

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 2000 in Room 423S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senators Bleeker, Hensley and Emert - Excused

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman, Revisor
Ben Barrett, Legislative Service
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Dr. Connie Briggs, Ph.D, Director, Kansas Regional Reading Recovery Center, Jones Institute for Educational Excellence
Emporia State University
Bill Marshall, State Program Director, HOSTS
Christi Whitter, Oskaloosa, Kansas

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and stated in Kansas there are two exemplary structured mentoring programs. The reading programs that are supported at the state level are probably some of the most important programs funded as far as education is concerned. It was disturbing to her to see the governor cut the structured mentoring reading programs. She wants the committee to be aware of the programs and the successes that these programs achieve. She introduced Dr. Connie Briggs, Emporia, to tell what is happening with the reading program with which she is involved.

Dr. Briggs began with the history of the program that was begun by Dr. Marie Clay in the late 1970s. Dr. Clay went into the classroom to see how the children obtained literacy. She designed her own instruments to document the progress of children. She saw what the high achieving children were doing, as well as what the low achieving children needed to do to become high achieving children. She wanted to see what would happen with a more diverse population so she did a second year of going into the classroom. A group of six classroom teachers worked hard for two years to come up with procedures. After the end of two years a pilot study was done with surprising results. The children were able to come up quickly in an average group of their peers. A longitudinal study was done and found that those gains were sustained.

The program was adopted nationally in New Zealand with wonderful results. It was brought to the United States in 1985 by Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education. It has been very successful across cultures and is a research based program. It is Dr. Briggs' belief that it is the most well researched, documented program that can be found. The program has been evaluated in terms of its relationship to other intervention programs in cost effectiveness. Teachers keep detailed daily records of a child's progress. These records serve to impact the next lesson. Data from every child who enters the program is sent to a national data bank at Ohio State. At the end of the year the data is analyzed and sent back to the state, district and classroom. Eighty-one percent of the children who successfully complete the program are discontinued. This sounds like a negative term, but it is a positive term meaning that they are reading at the average span of their peers. The aim of reading recovery is to eliminate literacy difficulties for the lowest achievers. An assessment called the observation survey is done on the lowest group of students and are ranked by the classroom teacher. The scores are ranked. As long as a child does not have an IEP in another literacy intervention, they are taken in reading recovery. They are brought to an average band of performance in a short period of time, within 12 to 20 weeks. The program is about prevention. It provides intervention at a critical time before the cycle of failure begins. A typical daily lesson includes two or more familiar books, rereading yesterday's new book and taking a running record, letter identification, writing a story and hearing and recording sounds in words, a cut-up story to be arranged and a new book introduced and attempted. (Attachment 1)

Dr. Briggs continued through the attachment that included teacher training. The challenge is to focus on prevention and ensure that all children have a chance to gain literacy skills.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 423S Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 20, 2000.

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Briggs for appearing and stated another successful program that is being implemented throughout school districts is the HOSTS program, Helping One Student to Succeed. She called on Bill Marshall, State Program Director, HOSTS program, to begin his talk.

Mr. Marshall referred to the information he had distributed to the committee (attachment 2 on file in Chairperson's office) and stated that he would talk about the research that has been done on the value of mentoring, itself, and try to separate mentoring as defined from structured academic mentoring. There are similarities to what was presented in reading recovery and what HOSTS provides the schools they are currently working with in Kansas and throughout the country.

A short history of the beginning of HOSTS was provided by Mr. Marshall. Because a teacher helped a highschool dropout with mentoring, that student succeeded and went on to become the founder of the HOSTS mentoring program.

Mr. Marshall continued by stating that one of the strengths of HOSTS over the last few years has been the business of corporate partnerships it has been able to develop across the country. Some of the most recent partnerships are Kellogg Corporation, USA Today, and SRA/McGraw-Hill. All of these corporations would like to have their employees volunteer in public schools, but unless there is a structure they are hesitant to do so. As they have researched HOSTS programs throughout the country, the corporations feel confident that when their people do go into the schools they will be trained. There will be a certified teacher who will be working with them to see that they are able to deliver the instruction to students and there will be results presented to them to see the gains and the proof of their employees labor.

Several articles in the attachment distributed to the committee were referred to by Mr. Marshall, particularly testimony by Dr. Thomas P. Jandris, Education Commission of the States, who in his article differentiates between mentoring and structured academic mentoring. An academic mentoring program, although it brings to the table a significant other to help, encourage, and motivate, also has the academic component. He continued through with articles for the committee to read at a later date.

Mr. Marshall stated HOSTS was founded by Bill Gibbons in the early 1970s, a highschool dropout. His beliefs were that regardless of what educational organization one is talking about in the country, there is one commonality and that is academics. Regardless of everything else the schools are asked to do for their children, they are still held accountable for the academic progress of students. Communities want to help the children and will respond if they are provided with training and something to do. What is needed is to put all the parts together and implementing it. Students can be provided instruction based on their needs and building on their strengths. They need activities to conceptualize with one-to-one instruction for students. HOSTS provides five different programs for school, reading readiness in English, reading readiness in Spanish, language arts English, language arts Spanish and Math. There is also a school-wide application where all teachers can be trained in how to use the system and strategies for within the classroom.

In closing, Mr. Marshall referred to a letter from the Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc. (CASE), where it states that the HOSTS program has had a significant impact on lowering the number of learning deficient children. What Mr. Marshall had done as principal of a school was to try to work the children in need into the HOSTS program prior to a teacher referring them to special education and also to work with the kids in special ed to try to get them out of special education. This was able to be accomplished in a two-year period. In the two years prior to Mr. Marshall joining the HOSTS corporation, they were able to reduce their special education population about 63%. Many of the children were not learning disabled, but language delayed. If these children could be provided with the instruction that was appropriate that was targeted specifically to them and put a significant other in the form of a mentor to encourage and motivate, we were able to keep them out of special education or move them back into the mainstream. The CASE letter is an endorsement of HOSTS; in their research they found the same thing. He stated what HOSTS asks the schools to do is to let key people know how the program is doing in a particular school.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Costs savings with the Reading Recovery Program and the HOSTS program was discussed. It was a general consensus that when a child has five or six teachers for special education, a viable alternative that would help children and cut cost figures would help everyone.

Christie Witter, Oskaloosa, spoke of the HOSTS program in her school. The school started the HOSTS program after receiving instruction and a training grant. At that time they had a half-time teacher getting the program up and running. They serve 50 student in the first through fifth grade. She stated that they have seen a decrease in the number of students classified as special education students. The Oskaloosa school does have a declining enrollment. The academic performance is significantly below the standard of excellence, however they are seeing some growth and improvement.

Ms. Witter went on to detail how they had seen dramatic improvement with the HOSTS program and related how the parents got involved. She stated that most parents work in Topeka or Kansas City and had some skepticism at first, but have seen the good results. The retirement community has become involved with something they feel like they can feel good about. Thirty minutes spent with mentoring a student has a positive impact.

One of the committee stated that from what he had heard from both Reading Recovery and HOSTS, if special education students can be cut as much as 50%, this is something that must be pursued.

The Chairperson thanked the conferees and adjourned the meeting.