

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 1:40 p.m. on January 24, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Downey (excused)
Senator Teichman (excused)
Senator Corbin (excused)
Senator Hensley (excused)

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education
Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education
Mark Desetti, KNEA
Bob Vancrum, USD229, Blue Valley
Amy Brunner, KASB

Others attending: See attached list

SB79 – At risk pupil weighting - expansion of definition

Dale Dennis was called upon to brief the Committee on **SB79**. **SB79** amends the definition of at-risk pupils in the school finance law as pupils who are enrolled in a district which maintains an approved at-risk pupil assistance plan and who are characterized by any one or more of the following: (1) eligibility for free meals under the National School Lunch Act; (2) a high rate of absenteeism from school attendance; (3) not making satisfactory progress toward completion of the course requirements of the State Board of Education necessary for graduation from high school. **SB79** would increase at-risk funding by approximately \$4,000,000. ([Attachment 1](#))

Chairman Umbarger said there had been questions about which districts would be hurt by the funding formula for Special Ed, LOB and other provisions passed last session. Dale Dennis compiled information on districts that would be hurt. They would be the sponsoring districts of a coop unless they are not using the full LOB authority. These findings are listed in ([Attachment 2](#)). Chairman Umbarger said that this information was based on LEPC meetings and it may be new to some members of the Committee, but the Committee will be reviewing the information at a future meeting.

Mark Desetti, KNEA, testified as a proponent of **SB79**. He stated that socio-economic status is not the only indication of difficulty in school. This bill would add two additional indicators of at-risk status: a high rate of absenteeism and unsatisfactory performance toward completion of graduation course requirements. The current system of funding at-risk programs is based on the number of students eligible for free lunch, but fails to recognize that poverty is not the only indicator. ([Attachment 3](#)) Committee members discussed how a high rate of absenteeism would be defined.

Bob Vancrum, Blue Valley School District, speaking as a proponent of **SB79** stated that he believes the present at-risk definition is deficient and needs to be changed. He believes many students qualifying for free lunch are average students and are not at-risk for not graduating from school. He believes there are other categories where students are at-risk and these need to be added to the definition. ([Attachment 4](#)) Mr. Vancrum's testimony was followed by Committee discussion on definition of satisfactory progress. It is believed there was a previous House bill with a comprehensive definition. Chairman Umbarger asked the staff to find this House bill and any others that could help the Committee define satisfactory progress.

Amy Brunner, KASB, spoke as an opponent to **SB79**, not because they disagree with the content of the bill, but because of the funding. It is clear from the state budget situation that there can be no increase in school funding, including an increase to fund an expanded definition of at-risk pupils under **SB79**.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION at on January 24, 2002 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Without additional revenue, funding for **SB79** can only come by taking money away from districts who have fewer at-risk pupils, or deeper cuts from other parts of the state budget. KASB believes the state must work on a plan that meets the needs of all school districts, that addresses the critical problems of teacher recruitment and retention and supports our new national goal to leave no child behind.

(Attachment 5)

Senator Vratil made a motion to introduce a bill to add school districts and community colleges to the statute that allows cities, counties and townships to levy a property tax to provide health insurance for their employees. The LEPC studied this situation at length this summer and the Committee felt that this was a critical fringe benefit that teachers consider when deciding where to take a job. Seconded by Senator Schodorf. Motion carried with 6 yeas and 1 nay.

Meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.