



Making public schools great for every child

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House Education Budget Committee
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Madame Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you our thoughts on HB 2397.

We see this bill as an attempt to limit or reduce resources to public schools and, in that attempt, reducing opportunities for Kansas students and ignoring the constitutional requirement that the "Legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools..."

The bill cites four statutes in determining just what the state's responsibility is when it comes to funding public schools:

72-1101. Required subjects in elementary schools. Every accredited elementary school shall teach reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, spelling, English grammar and composition, history of the United States and of the state of Kansas, civil government and the duties of citizenship, health and hygiene, **together with such other subjects as the state board may determine.** The state board shall be responsible for the selection of subject matter within the several fields of instruction and for its organization into courses of study and instruction for the guidance of teachers, principals and superintendents.

72-1103. Required courses of instruction; graduation requirements. All accredited schools, public, private or parochial, shall provide and give a complete course of instruction to all pupils, in civil government, and United States history, and in patriotism and the duties of a citizen, suitable to the elementary grades; in addition thereto, all accredited high schools, public, private or parochial, shall give a course of instruction concerning the government and institutions of the United States, and particularly of the constitution of the United States; and no student who has not taken and satisfactorily passed such course shall be certified as having completed the course requirements necessary for graduation from high school.

72-1117. Kansas history and government, required course; duties of state board. (a) The state board of education shall provide for a course of instruction in Kansas history and government, which shall be required for all students graduating from an accredited high school in this state.

(b) The state board of education shall prescribe the school year, not later than the 1990-91 school year, in which the requirement of subsection (a) shall become applicable and may provide for such waivers from the requirement as the board deems appropriate.

76-717.¹ Admission of students. (a) The board of regents may adopt rules and regulations for the admission of students at the state educational institutions. Except as provided by subsection (f), the rules and regulations shall include the following:

(b) **The board of regents may prescribe a precollege curriculum which includes, but need not be limited to, four units of English, three units of mathematics, three units of social studies and three units of natural science.**

What these three statutes do not specifically list includes physical education, fine arts, and foreign languages. One unit of physical education and one unit of fine arts are required by the state board for graduation so one assumes that those two units would be covered under the highlighted language in 72-1101.

The state board requires that schools *offer* foreign language instruction but there is no requirement for any student to study a foreign language. One wonders whether or not foreign languages would be caught in this bill. The Regents curriculum makes mention only of mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, and English/language arts.

¹ This is a lengthy statute dealing mostly with admission requirements. The only mention of required courses is in the section cited (highlighted); the KBOR regulations reflect the highlighted language.

This bill also begs the question of how much of anything should be funded by the state. For example, since the state board and the Board of Regents both only *require* three years of mathematics, science and social studies, should the state pay for a fourth year? And since the state board only requires one unit of fine arts and a typical Kansas high school could fulfill this requirement with the offering of one art appreciation class required of every student, would the offering of band, orchestra, choir, drama, visual arts, or art history be considered as “extras” for which the state has no obligation?

But finally, and perhaps most importantly, this bill assumes that Kansans are only interested in **inputs** when it comes to our children’s education. Did each child take each required course because that is the only interest of the state? We would suggest that what Kansans are really interested in are the **outcomes** of the education system. We base our accreditation system on outcomes, not inputs. If the state’s interest is only in providing specific courses, why do we have state assessments and why do we require improvement on state assessments of our schools?

It is not enough to provide for the inputs – as important as they are – and then ignore the ability of the schools to provide for constant improvement in the outcomes.

We urge you to reject House Bill 2397.