



## Written and Oral Testimony HB 2410: Kansas School Equity and Enhancement Act

**To:** House K-12 Education Budget Committee Members

**From:** Dr. Cory Gibson, Superintendent of Valley Center School District, USD No. 262  
President of the Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA)

**Date:** March 23, 2017

**Positionality:** **OPPONENT**

Chairman Campbell, Vice Chairman Huebert, and members of the K-12 Education Budget Committee,

In order for us to educate and prepare the workforce of tomorrow, we must provide a stable, equitable, and adequate funding mechanism in place to meet the diverse needs of Kansas public school students. I very much appreciate the sacrifices you make to serve the wonderful State of Kansas. The work of this committee should be commended, as the dialogue has been open and ongoing around the important topic of school finance.

Simon Sinek, a famous author and nationally known speaker, states that you must begin with the WHY. *“Your Why provides you with clarity, meaning and direction. It is a filter through which you can make decisions, every day, to bring your cause to life.”* (<https://www.startwithwhy.com/LearnYourWhy.aspx> ). So I suggest we start with the “Why” in regards to the discussion today. **Why did legislators choose to extinguish the previous formula?**

If the “Why” was because....

- they felt that funds were not **adequate** for the communities they represent, HB 2410, as proposed, decreases state resources for nearly 38% of Kansas School Districts. I believe that the bill is not adequate under the Kansas Constitution.
- they felt that **local property tax owners** bore too much of the responsibility to fund local schools, HB 2410 will increase that dependency. I believe that it is not **equitable** (equal tax burden) under the Kansas Constitution.
- they felt the previous formula did not take into account the **diverse needs of students**, HB 2410, as proposed, provides less resources to serve the needs of English Language Learners, Students Receiving Training in Career Technical Education, etc.
- they felt that funding **for students with disabilities and/or gifted education** was becoming more reliant on local dollars versus being covered under the current law (92% of excess costs), HB 2410, as proposed, does not allocate additional resources to serve this growing population (approximately 78% of excess costs).
- they felt the previous formula was **too complicated**, I contend that HB 2410 is **more complicated** and less flexible.

Certainly there are a variety of reasons WHY legislators extinguished the previous formula, however, the “WHY” of this committee and my “WHY” are probably similar. **We both wish to have a formula in place that is constitutional, sustainable, and serves the diverse student population in Kansas for many years to come.**

**Dr. Cory L. Gibson**

*Superintendent of Valley Center Schools – USD# 262*

143 S. Meridian

Valley Center, KS 67147

<http://www.usd262.net>      [cory.gibson@usd262.net](mailto:cory.gibson@usd262.net)

(316) 755-7000

**I believe HB 2410 has some positive elements:**

- **Headcount:** All equitable formulas must include a headcount mechanism.
- **All Day Kindergarten:** Funding all-day Kindergarten is a wise investment. Since most districts partially fund all-day kindergarten using at-risk dollars, this would allow for additional flexibility to serve students in need of additional support. A quicker escalator to fully funding would be preferred. The committee may wish to consider how districts who currently charge for ½ day kindergarten would handle this transition.
- **At-Risk:** The vast majority of states figure at-risk funding based on free lunch numbers. The committee may wish to consider additional weightings, similar to the previous formula for students who are not meeting objectives of the state’s new accreditation model. Flexibility to use these dollars for Pre-Kindergarten interventions would also be beneficial
- **Increase in Costs:** Once the base is considered constitutionally adequate, a formula must include some kind of escalator to cover additional costs.

**I believe there are areas in HB 2410 that should be refined, here are a few:**

- **Headcount:** A system of accounting for changes in enrollment is critical. A weighted average may apply an unexpected emphasis on a “bubble class” (when there is a dramatic shift in population). A second count also causes great concern. We are trying to meet the changing needs of our students, for example, we are no longer requiring seniors to stay second semester if they’ve earned all the required credits to graduate. We encourage those students to get a jump start on post-high school life either through internships, work-study, or college credit. Requiring a second count may decrease the willingness of some districts to allow this flexibility (due to a decrease in funding), as they’ve already encumbered the cost of the staffing for the year. The previous formula of a three year average, prior year, or current year should be considered.
- **CTE:** The labor market needs skilled workers and programs like welding, automotive repair, etc. cost a great deal. Without a dedicated source of revenue that covers those costs, districts may decrease offerings. We need to incentivize these programs in order for our state to flourish. Looking at a cost study and allocating resources based on program costs should be considered.
- **Disproportionality of Tax Dollars:** Prior to the 1992 formula, which included weightings and equalization, property taxes in Valley Center was nearly double what they are today. This plan would increase property taxes disproportionately across the state. Looking at equalization of resources should be included in all formulas. A child’s zip code should not determine the educational opportunities provided to him/her.

Due to our demographics and lower assessed valuation per pupil, our expenditures are near the bottom in the state. Counting every dollar that passed through our district last school year, from gate receipts to state funding, only six of 286 school districts in the state spend less per pupil when you remove capital expenses (source: expenditure per pupil report – KSDE). An adequate and equitable formula is critical to our future success.

Respectfully Submitted,



**OUR VISION:**

*To Be a Premier School District Known for Excellence in Education, Innovative Instruction, Outstanding Programs, and Dedication to Students.*