

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Dwayne Umbarger at 1:30 p.m. on January 17, 2001 in Room 123-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
 Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Others attending: See attached list

Chairman Umbarger introduced Ben Barrett to brief the committee on reports by the Special Committee on Preschool and K-12 Matters.

The first report was titled "Student Retention As One Alternative to Social Promotion" (Attachment 1). It was the conclusion of the committee that no action should be taken on this issue until the Legislature receives from the State Board of Education a report on the planning for implementing SB432 concerning mastering basic skills in reading in grades K-3.

The second report, "Early Childhood Education Issues", (Attachment 2). The study focused on three specific early childhood education areas, Parents as Teachers, four-year-old at-risk children's programs and full-day kindergarten. The conferees in general endorsed these programs and supported program expansion except one conferee was not supporting the full day kindergarten unless it was fully optional. The research also generally supported the effectiveness of these types of programs.

In this case, the committee is submitting the legislation to expand its application of the parent education program more commonly know as Parents as Teachers to the children from birth to age 4. Currently this program serves children from birth to age 3. The committee also recommended that the Senate Ways & Means Committee and the House Appropriations Committee consider increasing funding of this program with the objective of eliminating waiting lists for program participation.

The meeting was opened for questions. Concern was expressed about expanding the Parents-as-Teachers (PAT) program to 3 years olds when there are still districts that do not have the PAT program for birth to 3 year olds. The program was originally designed to be statewide and fully funded. Now that matching funds are required, some poorer districts don't have it. We have statistics that this program works, why not follow through with funds to get this program statewide as originally intended before we go on to expand the program to three year olds. Response was that there may be some issues besides the funding. Some districts may not have chosen the program as a high priority. It was felt that the testimony of people with active programs could not be ignored. These districts wanted the flexibility to decide which 3 and 4 years olds needed to stay on the program. These people are the experts who know which of these kids cannot be rolled off the program without some severe consequences. The other issue is how to structure the program so that districts can afford it and also see it as a priority.

Another comment was that the biggest issue was money, but since the committee had determined that there really was a big gap in the program between 3 and 5 year olds, the committee should be concerned about not expanding the PAT program to 3 and 4 year olds. Presently there are no programs for 3 year olds and limited programs for 4 year olds.

One member of the committee requested additional information on the research done on the all-day kindergarten program. It is a very expensive program and concern is that much of the day may be taken up in recess, naps and social development with very little academic material presented. Information

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presented to the committee indicated that the students who have not gone to all-day kindergarten tend to catch up with those who have within six months.

Back to the PAT program, one member of the committee wanted to know if the program was as beneficial to wealthy parents as to lower income families. The response was that we have parents at the top income level that are uninvolved with raising children because of their work loads, but we also have the same dilemma at the low income levels because both parents are working and are perhaps disenfranchised with raising children. This program was never economically based.

What about a program known as "Tiny K"? This program is under Health and Environment and the committee raised the question that perhaps it is time to ask the for the program to be put under the Education Committee so that there can be some coordination. Mr Barrett agreed to look into the possibility of transferring this program to the Education Committee.

The third study was on "Student Assessments". (Attachment 3) The Committee recommends legislation urged by the State Board of Education to increase from three to five years the mandatory schedule for review by the State Board of the specified curriculum standards. A five-year cycle will be less disruptive and less expensive than the current system.

A Motion was made by Senator Vratil to introduce one conceptual bill, #1rs0275, AN ACT enacting the KAN-ED act; providing for establishment and maintenance of a broadband technology-based network for certain schools, libraries and hospitals. Seconded by Senator Corbin. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Umbarger. The next meeting is at 1:30, January 18, 2001.