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)**. IDEA has included a commitment by the federal government to pay 40 percent of the average per student cost for every special education student since it was first passed in 1975. At no time since then, has the federal government met that goal of 40 percent.

Regardless of whether Congress appropriates sufficient funds for these programs, schools throughout Kansas will continue to instruct and assess students; we will continue to provide services to those students with special needs.

In addition to these programs, there are many others – some academic and some administrative – that are either unfunded or under-funded.

Administrators remain committed to working with you to address your concerns in a way that is ultimately beneficial to the public school students of Kansas.