

House Education Committee
Written Testimony on Innovation and Excellence in Kansas' schools

Washburn Tech, Seaman Public Schools Home Construction Project
Mike Mathes, Superintendent
Seaman USD 345

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In 2009, Seaman USD 345 Schools announced a lease arrangement of a 6.7-acre vacant tract of land to Washburn Tech (formerly Kaw Area Technical School). The \$1 per year lease over 20 years is for land that will be used for construction of affordable single-family homes by Washburn Tech construction program students. The lease arrangement will allow students from several Washburn Tech career training programs including Building Technology, Commercial and Heavy Construction, Commercial Construction, Electricity, Heating and Air, and Cabinet/Mill an additional real life, hands-on opportunity to practice their skills. Any land remaining undeveloped after 20 years would return to the ownership of USD 345.

Students will be involved in the construction project from the beginning. The students will have direct experience with grading and preparing each home site for building, constructing driveways and basements, building the home frame, interior walls and roof, installing the plumbing and electrical systems, constructing the cabinets and other millwork, as well as other components of home building.

The homes to be constructed will be reasonably priced, single story with three bedrooms, garage, and a basement. Energy efficient features, green building materials and technology will be incorporated into the design and construction of each home. The 6.7-acre tract will support the construction of 14 to 20 homes and is located across from the former Seaman East Indianola Grade School on Northwest Fillmore Street in north Topeka.

This a great opportunity to provide students real life experience in developing a sub-division from the very beginning. It will also be a great addition to the neighborhood. The district will see financial benefits as each house is sold and added to the property tax rolls as well as the possibility of providing additional students to our schools.

Washburn Tech appreciated receiving the land; the initiative has fostered an even closer partnership between the Seaman School district and Washburn Tech. As part of the 17 school district consortium, Seaman continues to provide a great deal of support to Washburn Tech as an educational partner. It is a wonderful opportunity for students to be deeply involved in the building process from beginning to end and acquire real-world experience in the career field they have chosen.

Washburn Tech is a 2-year institution where students can obtain technical skills so they can go out and get a job. Approximately 90 percent of the institution's graduates go either into jobs related to their training, into the military, or go on to further their education.

After just one or two years of training, graduates of Washburn Tech programs have obtained employment earning up to \$ 21.68 per hour. The Topeka institution offers 24 career-training programs in the Construction, Health Care, Human Services, Technology, and Transportation career fields. Most of Washburn Tech's career training programs carry around 48 credits. In addition, short-term continuing

education and computer classes are also offered. Approximately 40 Seaman students are enrolled each year at Washburn Tech. They spend the first 3 hours of the day at Seaman and then the remainder of the day at the technical school.