

Massive school finance changes - for the better AND worse

At 11:00 pm last night the House Appropriations Committee passed out House Sub for SB 218, their dramatically amended school finance bill.

While they were working, the full Senate was in a long and contentious debate on Senate Sub for HB 2506, the Ways and Means Committee's school finance bill.

In the House

The House bill removes most of the weighting cuts that had been in the prior version of the bill. Specifically, they returned virtual weighting, transportation weighting, and high density at-risk weighting back to current law. So, no cuts to those weightings. The House plan still has a relatively small cut to regular at-risk weighting, restricting it to full time students under age 20 unless the student has an IEP. They also eliminate non-proficient at-risk weighting. Their only other reduction is one that removes virtual weighting from the calculation of the LOB.

The House also reversed the plan to use KPERS school funds to pay for the equity fix and restored to mental health services the proceeds from the sale of the Rainbow Mental Health facility in Wyandotte County.

Still in the bill are two policy provisions opposed by KNEA. The first is a change to licensure that allows persons to be hired for CTE and STEM positions without any requirement for pedagogical training. KNEA opposes lowering the standards for teacher licensure in Kansas. The other is an expansion of the experimental "innovative district" program. The expansion from 10% of districts to 20% is restricted to districts that have Title I priority or focus schools.

The full House is expected to debate Sub for HB 218 late today.

In the Senate

Over on the Senate floor, Senators proposed and mostly adopted amendment after amendment designed to undermine public education and demoralize teachers.

While the bill maintains the program cuts that came out of the Committee, it also

- Provides for a property tax credit for homeschoolers and private school students expected to cost the state as much as \$50 million or more.
- Provides for corporate tuition tax credits at a cost to the state of \$10 million.
- Eliminates due process protections for teachers making them at will employees who can be fired for any reason or no reason at all.
- Prohibits spending any money on activities related to the common core state standards in Kansas.

No wonder the Kansas City Star says, "Kansas Senate school bill deserves an 'F.'" Click [here](#) to read their editorial.^[1]

What happens next?

The Senate, on a vote of 23 to 17, approved Senate Sub for HB 2506. This bill now goes to the House where they can vote to concur in the changes to the House Bill or non-concur and form a conference committee.

The full House must now debate and vote on House Sub for SB 218. They will have the opportunity to amend the bill on the floor either by adding, deleting, or changing the bill. Once they have approved it, the bill would go to the Senate where they can vote to concur in the changes to the Senate Bill or non-concur and form a conference committee.

Assuming that both chambers non-concur and there is a conference committee assigned, the members of the conference committee will negotiate the look of the final bill. Conference committee members would most likely be Senators Masterson, Denning, and Kelly and Representatives Suellentrop, Kleeb, and Henry.

During all of this, it is possible for either chamber to simple vote to concur in the other chamber's bill which would then go to the Governor.

We are a long way from being done!

What can you do?

Get engaged in the process! Use your voice!

Continue watching for Under the Dome updates.

Check for action alerts and respond when asked.

Go ahead and contact your legislators bringing them your concerns and telling them to do the right thing and pass a clean school finance equity bill.

Go ahead and share with your legislators your feelings on the various aspects of the bill - tax credits, program cuts, teacher due process, and the common core standards.

The easiest way to contact your legislators and the Governor is through the KNEA "contact your legislator" web portal. Click here^[2].

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=c09d2f22ac1266b4b8a1f5c02d86edf67b91d183ea71afa100fa2948a042a9102b0662ced2787996>
2. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=c09d2f22ac1266b466a995dc8d32c3f7dbaf3c16b08d9902de183c45bea7f92a4d25a63526f8fd19>