

Reporter

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SCHOOLS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.

Schools for Quality Education Advocacy Statements

General Fund

SQE supports funding based upon the current law which calls for increases based upon the consumer price index urban (CPI-U) and distributed with no changes to the current funding formula.

(Using the most recent CPI-U, this would call for an increase of \$80 BSAP)

We, however realize that the current state of the economy may necessitate cuts to K-12 but would ask for minimal cuts in 2008-2009. In looking toward 2009-2010, we would propose the following:

1. Equity for all districts.
2. Not just taking action on cutting funding but also taking action to increase revenue at the state level rather than at the district level as part of the package.

Special Education Funding

SQE supports the current legislation and formula for calculating funding.

Consolidation and Consolidation Incentives

SQE strongly supports local control in any decision regarding consolidation. We oppose any legislation that overrides local control by means of limiting funding due to size or geographic location or that severely limits a quality education for all students.

The member districts offer the following change to the consolidation incentive legislation which was passed last year:

Despite enrollment size of either district involved in the consolidation effort, the budgets of the districts would be combined for three years. In years 4, 5, and 6, the new district that has been formed would have a budget that is reduced by no more than 25% of the difference of the combined budget of year 5.

KPERS

As of January 1, 2009, the rate a district is required to pay to hire a retired KPERS employee is 16.07%. Provided that an employee must resign and not work for 30 days, a district has tried to hire a qualified applicant

and been unable to do so, we propose that a teacher may be rehired by the same district while drawing retirement. We would like to further propose a ramping of this percent based upon the age of the employee. For example, if the employee is age 55 to 56, the district would pay the full amount. If the employee is age 57 to 58, the district would pay 14%. If the employee is 59 to 60, the district would pay 12%. If the employee is 61 to 62, the district would pay 10%. If the employee was 63 to 64, the district would pay 8%. If the employee was 65 to 66, the district would pay 6%. After the employee reaches 66 years of age, the district would no longer contribute to KPERS. In other words, as the retiree ages the penalty decreases.

Transportation

SQE supports school choice in that a student with permission of the receiving district may choose to attend a school in a district in which he/she does not reside. Transportation, however, can only be provided to that student by the receiving district from the district boundary. No transportation funding, however, would be provided.

Out of State Students

SQE supports the current legislation with no funding restrictions on out of state students attending school in a public school district in Kansas.

Alternative Energy

SQE would support or encourage legislation that would mandate that all alternative sources of energy 100 kilowatts or less installed by a school district must receive net metering from the utility company for any excess energy. SQE would further encourage the legislature to fund an incentive program to help finance purchase and installation of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, or geothermal.

State Aid Calculations for all funds other than General

For increased equity SQE would support median household income as the instrument to be used for determining state aid for Supplemental General, Capital Outlay and Bond and Interest.

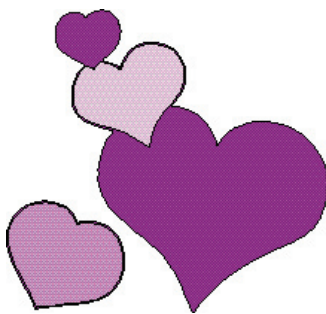
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President's Message

Never in many, many years of public education have we seen our children's education and our state's future placed in such jeopardy. If our state wants a productive work force, then we must continue with the fine education attained by Kansas students. The education received in Kansas public schools is at the very top of the list nationally and worldwide. The reasons to preserve our schools are too numerous to list in this limited space.

Our legislators are having a very difficult time facing this year's budget shortfall along with next year's shortfall. Although their job is difficult, we must make absolutely certain that our legislators weigh heavily the future of our children and this state. It is extremely important for everyone to contact and inform our legislators about the hardships our local districts will face with the proposed shortfall of revenue. Many board members have relied solely on SQE and our superintendents to lobby for our schools. Both have done an excellent job, but it is time for all board members to step up and contact their legislators regarding our difficult challenges with the current financial shortfall. Our children and their future must remain our primary focus. Let's all get on the bandwagon and support our students. Joined together we can make a very loud voice for our schools.

At our annual meeting in December we discussed the advocacy statements for this year. The board of directors proposed the positions to be of assistance to our member schools. The game plan has changed with the recent actions of our legislators, so the statements were reworked on Feb. 2 at our board of directors meeting. The following updated statements are included for your use, in hopes of presenting a strong, united voice for our rural and small schools.



*Darlene Jones
SQE President
USD #270- Plainville*

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Virtual Schools and Advanced Placement

SQE feels that no student should be denied access to quality programs based on the size of their district nor their location within the state. SQE would support the home district contracting with another district to provide a virtual online AP course with the funding flowing through the home district and paid for by the home district to the sending district. The cost of the course should be determined by the two consenting districts.

Preparation by Eighth Grade Critical to College/Career Readiness

Iowa City, IA—Students who aren't on track for college and career readiness by eighth grade are unlikely to attain that level of readiness by high school graduation, according to "The Forgotten Middle," a new research report by ACT, Inc.

The findings suggest the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a bigger impact on whether they are ready for college and career by the time they graduate than any single factor examined, including courses taken, grades earned in high school and demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and household income.

"Eighth grade is a critical defining point for students in the college and career planning process," said Cynthia B. Schmeiser, president and chief operating officer of ACT's Education Division. "If students are not on target for college and career readiness by the time they reach this point, the impact may be nearly irreversible."

"The implications of this research are clear," said Schmeiser. "If we want to improve college readiness among U.S. high school graduates, we need to intervene before students reach high school, in upper elementary and middle school. The findings impact not only how we prepare students leading up to high school but in what strategic ways we intervene with those who are behind academically in high school. Both elements are critical for ensuring that our high school grads are ready for college and career. Our students deserve it, and our nation demands it."

ACT's report suggests that the impact of this problem extends beyond college preparation to the U.S. workforce and the economy.

"The skills necessary for entry into the majority of the fastest growing jobs that require a high school diploma and offer a livable wage are comparable to those needed for success in first-year college courses," said Schmeiser. "In the context of our current economic challenges, we should be targeting eighth grade readiness as a key benchmark for our nation's ability to produce a workforce that is ready to succeed and compete in the global economy. The findings suggest we have a long way to go to ensure that outcome."

The findings indicate that eighth grade academic achievement is a better predictor of eventual college and career readiness than any other single factor studied, including background characteristics, courses taken in high school, grades earned in high school, or student testing behaviors.

Schmeiser pointed out that high school-level interventions such as taking more rigorous courses, studying harder, and earning higher grades in high school can help to improve students' level of readiness by the time they graduate. But, she cautioned, "Students who aren't on track for readiness by eighth grade will have

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New Study Released: The Quality of Out-of-School Time-Programs

The Wallace Foundation has just released one of the most comprehensive studies to date analyzing the costs, funding streams, and expenditures of a wide range of high quality out-of-school-time (OST) programs accompanied by a companion online calculator that generates cost estimates for specific programs. "We commissioned this research to fill a critical knowledge gap—accurate data about the full cost of providing high-quality out-of-school-time programs," said Christine DeVita, president of The Wallace Foundation. "This study provides the field, for the first time, with comparable cost data on a wide variety of high-quality program types. Especially at a time of great fiscal challenges, we hope it will allow state and city policymakers, funders, providers and their partners to make more informed decisions about how to sustain and support the kinds of high-quality programs that we know produce the greatest benefit for children."

The study and online cost calculator, along with many other research reports, is available without charge at The Wallace Foundation website at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>.

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a very difficult time making up all of the ground they have lost. Without sufficient preparation prior to high school, students can't maximize the benefits of academic enhancements while they are there."

The study also found that improving certain behaviors of middle school students can help increase their readiness for college and career by the time they graduate. Two academic behaviors were found to have the greatest impact on both eighth grade course failure and ninth grade GPA: academic discipline (e.g., good work and study habits) and orderly conduct (behaving appropriately in class).

The report also offers several recommendations to educators and policymakers on how to improve college and career readiness among high school graduates, including the following:

- Focus K-8 (kindergarten through eighth grade) standards on the knowledge and skills that are essential for college and career readiness, and make these non-negotiable for all students.
- Improve students' academic behaviors (homework compliance, attendance, and other aspects of academic discipline).
- Increase federal and state support for schools to implement intervention programs that help all students become ready for college and career.

A complete report "The Forgotten Middle" can be downloaded at <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ForgottenMiddle.pdf>

First Focus Releases Online Budget Resource

First Focus, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization, unveiled a dynamic new website that details the federal investment in every program benefitting children. The interactive new site, www.childrensbudget.org, provides customizable information on the more than 180 federally funded children's programs.

The website was made possible with the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and is a follow up to the highly successful First Focus book, *Children's Budget 2008*. Released last spring, the book reveals that over the past five years only one penny of every new, real non-defense dollar spent by the federal government goes to children.

"The federal budget is a reflection of our national priorities. Politicians of all political affiliations claim to put kids first. Yet this year, the federal government will spend less than 10% of its budget on programs addressing the needs of American young people," said Bruce Lesley, President of First Focus. "We have created this website to highlight this startling fact, providing policymakers and advocates with the information they need to improve investments in children's programs."

The user-friendly, searchable database makes available information on children's programs funded by the federal government, from child health and education to child welfare and juvenile justice, and allows users to:

- Search for data on one or more of the 180 federally supported programs that aim to help our nation's children.
- Discover annual funding information, program overviews, and dynamic graphs that visually display how funding has changed over time.
- Limit your search by funding type, policy area, amount of funding, federal department and agency, and change in funding over time.
- View funding data in the aggregate. Programs are associated with one of eight broad categories, or you may create your own category by grouping individual programs of interest.
- Compare one category of funding to another, or to the entire federal budget, the federal budget without the defense programs, or the total of all programs that benefit children.

Visit the website at: www.childrensbudget.org



Mark Your Calendar

October 9-11, 2009
101st Annual NREA Convention
and Rural Research Symposium
Cincinnati, Ohio
Contact: 765-494-0086



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