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2001 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. HB1321

House Education Committee

Conference Committee

Hearing Date 01/22/01

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
#1		X	63 to 3128
#2	X		1 to 2427
Committee Clerk Signature <i>Lisa Gilbertson</i>			

Minutes:

Chairman R. Kelsch, Vice-Chair T. Brusegaard, Rep. Bellew, Rep. Grumbo, Rep. Haas, Rep. Hanson, Rep. Hawken, Rep. Hunskor, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Meier, Rep. Mueller, Rep. Nelson, Rep. Nottestad, Rep. Solberg, Rep. Thoreson

Chairman Kelsch: We will open the hearing on HB1321.

Rep. Disrud: (District 21) I've been involved with families that have come into our community and have given me an acute realization of their personal stories, and while listening and working with the teachers and students, I've gained a deep respect to those who are working to enhance the quality of life and education of these young students. The ESL program is growing, and all indications are that it will continue to grow throughout the state of ND. We all know that Fargo has been impacted by the ESL program, but we are now looking at several other districts who are now impacted in educating our ESL students. The districts who are now involved will be receiving even more students, plus I really believe that the projections are that additional students

will be entering school districts that are not involved. I really believe that the ND Foundation Aid payment of \$2230 per student will be more efficiently spent on students who can speak and understand and learn the English language. Once they know and understand the language in which they are living, the environment and life, the people they are living with, they can actually learn better, and our foundation aid money will be spent more efficiently. Everybody wins: our teachers will continue to be supported in the important work they are doing. This is truly economic development at its best. We, in ND are talking about our future work force, and how critical it is to our economy to fill the need for workers. Our ESL students and their families have come out of an environment that most of us would cringe at the thought of having lived in. They appreciate the opportunity to work, and through our ESL program, they are more empowered to do so in a quality way.

Chairman Kelsch: There's \$450,000 that's been appropriated by Governor Hoeven's budget, and then what this would do is this would add an additional \$350,000? Is that correct?

Rep. Disrud: Yes.

Mari Rasmussen: (Assistant Director of Bilingual Education for DPI) *Please refer to attached testimony*

Rep. Hunsaker: Did you allude to the increasing number of students that are in need of this program. Do you have some figures on that?

Rasmussen: Approximately 10% is what we figured, since 1997, and it was hard to do accurate projection, we could expect to increase by 10%.

Rep. Grumbo: Has there been a follow-up study been done with the students that are in ESL and as they progress through the system? Have they followed in post school?

Rasmussen: Right now we just have qualitative data. I'd like to do some investigation further to get more concrete data about how this program has been affected students. Roughly, yes, there are a number that have gone on to higher education.

Bev Nielson: (School Board's Association) I'm in support of this. Our association has recognized the importance of support for weighting factors for the size of schools, support for schools with declining enrollment, support for small but necessary schools, and support for special education students, and we see the ESL as a very special circumstance which is similar to the ones I have just mentioned, and for that reason, we do support continuing to fund, not only have the numbers gone up at 10% a year, but our costs go up, and in supporting an additional level, I would just like to say that in working in a system that has tried very hard to get children with no English and even children who are sometimes illiterate in their own language, that it's crucial that we not only be able to teach them the language in emersion, but also to get to the level where these people can learn, assimilate, think in English, in order for them to master the textbooks at high schools and essay questions writing and so forth.

Dan Huffman: (Fargo schools) *Please refer to attached testimony*

Rep. Brusegaard: Does the Fargo school district receive any support, financial or man hours from private foundations or private agencies in helping acclimate these children?

Huffman: One time in the last 16 years, we did receive about \$2500 from Lutheran Social Services to help with transportation of an adult population to our adult education center so that the parents of these children could learn some language skills also. Beyond that, the answer to your question is no.

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Rep. Hanson: Does Moorhead and Dilworth receive any MN state funding for those types of students?

Huffman: I'm not familiar with, specifically with the state of MN funding, other than to tell you that they get more than we do. There is a fairly sophisticated reimbursement system through the Department of Children and Families in the state of MN.

Rep. Mueller: You referred to 654 students in the Fargo system who are involved with the program. On the paper that Ms. Rasmussen handed out, we're talking about 540 kids in the whole state, so I guess for me, it would be somewhat important to know how many students we're talking about here across the state.

Huffman: I can't speak specifically to other school districts. In Fargo, we have 654 children who have met level 1-5, which means they have varying level of education English language deficiencies. Of those, 362 of the 654 are in levels 1 and 2, and the numbers that you see before you are only those children who have tested in level 1 and 2, because those are the only children at the time who are eligible for the state reimbursement. There still are three other categories of students that we're serving, but we just don't get any funding for it.

Rep. Mueller: If there ever was a program, it would seem to me to qualify, or should have a federal involvement here. This one seems to be it. Are there no federal programs to assist with this effort?

Huffman: Yes, the Fargo school districts does receive some federal funds also. At the present time, we're receiving about \$280,000 in federal funds. \$78,000 of that, however, is money that has to be used to provide before and after school activity programs for these children, so

approximately \$200,000 of the money is used for during the day kinds of programs. The fluctuations of the federal funds, also have been very dramatic over the years.

Rep. Nottestad: Going back to your statement about sponsored organizations and the help they have had. Do these organizations have an X number of dollars attached to each child or family for assimilating them into the culture we have here in ND and the USA?

Huffman: My understanding is the placing agencies do, in fact, receive their federal assistance based on the number of individuals that are placed. Those dollars, however, are to cover the costs that they incur in bringing the children here. Once the family is in a community, it is the responsibility of the school district, the county and the social service agencies to provide all of the assistance necessary to acclimate them to the community. There is no support to the agencies providing the services.

Rep. Nottestad: So, in essence, these people are brought here, and they become the responsibility of that community totally. It just doesn't seem right.

Huffman: That is a fair assessment of what happens.

Rep. Nelson: In regard to the federal funds that you receive in Fargo, are you aware of the other districts in the state, do they receive them as well? Or is that something you have to apply for through a grant process?

Huffman: It is a grant process, I think that Mari would be in a better position to answer that question. There is a grant application process that you go through, as school districts, to receive the federal dollars.

Rep. Nelson: As I do the math, that round figures in another \$300 per student that would be available to your district through federal funding, if you.. You said the total cost, you estimate is \$1300 per student on the average?

Huffman: For the 654 students, not the 362.

Rep. Hunsakor: Would you walk us through what happens to a level one or a level two student? How much contact throughout the day with the special teachers you have that would be helping that student? And is that done in the classroom?

Huffman: It's a combination, when a child shows up in our school district, the first thing we do is go through a process of assessing their level of proficiency. Depending on that level of proficiency, each of these children, when they show up, has an individual assessment process that we go through, and what I'm going to talk about as being typical, if there is such a thing, a portion of their day being spent in a regular classroom, so they begin to become acclimated to the social environment of a school in ND, but in addition to that, there is individual tutoring, there are small group session, with pupil to teacher ratios to five or six or seven to one, and as the language proficiency improves, more time is spent in regular classrooms, and less time is spent with the tutors and the English language instructors.

Rep. Solberg: You mentioned there are as high as 60 different dialects, so, how many additional staff does this involve?

Huffman: I can't give you specific numbers of additional staff. The other thing we rely on quite heavily are the parents of the other families who may have proceeded the location of that family in our community to provide us with assistance in interpreting for us. One of the real issues for us is finding somebody who speaks the dialect of their language so we can even sit down and

have a conversation that determines the need, age of the children, and what kind of services are actually going to be provided. Most of these children come to us without birth certificates, no history, and often times we have programs for the programs to acclimate them to our language, that allow them to be more English proficient, at a fast rate than their parents, which also creates some interesting problems for us.

Rep. Hawken: As I recall, with the federal grant, there's also a time frame on those. Has that changed?

Huffman: Typically the grants run in three year cycles. After you've received the grant for three years, you have to get back into the mix of things for the next cycle again.

Rep. Haas: So, in that two year grant period, are you getting \$280,000 per year?

Huffman: Yes. For us, it's divided into two parts, so each of them have a level of uncertainty, and they're not both on the same three year cycle, but at the present time, we're getting \$280,000 for this year.

Carrie Kasowski: (Grand Forks ESL teacher) *Please refer to attached testimony*

Rep. Mueller: Do most of the ESL have social problems?

Kasowski: It's starting to become more true than it was before. I've been teaching for almost 20 years, and at the beginning we had the Vietnamese population, which was mostly minors coming in, unaccompanied minors, and they were taken in by foster families, and so the foster family really helped in making sure their education and social skills were brought up to snuff. Now we're seeing whole families come in, which is not a bad thing, it's a good thing, but we are finding that we have to reeducate the whole family in social skills, and a lot of these kids coming in now, have had very little education, and they tell me in their schools there's a lot of fighting

and there's not much discipline, and it's just kind of a free for all, and that's the reality of what they're coming in with, but I do see, with help, they come along so far, and that's just with some care and some real specialized help.

Rep. Nottestad: Would a young man like Driton, problems that he created for you and with you and through you to begin with. Was there ever a meeting back and forth with a sponsoring organization, so they could have given you aid if they had chosen to do so?

Kasowski: Usually when they come over, I have to stick up for the representatives on new americans into Grand Forks, and they don't always get much more information than we do on the students, but when they come in, we do work as a group. We also have a great system in Grand Forks with counselors and social workers. We do not have the numbers that Fargo has yet, so when Dan was talking about how they deal with these ESL students, we don't have that capability yet, but it's getting there. It's getting so that we're not able to make it some days, but it is a united effort.

Rep. Hunsakor: In your professional opinion, the students that are receiving this help. what percentage of those do we lose to the streets, to crime, and if they were not receiving their help, in your opinion, would we lose to that?

Kasowski: You know, I'm not good with percentages, but my opinion is if Driton never had any help, he would be.... He seemed to have no conscience, because he's seen so much, and a lot of kids that I've seen... Especially when they come in when they're 17 years old and have very little background in education in their country, and they come in very racially discriminative, and we have to have long talks about that, when they're able to talk, and if we would not be giving help to them, I would consider all those students that we didn't help, would go on to crime.

