

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 18, 1999
Roughrider Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Layton Freborg, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Senators Layton Freborg, Dwight C. Cook, Jerome Kelsh, Rolland W. Redlin; Representatives James Boehm, Thomas T. Brusegaard, Lois Delmore, Rachael Disrud, David Drovdal, Howard Grumbo, C. B. Haas, Lyle Hanson, Dennis E. Johnson, RaeAnn G. Kelsch, Bob Stefonowicz, Laurel Thoreson

Members absent: Representatives Jack Dalrymple, Kathy Hawken, Deb Lundgren, Ralph Metcalf, Robert E. Nowatzki

Others present: See Appendix A

It was moved by Representative Boehm, seconded by Representative Kelsch, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

At the request of Chairman Freborg, Dr. Mary Harris, Dean, College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, presented testimony regarding teacher training programs.

Dr. Harris said there are five policies that promote teacher quality in North Dakota:

1. The requirement that teachers teach in the area in which they have a major or a minor.
2. The use of national standards for teacher education program accreditation. She said the six institutions that are part of the North Dakota University System are accredited by the Education Standards and Practices Board and by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.
3. The middle-level endorsement. She said this is voluntary, but for those who have it, it ensures they have given thought to the needs of that particular age group.
4. The elimination of minor equivalents.
5. Assuring that there are licensed teachers in every classroom.

Dr. Harris distributed a document showing the number of higher education institutions that prepare teachers in 1999. The document is attached as Appendix B. She said both public and private institutions prepare teachers. She said almost half of all teachers are prepared at institutions having a total of more than 10,000 students. She said about one-third

of North Dakota teachers come from out-of-state institutions.

Dr. Harris said the single biggest factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher. She said the essential components of a strong, effective teacher are a command of the subject, adequate preparation, and effective pedagogy. She said the essential components of a strong, effective teacher training program are similarity of vision between the administration and the faculty, a rigorous core curriculum, and the extensive use of problem-based teaching methods. She said the quality of students entering the secondary teaching track is comparable with that of students entering other fields. She said that is not necessarily true of students entering elementary education.

Dr. Harris said the federal class size reduction act is causing a teacher shortage. She said we are already having trouble attracting teachers to the highest poverty areas of our state. She said we are having difficulty attracting teachers to the areas of mathematics, science, and music. She said if we could retain some of the teachers we already have, we would be a long way toward alleviating our teacher shortage.

Dr. Harris said a teacher education program includes general education requirements, an academic major, a professional core, and field experiences that include student teaching. She said in this state candidates enroll in four-year programs and complete a baccalaureate degree. She said there are other patterns by which one can become a teacher. She said some states have five-year programs that often include some master's level work. She said in California teacher licensure is earned in the fifth year of the program. She said almost half of the states require a master's degree for full licensure. She said North Dakota will probably have to look at some licensure alternatives for people who are at middle or advanced levels in their professional careers. She said we could give those people incentives to consider a switch to teaching. She said an ongoing issue in this state is teacher supply and demand. She said the teacher preparation colleges have to figure out what the market will accept in terms of preparation time.

Dr. Harris said the program at the University of North Dakota (UND) requires a 16-week student teaching component. She said often teachers are given two placements in different grade levels. She said the minimum that North Dakota requires is a 10-week student teaching component.

Dr. Harris said the size of the teacher education programs is fairly similar from institution to institution. However, she said, the mission of the schools is different.

Dr. Harris said there is discussion about the merits of having a student's field experience in one place as opposed to having it in several schools.

Dr. Harris said a professional development school is like the teaching hospital of a medical school. She said to date UND is the only institution that has professional development schools. She said the UND professional development schools are located at two individual schools. She said our institutions also require students to obtain field experience prior to undertaking their student teaching assignments. She said the field experiences help students see the practical classroom application of what they are learning.

Dr. Harris said the average age of people moving into teacher education is 22.4 years. She said the average age of people entering the master's program is 30.2 years. She said many of these people are coming back to teaching as a second career.

Dr. Harris distributed a document entitled *Thinking K-16*. The document is on file in the Legislative Council office. She said on page 20 of the document, there is a survey of the states that are using content knowledge examinations for teacher licensure. She said seven states do not now require a standardized test for teacher licensure. She said North Dakota has chosen to require majors instead. She said the tests are basic tests of one's reading, writing, and mathematics ability. She said North Dakota institutions use the preprofessional skills test as an admission test. She said UND does not use this test because it is committed to finding alternatives to standardized testing. She said the preprofessional skills test is used in Minnesota for licensure. She said an ideal testing instrument would be one that tests a pedagogical knowledge base together with that which teachers really need to know.

Dr. Harris said UND admits no more than 60 students a semester to the elementary education program. She said Minot State University is seeing an increase in the number of students who want to enter teaching, perhaps as a result of word getting out regarding the upcoming teacher shortage. She said Dickinson and UND have, however, seen fewer applicants. She said the standards for admission have increased over the last couple of years.

Dr. Harris said for admission, a student is expected to have a 2.5 grade point average and to demonstrate a knowledge of basic skills through the preprofessional skills test or through an alternative

writing assessment. She said Minot State University requires a student seeking admission to also submit letters of recommendation from practicing teachers. She said some institutions require a personal interview.

Dr. Harris said to successfully exit a teacher preparation program, some institutions are requiring the use of portfolio assessments. She said students may also be asked to demonstrate their understanding of learning styles and classroom management skills. She said some institutions administer portions of the national teachers exam.

Dr. Harris said North Dakota in general is ahead of other states in the incorporation of technology in teacher education programs. She said the area of technology changes so fast that no matter what the institutions do, they are always a little behind. She said students are expected to demonstrate their ability to use computer technology. She said teacher program graduates say when they go out to their first jobs, they are often called upon by older teachers to assist with the school's efforts in technology.

Dr. Harris said the Teacher Education Accrediting Council is a new accreditation council developed because some institutions thought the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education standards were getting pretty tough. She said North Dakota has stayed with National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accreditation. She said fewer than half of the programs in the country are nationally accredited.

Dr. Harris distributed a copy of North Dakota Administrative Code Section 67.1-02-02-02. The document is attached as Appendix C. She said this section sets forth the minimum requirements for teacher licensure. She said the trend in assessing teacher candidates involves determining whether they can use their knowledge base in teaching to affect student learning. She said portfolio assessments is the way things are going nationally.

Dr. Harris distributed a document entitled *Teacher Supply and Demand in North Dakota*. The document is on file in the Legislative Council office. She said approximately half of our graduates seek licensure and remain in North Dakota. She said North Dakota teacher education programs graduate 600 to 700 new teachers each year. She said there are not enough jobs for even half of them in this state.

Dr. Harris said the areas that the teacher candidates are entering are not always those areas of highest need. She said the areas of mathematics, science, languages, and music are areas of greatest shortage. She said there is a great need to persuade people with talents in those areas to pursue teaching.

Dr. Harris said we have a real problem with attrition. She said the first-year teacher attrition in North Dakota is higher than the national average. However, she said, the statistics do not segregate those

teachers who start with a small district and then move to a larger one in a year or two.

Dr. Harris said attention needs to be paid to attracting teachers to rural communities. She said loan forgiveness programs or other incentives should be given special attention. She said we need to encourage partnerships among the teacher education programs and partnerships with rural communities, not just with those communities or school districts close to program locations.

Dr. Harris said teaching requires constant updating. She said UND advocates programs of assessment for teachers and ways of rewarding teachers who have remained in the field.

Dr. Harris distributed a document entitled *Policy Implications From the Talmey-Drake North Dakota Educator Survey*. The document is attached as Appendix D. She said the survey shows that educators were satisfied with the programs but not with the incentives that were available to encourage participation in advanced degree pursuits.

Dr. Harris said the issue of monetary incentives emerges very strongly. She said teachers need to earn at least four hours of credit every five years to maintain their licensure. She said there is no expectation that those credits be graduate credits. She said many of our teachers who have advanced preparation will be retiring in the next few years. She said some of those teachers are the ones who provide the most support and guidance for new teachers.

In response to a question from Senator Freborg, Dr. Harris said in order to supervise a student teacher, a cooperating teacher needs to have completed a course in the supervision of student teachers and to have had a certain amount of teaching experience. She said we would not want the cooperating teacher to remain in the classroom every minute, because we want the student teacher to try his or her wings. She said, on the other hand, we want the cooperating teacher to be professionally involved with what is happening in the classroom.

In response to a question from Representative Delmore, Dr. Harris said in the realm of student teaching, we need to determine how the student teachers can contribute to the schools.

In response to a question from Senator Kelsh, Dr. Harris said it is important to look at alternative teacher education programs applicable to people who have degrees already but who do not have teaching degrees. She said the laws were written with the traditionally aged entry-level students in mind. She said we need to look at middle-career teachers.

Dr. Harris said student teaching is now unpaid. She said perhaps a less than certified teacher working with a cooperating teacher should get some pay. She said that would be necessary for many people who might consider being middle-career teacher candidates.

Dr. Harris said because university finances are based on student credit hours, many institutions do

not have the incentives to create graduate-level teacher preparation programs.

Dr. Harris said if we want to improve teacher education and the quality of student learning, we need to encourage the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop and to require that standardized curricula be used in all schools. She said we need to establish a curriculum that puts learning stages in an appropriate order, and we need to require that all schools follow such a curriculum. She said we need to direct the Education Standards and Practices Board to establish a system of licensure that includes assessment. She said we are one of only seven states that does not have teacher assessments in place. She said the Legislative Assembly needs to direct the Education Standards and Practices Board to do this. She said we need to establish a state support system for new teachers.

Dr. Harris said incentives are needed for educators to complete graduate studies.

Dr. Harris said we need to have a system of licensure that supports developmentally appropriate growth better. She said teachers are still being prepared to teach grades 1 through 8 and grades 9 through 12. She said we do not have very many kindergarten through grade 8 or grades 9 through 12 schools left. She said early childhood, middle childhood, young adolescence, and older adolescence should be the levels of teacher preparation.

At the request of Chairman Freborg, Ms. Janet Placek, Executive Director, Education Standards and Practices Board, presented testimony regarding teacher quality issues. She said her copresenter will be Mr. M. Douglas Johnson, Principal, Simle Middle School, Bismarck. She said Mr. Johnson is also the chairman of the Education Standards and Practices Board. A copy of her testimony is attached as Appendix E. Ms. Placek also distributed a document entitled *A Century of Development - Teacher Certification History* [in North Dakota]. The document is attached as Appendix F.

Ms. Placek distributed a document entitled *Have a Whale of a Time This Summer - Continuing Education North Dakota State University, Fargo, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, Minot State University, Minot*. The document is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Ms. Placek said the Education Standards and Practices Board has just adopted a new code of ethics which is going out to the public for review and then will go through the administrative rules process. She distributed a copy of the new ethics code, which is attached as Appendix G.

In response to a question from Representative Delmore, Ms. Placek said if we loosen the standards for teacher licensure any more, we will be affecting teacher quality.

Mr. Johnson presented testimony relating to teacher quality parameters. His testimony is attached as Appendix H. He said the Education Standards and

Practices Board is not seeing a decline in the number of teachers in this state, with the exception of mathematics, science, technology, and music. He said our challenge is in keeping the teachers we have. He said we need to maintain the passion for teaching, but we also need to be aware of the stresses that come with teaching.

At the request of Chairman Freborg, Mr. Joe Westby, Executive Director, North Dakota Education Association, presented testimony regarding teacher shortages and teacher quality issues.

Mr. Westby distributed a packet of documents that included information regarding teacher quality and the assessment of teacher quality, teacher recruitment and retention, professional development activities, and teacher salary rankings and salary comparisons. The packet is on file in the Legislative Council office. Mr. Westby said in the next six years 4,500 teachers will be eligible for retirement. He said there are about 9,000 teachers in the state. He said we train plenty of teachers in this state. He said we do not necessarily train individuals who can teach in the areas of shortage.

Mr. Westby said nationally we lose nearly half of our teachers in the first five years.

In response to a question from Senator Cook, Mr. Westby said there are still 10 to 12 school districts in this state that do not participate in Social Security. He said many years ago the districts made an election not to participate in Social Security.

In response to a question from Senator Freborg, Mr. Westby said the number of hours that a school district requires or that a teacher puts in each day is a variable. He said teachers in middle school have more preparation time than they did earlier.

In response to a question from Senator Freborg, Mr. Westby said the North Dakota teachers' retirement program now has a multiplier of 1.88. He said the national average is over 2.00.

In response to a question from Senator Cook, Mr. Westby said a bill on merit pay for teachers has come to the floor during the last two sessions. He said the North Dakota Education Association has established a committee to look at merit pay efforts across the country. He said it is not a concept that the North Dakota Education Association rejects. He said it is one that is being considered.

In response to a question from Senator Cook, Mr. Westby said this year one district paid considerably more than the pay schedule for a position it had trouble filling. He said the district spent more over its schedule to hire this one individual than it spent for all of its teachers' raises. He said such happenings cause severe morale issues. He said it is an issue of fairness. He said we need to talk first about raising the pay for all teachers. Then, he said, we might want to see if we should have ways of paying more than the schedule.

At the request of Chairman Freborg, Mr. Max Laird, President, North Dakota Education Association, presented testimony regarding teacher quality issues. His testimony is attached as Appendix I.

In response to a question from Representative Haas, Mr. Laird said the documents regarding teacher salaries do not include benefits.

In response to a question from Representative Kelsch, Mr. Laird said most school districts do include a percentage of their salary budget for continuing education. He said many of those dollars are for specific categorical purposes.

In response to a question from Representative Kelsch, Mr. Laird said most school counselors handle between 350 and 600 students. He said guidance counselors have to look at allotting time to students in crisis or students in need versus time for career counseling. He said it is difficult for a school guidance counselor to advise a student to take a particular track. He said we need to do a better job of encouraging students to go into teaching.

At the request of Chairman Freborg, Mr. Larry Klundt, Executive Director, Council of Educational Leaders, presented testimony regarding school district administration and teacher availability and qualifications. His testimony is attached as Appendix J. Mr. Klundt said we need to put greater emphasis on training teachers and administrators regarding the use of assessments. He said we need to ensure that we increase learning, not just increase test-taking skills.

Mr. Klundt said we need to ensure that we have successful teachers of children, not just the teaching of content areas. He said although there are no guarantees of quality, the likelihood of someone providing quality educational experiences for children increases when that person has received the training that results in licensure and credentials.

In response to a question from Representative Stefonowicz, Mr. Klundt said the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders has not taken a recent position on merit pay. He said there may be ways to make merit pay work. He said more people need to be involved in whether a teacher is deserving of merit pay, not just the principal.

In response to a question from Representative Stefonowicz, Mr. Klundt said it is very difficult to reference what professionals earn in terms of an hourly wage.

In response to a question from Senator Freborg, Mr. Klundt said while there are some smaller districts that rank high in base schedules, the higher salaries are generally found in the larger districts. He said some large districts have very high levies while other large districts are capped at 185 mills.

Senator Freborg said we have some small districts that are paying low salaries and those same districts have among the lowest mill levies in the state. He said we have other districts that are paying low

salaries, and they have reserve funds that are very large.

Mr. Klundt said education is a state responsibility. He said it is a constitutional responsibility. He said the state has given some autonomy to local districts, but it has then turned around and placed limits such as the 185-mill cap. He said with respect to ending fund balances, he needs to do a survey to determine why some districts have large ending fund balances. He said some districts' ending fund balances are far too low. He said some districts are fearful that they are not going to get any additional revenue and are looking at their ending fund balances as a way to continue their operations as long as possible.

In response to a question from Senator Freborg, Mr. Klundt said even though some large districts have only one superintendent, they have a lot of assistants doing administrative work.

In response to a question from Representative Disrud, Mr. Klundt said larger school districts can provide teachers with more opportunity for advancement than can small school districts.

Chairman Freborg called on Representative Michael D. Brandenburg, who presented testimony regarding the mandatory employment of an elementary school principal. Representative Brandenburg distributed a copy of the state accreditation standards and the credential requirements for an elementary principal. The documents are attached as Appendix K.

Representative Brandenburg said the school board in Edgeley had employed a school district superintendent, a high school principal, and an elementary school principal. He said in August 1999 the elementary school principal position became vacant. He said the school board is trying to keep its cost of education down. He said because the district had only one school building that houses all grades and district administration, the board would like to have the duties of the elementary principal shared between the school district superintendent and the high school principal.

Representative Brandenburg said the Edgeley School District has about 280 students. He said the district loses about 10 students each year. He said this year the Edgeley School District has a kindergarten class of 10 students. He said the school board is being told that the high school principal does not meet the present accreditation standards for an elementary principal.

Representative Brandenburg said his school district would like to be able to at least share administrative duties with other school districts to help keep costs down. He said the district has lost students over the years, but it has maintained the same number of administrative personnel. He said if the district cannot save money, it, and others like it, will have to close. He said the students would have to be bused more than 25 miles, and he does not want to

require that. Representative Brandenburg said in this instance the cost to the taxpayers of the Edgeley School District is \$40,000.

Representative Brandenburg said LaMoure County has 1,047 students and five school district superintendents. He said we cannot continue to maintain the small rural schools unless we have some flexibility. He said Edgeley does not need three administrators for 280 students, all of whom are in one building.

In response to a question from Representative Thoreson, Representative Brandenburg said the high school principal does not have the credential that permits him to function as an elementary school principal. He said the high school principal is doing the duties in the absence of an elementary principal. He said the district is going to be forced to hire an elementary principal or lose its accreditation status.

In response to a question from Representative Delmore, Representative Brandenburg said when there are fewer students, there is less need for administration.

Representative Delmore said, as a high school teacher, she does not believe she should, nor would she choose to, go in and teach an elementary school class.

Representative Brandenburg said the question is how much longer can we dig into the well and ask the taxpayers to pay more and more for the education of fewer and fewer students. He said because the district is losing students, it is receiving less and less foundation aid. He said the district is left with no choice but to continue raising property taxes or find ways to be more efficient. He said he would like to see if there could be more flexibility in the accreditation standards so that students do not have to be bused for an hour or two because neither the school district superintendent nor the high school principal can serve as an elementary school administrator. He said we would prefer to keep the students in the local school.

In response to a question from Senator Redlin, Representative Brandenburg said the district levies about 150 mills plus nearly another 50 mills on an outstanding bond issue. He said the total is close to 200 mills for the Edgeley taxpayers.

Representative Brandenburg distributed a document entitled *Superintendent Salaries and Student Enrollments for Public School Districts*. The document is attached as Appendix L. He said the taxpayers in LaMoure County are paying \$784,221 for the administration of schools with only 1,047 students.

Chairman Freborg adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.