

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Senator John Vratil at 1:10 p.m. on February 6, 2001 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research  
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. Ron Wimmer, Superintendent, USD #233 - Olathe  
Dr. Kent Hurn, Superintendent, USD #345 - Seaman  
Mr. John Benson, Superintendent, USD #503 - Parsons  
Mr. Steve Nilhaus, Superintendent, USD #281 - Hill City

Others attending: See attached list

Chairman Umbarger, due to another commitment, will be late today. Vice Chairman John Vratil will conduct the meeting until he arrives.

**School Finance Hearings on Base State Aid Per Pupil, Local Option Budget, At-Risk Weighting, Special Ed and Correlation Weighting**

Dr. Ron Wimmer, Superintendent, Olathe School District gave testimony ([Attachment 1](#)) sharing his prospective on the problem of inadequate financial resources to accomplish the his district's Vision for Excellence.

During committee discussion Dr. Wimmer stated that he believes his district is supportive of providing the necessary funds to insure that the children receive an excellent education. They have demonstrated this through their past commitment on bond issues and he believes that commitment is still there today. Dr. Wimmer believes their district has one of the lowest administrative costs in the state. To retain and hire new teachers, their district has stressed benefits that do not have direct dollars attached to them. They have looked into allowing the employees to utilize unused sick leave to purchase back insurance, professional staff training, medical reimbursement plans, and matching tax sheltered annuities.

Chairman Umbarger apologized for being late and introduced Dr. Kent Hurn from Seaman School District. Dr. Hurn presented his testimony ([Attachment 2](#)) on the issues as they affect his district.

During discussion, Dr Hurn stated his district doesn't want a tax increase, but they would support it for purposes of education. Dr. Hurn was Chair of the USA School Task Force and the increase in tax question was asked all over the state and no one wants taxes on their property. The most popular tax is sales tax or a combination of income and sales tax.

John Benson, Superintendent, Parsons, presented his concerns on serious employment and funding issues facing school districts in SE Kansas in his testimony. ([Attachment 3](#))

Mr. Benson, in committee discussion, said he was concerned that the funding for education at an adequate level has not been there during the last 8 years when the economy was good and is concerned what will happen when times are bad.

Steve Nilhas, Superintendent of Schools, Hill City, KS gave testimony ([Attachment 4](#)). He sited problems of loss of budget authority due to declining enrollment, the lagging of state aid behind the rate of inflation and their commitment to provide a broad range of programs to meet the needs of all the students.

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They have closed an elementary school building, cut some positions and raised local taxes. Decisions need to be made on who is responsible for education in Kansas; is it state responsibility or local responsibility or a combination of the two.

An error was noted in the minutes for January 29, 2001. A bill number will be corrected from SB3092 to HB2092. Motion to approve minutes for January 29, 2001 with correction, and January 30, 2001 was made by Senator Schodorf and seconded by Senator Vratil. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, February 7, 2001