

First plan for public school financing intended to undermine public schools

Governor Brownback's allies in the House have drafted HB 2773^[1], the first school finance legislative proposal introduced in the aftermath of the Gannon decision. And it's a doozy! Intended not to just meet the equity ruling of the Supreme Court, HB 2773^[2] also begins the destruction of public education in Kansas as we know it.

The bill strings together a variety of anti-public schools legislation that has been defeated over the past two years either in committee or on the floor of the House and ties passage of those proposals to meeting the equity issue.

As drafted, the bill restores capital outlay state aid and supplemental general (LOB) state aid but it also:

- Enacts the corporate tuition tax credit bill that failed on the House floor last year and has not come out of committee this year,
- Enacts the charter school expansion bill that has failed to come out of either the House or Senate education committees over the past two years,
- Eliminates teacher training and licensure for science, technology, and mathematics teachers and for career and tech education teachers,
- Expands the so-called "innovative district" program from 10% of school districts to 20%. This despite the fact that the first round of applications has not produced any results or data demonstrating improved student performance.
- Allows principals to hand out pay bonuses willy-nilly to teachers they like.
- Reworks transportation weighting reducing funding for districts providing student transportation.

While the equity issue is addressed this bill is certain to force massive cuts to school funding thanks especially to the tax credit and charter school provisions.

The corporate tax credit bill allows corporations to recruit students to leave public schools to attend private schools by granting select students "scholarships" of up to \$8,000. In return, the corporation gets a tax credit of 70% of the scholarships. The state stands to lose \$10 million in tax revenue under this provision at a time when the Brownback tax cuts have already put the state budget in jeopardy.

The charter school proposal allows any currently operating private school to be designated as a "public charter school" and eligible for state funding. There is no requirement that these schools be accredited and they would be exempt from all education laws, oversight, and regulation. The resulting increase in students eligible to receive state aid would force the legislature to dramatically increase school funding or alternatively, to simply spread current funding out, reducing per pupil expenditures everywhere.

You put WHAT in there????!!

So we've just told you about the bill as it came out this morning. Upon arriving at the statehouse folks in the Governor's and Speaker's offices read the bill and were apparently taken aback. There are portions of the bill that were not okayed by either the Governor or the Speaker.

In particular, the massive unaccountable charter school expansion was noted. There has been some talk that the corporate tax credit piece will also be removed although that hasn't yet been confirmed.

The bill was referred to the Calendar and Printing Committee where it will likely die allowing the Appropriations Committee to start over.

That being said, the Committee is moving ahead with hearings on certain sections that were in the bill on Monday and Tuesday of next week.

On Monday, they will hear the sections on the policy statement that all funds count, transparency, litigation protection, innovative school expansion, teacher liability coverage, uniform financial accounting, the Rose standards, and the establishment of a study commission.

Tuesday will cover teacher merit pay, teacher licensure, bond and interest, school financing sources, transportation weighting, and at-risk.

Here's what you need to remember. Right now, things are quite fluid. We're in a world of speculation, rumors, hints, and allegations! And besides, everyone is now more concerned with basketball than bills.

We will keep you updated as we get more information. But, in the meantime...

TAKE ACTION NOW!

Your state representative needs to hear from you!

Use the KNEA legislative contact system by clicking [here](#)^[3].

Your representatives need to understand a few fundament points:

- HB 2773 is an inappropriate response to the Gannon decision and a serious attack on public schools in Kansas.
- The bill contains the full contents of other bills that have failed to win the approval of the education committees and one bill that has even been defeated on the floor of the House.
- The corporate tuition tax credit and charter school proposals in this bill will undermine the state's ability to raise revenue and divert public school funding into unaccredited and unaccountable private schools.
- In the long run, HB 2773 will compromise the education of all Kansas children. This bill must be defeated if Kansas is to maintain the quality public education system we have long enjoyed.
- Teacher training and licensure is critical to a quality public education. Don't approve any effort to lower standards for entry to our classrooms.
- Merit pay programs have failed everywhere they've been tried. Putting teachers in competition with each other for scarce resources does not encourage the kind of collaboration and cooperation needed to move all students to ever higher levels of achievement.
- The time for manipulations and games is over. It is long past time to restore

equity to the Kansas school finance system by simply funding capital outlay and LOB state aid as directed by the court. That equity must not be held hostage to ideas that have already been rejected by the education committees and the legislature.

· Do the responsible thing. Fund equity and stop the attacks on our schools.

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=8acb97fed96788dad413deaf6afa40cfd6ef6a4d7d1eea0eab499c0ffd753ed1de6ddb53f0bb6a8e>
2. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=8acb97fed96788dad413deaf6afa40cfd6ef6a4d7d1eea0eab499c0ffd753ed1de6ddb53f0bb6a8e>
3. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=8acb97fed96788dadde128f330b99dfe845a9c8ace8725fc489af0b9581478fb0b1e342450d4fd68>