

## MINUTES

### 2010 COMMISSION

October 16-17, 2006

Galena and Baxter Springs School Districts

Southeast Kansas Education Service Center (Greenbush)

#### Members Present

Rochelle Chronister, Chairperson  
Dr. Ray Daniels, Vice-Chairperson  
Representative Kathe Decker  
Representative Sue Storm  
Carolyn Campbell  
Dennis Jones  
Stephen Iliff  
Jesse Paine, Attorney General's Office

#### Members Absent

Senator Jean Kurtis Schodorf  
Barbara Mackey  
Barbara Hinton, Legislative Post Auditor

#### Staff Present

Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Michele Alishahi, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Art Griggs, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Scott Frank, Legislative Division of Post Audit  
Dan Bryan, Legislative Division of Post Audit

**Monday, October 16**

**Galena USD**

Superintendent Brian Smith provided general information about the Galena USD. Galena USD encompasses 13 square miles—a relatively small school district. Current enrollment is 744 students. The district implemented all-day kindergarten several years ago. About 10 percent of the student population is considered special education. About 10 percent of the student population is transient. About 65 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Even though Galena USD is a rural school district, it has no major transportation problems.

The Galena USD started a reading program this school year using new school finance dollars to hire a reading specialist with the goal of getting new students up to the appropriate reading level by second grade. Galena USD also has 35 out-of-state students for which they receive Kansas state aid but no state aid from the students' state of residence, Missouri. With the third and fourth year of additional state aid under the new finance formula, the district plans to hire another counselor.

Galena USD has not had many problems hiring or retaining teachers. This is attributable, in part, to paying higher teacher salaries than Missouri.

Because of the district's small size and low property values—due in large part to abandoned lead and zinc mines that have led to collapsing of buildings—poverty is one of the greatest problems faced by the district.

A variety of Galena USD staff presented descriptions of various programs as well as descriptions of future needs. Those descriptions are included in [Attachment 1](#).

**Baxter Springs USD**

Baxter Springs High School was a Blue Ribbon School in 2005. Forty-four percent of the district student population receives free or reduced-price lunches.

Baxter Springs USD staff chose to highlight its innovative high school programs for the Commission. Of the 241 students in the Baxter Springs High School, about 20 percent are considered at-risk students. Two years ago, the School District undertook a program to improve students' achievement levels through a variety of programs. One involved providing a laptop computer to every high school student. There were some restrictions on the computers' use; but, in general, the students could use the computers for all school-related homework and research. In addition, students took practice state assessment tests over and over. Rewards to students for improving test scores include receiving two extra days' off at a year's end. Achievement scores have skyrocketed in the past two years.

**Tuesday, October 17**  
**Southeast Kansas Education Service Center (Greenbush)**

David DeMoss, Executive Director, Southeast Kansas Education Center (Greenbush) welcomed the Commission and led a tour of the facility. Greenbush receives no user fees. Its funding comes from contracts to provide services to USDs and educators across the state. Greenbush has a five-member board comprised of representatives from the five USDs creating Greenbush in 1976. Greenbush has about 100 employees.

Dr. Victoria White, Interim Chair of Special Service and Leadership Studies at Pittsburg State University, presented information on recruiting and retaining special education teachers. Dr. White said the challenge is getting students into the special education field. She advocated development of innovative methods of recruitment, including: signing bonuses, housing, financial support for hours required for licensure, repayment of student loans, competitive salary schedules, and recruitment of students to special education at the sophomore and junior levels. She said that this school year started with 100 special education vacancies across the state ([Attachment 2](#)).

Sharon Hoch, Director of Greenbush's Virtual Prescriptive Learning Program, presented information on that program ([Attachment 3](#)).

Superintendents Gary Price of USD 250 Pittsburg, Craig Neuenswander from USD 257 Iola, and Jim Porter of USD 484 Fredonia presented comments on financing education.

Comments and recommendations regarding school funding issues included the following:

- Ensure at-risk funds continue, which is the method schools are using to fund all-day kindergarten. If at-risk funds go away, full funding for all-day kindergarten will be needed.
- Funding for a director of curriculum and assessment is absolutely necessary.
- Reviewing and changing the high-density formula is critical. This funding is flawed in its distribution method. A more appropriate plan would include a linear transition.
- Stable state aid is important. This should be ensured even after the current three-year school finance plan ends.
- Because Kansas now has research completed that determines what a quality education costs, the state should continue to fund based on this research and not based upon fund availability.
- Multi-year funding should continue to include cost-of-living increase estimates; however, KPERS increases should be separately determined and included in available funding.
- School funding problems in the state include a growing reliance on local option budgets.

- Additional funding now provided for at-risk, special education, and bilingual students should stay in the funding formula.

Superintendents reported that the additional state aid dollars have been used for items, including those listed below:

- Reducing class size;
- Limiting fees to parents;
- Expanding after-school programs; and
- Expanding other programs, such as music (Attachment 4 provides additional detail).

The Commission traveled to USD 250 Pittsburg and viewed programs at Meadowlark Elementary School.

The Commission tour ended at 4:00 p.m.

Prepared by Sharon Wenger

Approved by Commission on:

November 13, 2006

(date)