

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on March 2, 2005, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Martha Gage, State Department of Education
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards
Peg Dunlap, Kansas National Education Association
Dr. Howard Smith, Pittsburg State University–Kansas City
Center
Earl Nissen, teacher, Kansas City Public Schools
Lindsay Cegelis, Pittsburg State University

SB 130–Teacher certification; alternate teacher preparation program

Carolyn Rampey, Kansas Legislative Research Department, gave an overview of **SB 130**. She noted that the traditional path for teacher certification is graduation from a private or public school in Kansas. However, certification can be obtained through teacher alternative routes wherein a teacher preparation institution works with an individual who has a baccalaureate degree but lacks the education course work. This route generally involves the individual being employed by the school district and taking evening or summer courses to become eligible for licensure. She explained that **SB 130** would create an alternative route that does not involve a teacher preparation institution. Under the bill, a person who has a baccalaureate degree would serve an internship with an employing school district in an accredited school or in an accredited private school for two years and then become eligible to apply to the State Board of Education for licensure. The applicant would be required to have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university with a grade point average of 2.75. The person would have had to earn academic credit appropriate to meeting the subject and field requirements for the area in which the person plans to teach. The bill would not provide an alternative route for a person who wants to become a special education teacher. The applicant would have to have an offer of a teaching position at an accredited school and would have to have passed a test identified in the bill. The Board of Education would prescribe the internship. During the internship, the person would have to be supervised by the school building principal and a mentor teacher or teacher who has attained National Awards certification. The State Board would provide guidelines for supervision and the supervising team. The applicant would share equally with the school district the cost for the principal and mentor teacher. These fees would have to be approved by the State Board. Beginning in school year 2005-06, the State Board would be required to annually report to the Legislature how many people applied, how many were successful, the attrition rate, and the quality of the teachers who were granted licenses under the program. The Department of Education believes it would need \$10,000 in additional operating expenses to cover startup costs of the program. The Department does not know how many people might participate, therefore, could not project what the fee revenue would be.

Martha Gage, Director of Teacher Education and Licensure for the State Department of Education, explained that Kansas has an alternative certification program effective July 1, 2002, known as the Restricted License Program, and she outlined the requirements for restricted license applicants. She noted that the Department of Education received a federal grant of \$2.0 million for the implementation of the Restricted License Program over the next five years. Districts that can participate are “high need” districts throughout the state. She informed the Committee that Wichita State University has had an alternative route for the past ten years, and Pittsburg State University began an alternative route with the Kansas City, Kansas, school district two years ago. She explained that the Kansas restricted license meets the No Child Left Behind requirement that teachers must be “highly qualified.” She discussed the requirements for all Kansas teachers, whether they prepared by an alternate route or by traditional route. In conclusion, she called the Committee’s attention to attachments to her written testimony which included a list of all persons and institutions currently participating in Kansas’ Restricted License Program, a summary of candidates in high need districts and non-high need districts, an outline of the curriculum for on-line transition to teaching candidates, and a listing of the teachers on alternative licenses, their subject, and their district. (Attachment 1)

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:35 p.m. on March 2, 2005, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), testified in support of **SB 130**. He noted that KASB believes that local school boards should have the opportunity to employ individuals who demonstrate certain qualifications for teaching, even if they have not completed a traditional teacher education program. He emphasized that this does not mean reducing standards or accountability. He went on to discuss the provisions of the bill and the reasons KASB supports the concept of alternative licensure. He noted that schools currently must frequently use substitute teachers or seek licensure waivers to fill positions. He pointed out that the qualifications set forth in the bill are equal to or greater than the requirements of those individuals. He emphasized that **SB 130** was designed to help schools fill positions with aspiring teachers, to give those teachers a chance to demonstrate their competence through performance, and to give some individuals a path to a second career in education. (Attachment 2)

Peg Dunlap, Kansas National Education Association (KNEA), testified in strong opposition to **SB 130**. She noted that KNEA does not oppose alternate licensure, but it believes that the bill significantly lowers the standards for entry into the teaching profession. She pointed out that Kansas already has an alternate route, and that route has strong standards for entry into the teaching profession. In her opinion, supporters of the bill operate on the premise that one learns teaching “on the job.” She noted that no other profession addresses a potential shortage by eliminating preparation programs. She pointed out that, while 10 contact hours might provide time to cover policies and procedures, it takes a significantly greater amount of time to learn curriculum and instructional models. In her opinion, teachers licensed under the bill would not meet the “highly qualified” standard required by No Child Left Behind. She concluded that it is poor public policy to risk children’s education with untrained teachers. (Attachment 3)

Dr. Howard Smith, Executive Director Pittsburg State University, testified in opposition to **SB 130**. He stated that Pittsburg State feels that the bill provides less than adequate direction for the training and development of highly qualified teachers. He noted that he works with schools every day and regularly meets with teachers and administrators. Without exception, each one of them continues to talk about how much is crammed into a full school day. In his opinion, the bill creates an additional burden for the school. He complained that, with the bill, an untrained, unfamiliar person would have to be supervised by two mentors, both of whom already have full time positions. In addition, he noted that the bill does not include a funding mechanism; therefore, it is unknown whether a person who was selected could afford to pay. He went on to say that desire and commitment are two different things. He informed the Committee that the Pittsburg State program is on the fifth cohort of students now. He noted that the program is much more intensive in the first summer. Some persons drop out of the program at the end of the first summer, and the school is glad because, when they recognize that they should not be there, they should not be in the classroom any longer. (Attachment 4)

Dr. Smith introduced Earl Nissen, graduate of Pittsburg State’s first Alternate Licensure Route Cohort and a current practicing teacher in Kansas City, Kansas, public schools. Mr. Nissen explained that he teaches 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in a high needs district. He explained that he has a bachelor’s degree with Spanish and economics, and, at the end of his 30s, he decided the appropriate thing for him to do was to teach children. He decided to apply to the alternative service program, but he was required to do two full days of classroom observation before applying to the program. During the summer before the fall he started teaching, he taught summer school half days for eight weeks. During those eight weeks, four hours of each afternoon were devoted to masters level classes, which is an equivalent of almost nine credit hours. Having been an executive director of a not-for-profit agency, having worked for national marketing, and after having all the summer training, he still felt he was marginally qualified to deal with a room full of kids. From his experience, he believes that success in a classroom requires much more than 10 hours pre-service. He noted that one of the reasons he was successful was due to the internship program which offered him a great deal of cohort support and the backing of Pittsburg State for two years. Although he had a mentor, a vice principal, and a principal as back ups, he rarely saw them because they were very busy people. The master level classes he took included child psychology, literacy, strategies for master teachers, classroom management, and how to handle special needs kids. In conclusion he said, “It takes more than passion to go through an alternative certification program. It also takes more than 10 hours. I really feel that adults like me who have committed their lives after making a lot more money and after doing things that probably don’t have as much meaning now, would not have been as successful without the support of masters level program to see us through it. And, by successful, I mean I’m able to leave my classroom knowing that I got into those kids’ minds and helped them learn.”

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Lindsey Cegelis, Coordinator, Alternate Teacher Licensure Route, College of Education at Pittsburg State University, testified in opposition to **SB 130**. She noted that involvement with the alternative certification program has been a great success in the school district. The school has had an 85% retention rate over five years. She noted that Pittsburg State is very selective in choosing who they place in the program, and she was concerned that the bill did not include that type of process. She noted that candidates are observed during summer institute and two days in the classroom. In that way, the school can see how they will be with students, and the candidates can see if the program is something they want. Under the bill, applicants would never have had an opportunity to step foot in the classroom. She noted that alternative certification students need a great deal of time, assistance, and support to become successful. She concluded, "While there is a need for quantity, quality should still be the driving force."

Senator Schodorf called the Committee's attention to written testimony in opposition to **SB 130** submitted by Guy E. Mills, Ed.D., Dean of the College of Education and Technology at Fort Hays State University (Attachment 5) and Tes Mehring, Ph.D., Dean of the Teachers College at Emporia State University (Attachment 6).

With this, the hearing on **SB 130** was closed.

Senator Schodorf called the Committee's attention to the minutes of the February 14 meeting.

Senator Vratil moved to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2005, meeting, seconded by Senator Ostmeyer. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2005.