



January 23, 2012

Chairman Aurand and Members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about recent innovations in our curriculum. We have recently taken steps to add robotics to the class offerings now available to students in Topeka Public Schools. The class meets two hours each day and is available to students from other high schools in the district. An adult education course is also available. The instructor is Bruce Babin, a former mechanical engineering professor at Kansas State University.

The robotics program is the result of a partnership between Topeka Public Schools, Go Topeka's Entrepreneurial and Minority Business Development Plan and Washburn Institute of Technology. High school students who complete the robotics class will be eligible to receive a certification with the job ready title of technician, operator, or basic programmer.

Yaskawa Motoman Robotics, one of the largest robotic companies in the world, is providing training for the program. Instructor Bruce Babin has already received training from Motoman Robotics. He has provided some basic programming with the kids to get them familiar with the robot, and they have now begun working with the robotics. We also have heard from people in California and the East Coast that want to get involved. It is a phenomenal experience for USD 501 and our students.

With this particular course, we have an opportunity to support what is happening through our local Chamber of Commerce in recruiting outside businesses, while also providing our student and adult population with job ready skills. Hallmark Cards already uses robotics in its Topeka facility and Frito Lay expects to use robotics in the near future.

Also, presenting today will be Topeka High School representatives. They will be sharing the vision for the new International Studies Program, which includes Chinese.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our innovations in robotics with the committee.

Dr. Julie Ford
Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools