



# Reporter

Volume 21, Number 1

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## SCHOOLS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.

### Schools for Quality Education 2005 Essay Contest

#### "A Strong Nation Needs Strong Rural Schools"

<b>1st Place</b>	\$200.00 Scholarship Honorary Plaque
<b>2nd Place</b>	\$100.00 Scholarship Honorary Plaque
<b>3rd Place</b>	\$50.00 Scholarship Honorary Plaque

All Essays Submitted to SQE are given a Certificate of Award

**Division I** - 10th through 12th grades

**Division II** - 7th through 9th grades

#### Contest Notes — Val DeFever, Chair

Schools for Quality Education sponsors an essay contest each year to call attention to the advantages and opportunities that our small, rural schools offer the children of Kansas. Please consider using this year's theme as a writing exercise for your students to share ideas and feelings about their education. They can also draw on the success stories of other rural Kansans. This year's theme is "A Strong Nation Needs Strong Rural Schools."

I hope this theme helps our children realize and appreciate their rural roots. This could be a great opportunity to feature a number of outstanding Kansans who came from all parts of our state. I can see a kick-off of the theme, using weight lifting or reading Paul Bunyan or tales of Amelia Earhart. Please feel free to use your imagination to stress the strengths we find or gain in rural America. Students may want to consider:

- What aspects of their education makes them stronger?
- How can this affect our state and our nation?
- Specifically, what happens in your school that could have a long-range affect upon our country?
- What opportunities does a rural school provide its students that make them better citizens of our state and nation? (think in terms of building character, integrity and personal abilities)
- Who can you think of that has made a big difference in our state and/or our country who came from a rural education setting?

- Your essay can be about you or another person or it can just be written in a general sense.
- Use your imagination and creativity, make a stirring and emotional case for our small, rural schools.

#### Contest Rules

1. Any student currently enrolled in a SQE member district school, in grades 7-12, is eligible to submit an essay. Each attendance center in a district may submit a maximum of five (5) essays per grade level. (It is assumed that if an attendance center has more than five essays completed by students at any grade level, the attendance center will screen the essays and submit the top 5 essays for that grade level.)
2. Division I essays (grades 10-12) must be typewritten and limited to 500 words. Division II essays (grades 7-9) may be typewritten or submitted in ink and limited to 250 words.
3. Essays will be judged for originality and development of the topic. Awards will be presented at the Rural and Small School Conference on Sunday, October 23, 2005.
4. Your NAME, FULL ADDRESS, and GRADE LEVEL must be submitted with your essay. The NAME and LOCATION of your SCHOOL must be included. Entries without complete information will be disqualified.
5. It should be understood that students who enter do so as individuals and are not officially representing the school.
6. There are no entry blanks. Send completed essays directly to Val DeFever.
7. The original copy of the essay must be submitted to Val DeFever, PO Box 644, Independence, KS 67301. The essays must be postmarked on or before **October 1, 2005**. The original copy will become property of Schools for Quality Education, Inc. and will not be returned to the participant. Call with questions: 620-870-9698 (cell) or 620-331-3363 (home).



## Public Relations Message



### Post Audit—Cost Analysis What It Costs to Educate Children in Kansas

The 2005 legislative session saw more movement on funding education than has existed in a number of years. It was a difficult general session and an even more difficult special session. The district and then the supreme court pointed to the legislatures' Augenblick & Myers Study to rule on the Schools for Fair Funding lawsuit — to identify what it actually costs to educate children in our state. This was a big bone of contention for lawmakers who never agreed with Augenblick & Myers and; therefore, did not act on it. No one was surprised when the Post Audit Department was instructed to do a cost analysis to help policymakers determine how much should be dedicated to education. This request created further uncertainty. Was the audit to consider only state statutes, which lawmakers passed, or should it also consider regulations established by the State Board of Education? More specifically should it be based only on inputs or look at the outcomes that the state board and No Child Left Behind pointed to as the real job of educating children. The final decision was that the post audit study should encompass both inputs and outcomes. This meant that two studies would be conducted simultaneously. One would be very focused on actual costs while the other examined a host of variables of what was needed to accomplish the task.

Today the Kansas Department of Post Audits' team, headed by Barb Hinton, is busy visiting with experts across the nation, interviewing administrators across the state, and documenting cost factors and how well Kansas kids are doing on our state assessments. They are conducting surveys, visiting school districts and reading studies in an effort to understand what is being done in all size schools to help children achieve levels of proficiency in math and reading. As they delve into data already collected, they look at spending per pupil and student performance. They also look at the enrollment, wealth, density, and salary levels of the individual districts. Student characteristics such as poverty and the number of special needs students are considered.

As the post audit team immerses themselves in education, they are gaining a better understanding of why education is such a complex animal. Hinton has been quick to admit that there are no easy answers. In a recent visit she noted that how one district provided curriculum, services and mandated programs

might be highly successful in one district and get very different results in another. Nonetheless, her department will strive to consider all factors and identify necessary expenditures for operating schools of all sizes and try to determine what are reasonable costs.

Over one-fourth of our school districts statewide will be surveyed to gather the necessary data. Their costs for general education, as well as special needs areas, such as special education, bilingual and at-risk will be examined. Both the costs and their outcomes will be considered. With 205 of the 300 school districts falling in the low enrollment category, Hinton wants to be sure she understands small school issues. A proportionate number of schools being surveyed and interviewed are scheduled to be low enrollment schools.

The task at hand is at times overwhelming to those of us who spend our days in education. The input-based approach is much narrower than the outcomes-based approach. Costs cannot be limited to what is mandated by state statute (input based) if we are to look at the outcomes-based approach, as it is often the non-mandated programs like quality after-school programs and alternative schools that account for success for many at-risk children. We know it can also be low student-teacher ratios. Although we must have both inputs and outcomes to know that Kansas students are truly learning, there is a likelihood that we will see each house focusing on one or the other of the studies as they move forward in the 2006 session. Post Audit will present a progress report at the first meeting of the leadership of the house and senate education committee on August 23.

*Val DeFever*  
Public Relations Representative

### **SQE Annual Meeting and Banquet**

**October 23, 2005  
Holiday Inn Holidome  
530 Richards Road  
Manhattan, KS**

(Detailed meeting and banquet information will be sent to SQE member districts. For reservations and additional information, call 785-532-5886.)



# Letter from the President



## Final Reflections of a Four-term BOE Member

At the end of the 1980's Mrs. Getty, a really superb first grade teacher, asked me to run for the school board. So I did. I wasn't mad at anyone nor did I have anything in particular that I wanted to see changed. In fact, when we moved to USD #288 in 1980 I was tickled pink when I found out they had a full time elementary music teacher and full time art teacher; plus the school just plain looked great. Our superintendent eventually moved Mrs. Getty to the 5th grade as punishment because she was pretty outspoken. I also had to defend her a few times and teach a BOE member what the term insubordination meant. She then sent me a note that said, "When they give you a Lemon, make Lemonade!" The next year one of our 4-H moms said this is the first year her 5th grade son has enjoyed school. He is now a college graduate! And for 10 years I sat across the table from Mrs. Getty during teacher negotiations, which usually wasn't that bad. To this day, I'm always pleased when a USD #288 graduate finishes college or vocational school.

I've seen both feast and famine in the financial area at USD #288. Back in 1993 we had trouble spending everything we got from the state. We'd have really built our Capital Outlay fund if we hadn't had state rules limiting the transfers. We did a one million dollar lease purchase for an addition and cafeteria expansion that we paid off in four years plus a \$400,000 down payment. Then the last six years we have had a virtually level budget and made ends meet by attrition and using the capitol outlay fund as a piggy bank. But QPA and NCLB has forced us to refill some positions such as an elementary librarian that we had cut. Requirements went up and the finances were basically static. The federal dollars can almost be hard to spend because none of them help the normal kids. Because we have one attendance center our district is pretty efficient; this leads to trouble during negotiations when the union tries to negotiate the budget. The unused LOB authority looks like a big piece of candy to the Uniserve negotiator; I'm betting on impasse this year. I believe the patrons deserve the benefit of a relatively low mill levy since they bit the bullet 40 years ago and consolidated four small and closely situated districts; our friends in sparsely populated areas of Kansas don't have that same option. We have some rural kids who spend 45 minutes on the bus; plenty long for elementary kids when added to the seven hour school day. I believe our first priority is to think about kids; it's a bonus if we can give the district taxpayer a good deal. I am willing to be known as someone who hugs his kids harder than I do my wallet.

In the last ten years many of our legislators and even the local papers kept saying how horrible our schools were. Then the data got published and the whole state

knows (even if some people won't acknowledge the facts) our public schools do a very good job. So then they tried to prove we were too expensive; that hasn't fared too well as the Augenblick & Myers study showed. I don't have a problem discussing school finance, but you have to first start with firm definitions of what we're calling things like school lunches, books and computers, counselors and gymnasiums. None of these things seems like administration to me; but they seem to be in that category for some people. SQE needs to insure that this definition of terms occurs. I think our Amicus Brief group will try to accomplish that and more. The small and rural schools have to tell our own story.

There is one trend that I have observed the last two terms on the BOE. When we discipline a kid these days the parent wants the BOE to beat up on the teacher or administrator. It didn't seem to be that way when I first got on the board. In this day when we want ever-higher performance from our students, we can't afford to have one of the key ingredients (real parenting) missing from the school and home team. I believe any trend to insure parent accountability for sending a respectful and ready to learn student to the school would be a move in the right direction. My mother always said, "Those who cannot hear must feel." She packed a pretty good hair brush and didn't raise any trash. I also happen to feel that the home schoolers should also do the same high stakes testing that is supposed to be good for the public schools. To the legislators on the topic of home schoolers performance I say give me hard data, not a few shining examples.

I have enjoyed the class people I've met while attending SQE functions and other education related seminars. I think our schools still teach patriotism and respect the democratic processes by which this country is generally run (maybe that's irrational idealism on my part). But freedom is never free. By and large the terrorists who blow themselves up are an uneducated lot; take away the oil and much of the Middle East couldn't even feed itself. A good education is the only inheritance I can give my kids so that they can compete in an increasingly hostile job market. One of my personal visions is not an America that resembles a third world nation with a few rich and many poor. Education is the one thing that will give the common man's children a chance to compete; it should be for all kids, not just those in five wealthier counties or in a district which happens to have a power plant or a large slaughterhouse.

It has been my privilege to serve USD #288 for 14 plus years and SQE as a Director. I will miss the educators that I have worked with for these last years. Keep up the good work. See you this fall for one last time.

Lester P. Wuertz, SQE President  
USD #288- Central Heights  
Richmond, KS

## Calendar

### 27th Annual Rural and Small Schools Conference

October 23-24, 2005  
Sponsored by the Center for Rural Education & Small Schools  
Manhattan, Kansas  
Program and Registration information at <http://coe.ksu.edu/cress/>

### 97th Annual NREA Convention

November 5-9, 2005  
Tucson, Arizona  
Program and Registration information at [www.nrea.net](http://www.nrea.net)

## SQE Executive Board

President, Lester Wuertz  
USD #288 — Central Heights  
785-835-6298

Sec./Treas., Deanne Alexander  
USD #288 — Central Heights  
785-869-3455

President-Elect, Glennys Doane  
USD #272 — Waconda  
785-781-4328

Past Pres., Doug Malay  
USD #208 — WaKeeney  
785-743-2145

Region #1, Robert Scheib  
USD #208 — WaKeeney  
785-743-2145

Region #2, Gena Stanley  
USD #292 — Wheatland  
785-673-4365

Region #3, Larry Geil  
New Cambria, KS  
785-799-5073

Region #4, Jerry Cullen  
USD #220 — Ashland  
620-635-2220

Region #5, Paul Kendall  
USD #424 — Mullinville  
620-548-2521

Region #6, Thomas Alstrom  
USD #398 — Peabody-Burns  
620-983-2198

Public Relations, Val DeFever

Exec. Sec., Barbara Havlicek  
785-532-5886

Contact: 785-532-5886 or go to our website at <http://coe.ksu.edu/sqe/>



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