

Senate Education Committee
On
Senate Bill 103
submitted by
Roger W. (Bill) Lowry, Superintendent, Hoisington USD #431, a
member of Schools for Quality Education

As this committee reviews SB 103, I would like to submit my concerns in changing the definition of "At-Risk" students from those on free lunches to only students whom are on academic warning after taking State assessments in grades 4 through 12.

I am opposed to the definition change of "At-Risk" students due to the fact all research shows children in poverty have the highest risk of failing academically and socially. If we are unable to reach out and teach children in poverty and raise their educational level and give them tools to succeed, it is most likely the State will be paying to incarcerate them.

From my calculations on SB 103, I anticipate a reduction in at-risk funds. The at-risk funds may be the most critical funds in my budget. First, these funds pay for the other half of teachers that teach kindergarten. All day Kindergarten is one of the most important factors for children to achieve appropriate grade level reading at the most economical cost. USD #431 believes that all day Kindergarten and 3 year old and 4 year preschool for **ALL** students is the solution for reading at grade level and is more economical then remediation later in school. Reduction in at-risk funds would endanger this program.

USD #431 has implemented MTSS to improve and promote reading. We started this strategy because it is research based to help students read, not because our District is low performing. We are actually a very high performing school. On the last DIBELS benchmark probe on 12-11-2013, out of 268 Kindergarten through fourth grade students only 35 tested below grade level, or 13%. Of those students 22 had not attended our 3 year old and 4 year old preschool and all day kindergarten or 63% of those not at reading level. Again, our MTSS program would be affected if at-risk funds were reduced.

I would ask that you do not pass SB 103 as it will have a negative effect on children in poverty and reduce the programs that have been implemented to help all children.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Bill Lowry