

# NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

## Minutes of the

### EDUCATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

Monday, June 30, 1997  
Roughrider Room, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Ray Holmberg, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Senators Ray Holmberg, Pete Naaden, David O'Connell, Vern Thompson, Dan Wogsland; Representatives Thomas T. Brusegaard, David Drovdal, Howard Grumbo, Lyle L. Hanson, RaeAnn Kelsch, John Mahoney, Dennis J. Renner, Laurel Thoreson

**Members absent:** Senators Randy A. Schobinger, Terry M. Wanzek; Representatives Ole Aarsvold, Linda Christenson, David Monson

**Others present:** See attached appendix

At the request of Chairman Holmberg, Mr. John D. Olsrud, Director of the Legislative Council, reviewed the Supplementary Rules of Operation and Procedure of the North Dakota Legislative Council.

Chairman Holmberg announced that Representative RaeAnn Kelsch will serve as the vice chairman of the Education Services Committee. He also reviewed the studies assigned to the Education Services Committee.

Chairman Holmberg called on Dr. Wayne Sanstead, Superintendent of Public Instruction, to welcome the committee. He said the studies assigned to the committee are very timely in terms of the development of education in North Dakota. He said the most important responsibility of North Dakota state government is the provision of education. He said North Dakota Century Code Title 15 is the operational code for North Dakota's public schools and that is why it is important to review the provisions from time to time. He said we need to provide a framework for education which will maximize the education and educational opportunities for students. He encouraged the members of the committee to visit with him and his staff at any time.

At the request of Chairman Holmberg, Committee Counsel presented a background memorandum entitled *Provisions of North Dakota Century Code Title 15 Which Relate to Elementary and Secondary Education* and a background memorandum entitled *Development and Delivery of a Core Curriculum*.

Representative Mahoney said he was concerned that we would have trouble enforcing content and curriculum standards, much as we have trouble enforcing our truancy laws.

Senator O'Connell said he has come across some instances in which home-schooled students are not being appropriately educated.

Senator Naaden said we need to ask ourselves why so many people are seeking to home school their children, as opposed to enrolling them in the public school system.

Dr. Sanstead said the issue of monitoring home-school students is an ongoing process. He said he would be happy to provide additional material and information to the committee if the committee wished to pursue this area. He said another area to be addressed involves computer technology. He said in many instances the students are far ahead of their teachers in terms of computer literacy.

In response to a question from Senator Thompson, Dr. Sanstead said there is a cost factor involved in the development and implementation of standards. He said what the standards will mean for districts that do not have the resources for staff and technology will have to be addressed by this committee.

In response to a question from Representative Grumbo, Dr. Sanstead said the Department of Public Instruction has a Curriculum Council that looks at curricular material in all areas.

At the request of Chairman Holmberg, Mr. Mel Olson, State Board for Vocational and Technical Education, presented testimony regarding the committee's assigned studies. He said we need to find ways to better prepare and motivate our students. He said for years we have tried to focus on preparing students for college and 75 percent of new jobs are in technical fields. He said changing curricula is not as important to young people as changing the incentives. He said we need to train and retrain and motivate teachers. He said that will make more difference than changing curricula.

In response to a question from Senator Wogsland, Mr. Olson said most students do not make career decisions while in high school. However, he said, more and more students are starting to look at career options while in high school.

In response to a question from Representative Thoreson, Mr. Olson said career information needs to be included in a lot of courses. He said we need to spend more time talking to students about career opportunities. He said we need to relate what we

teach to life skills. He said we need to explain to students why they are learning what a noun is for the twelfth year.

In response to a question from Representative Brusegaard, Mr. Olson said a certain level of skill in speaking, reading, and writing is important for any career. However, he said, it is not necessarily accurate to assume that after four years of English a student will have good communication skills. He said we need to recognize that students learn in different ways. He said some students have been disconnected from the academic model.

At the request of Chairman Holmberg, Dr. Anne Clapper, Director of Curriculum, Department of Public Instruction, presented testimony regarding the core curriculum study. She said we do not specify what constitutes course content. She said curriculum is defined as the material and strategies used to teach something. She said a person might elect to teach Algebra I (the course). She said the person would then acquire a list of things to be taught in Algebra I (the content). She said the person would then choose a specific textbook and specific instructional strategies (the curriculum). She said North Dakota is very focused on local control. She said the state has never prescribed the content or the curriculum. She said if the same course is taught in Bismarck and Bismarck, the content may be different and the curriculum or the teaching strategies will certainly be different. She said the closer a state comes to dictating what teachers should be doing in the classroom, the more intense and costly the state involvement becomes.

Dr. Clapper said state-dictated content standards and curricula are lauded in states that have high student mobility. She said it is important that a student attending grade 4 in the western part of the state can continue receiving an appropriate education if that student moves to the eastern part of the state in the middle of the school year. She said when a state specifies content standards, local school districts do not have to perform that task, which saves resources at the local level. She said if standards were to be localized, 231 North Dakota school districts would have to write their own standards. She said the committee will have to determine where on the continuum of courses-content-and-curriculum we should be in North Dakota. She said the more detailed we get, the costlier it will become.

In response to a question by Representative Grumbo, Dr. Clapper said we have jumped a little into the content area through our curriculum frameworks. She said the curriculum frameworks are not specific to grade levels, but are only benchmarks for grades 4,

8, and 12. She said we leave it up to the local school districts to fill in the gaps. She said the North Dakota curriculum frameworks are not written by the state but rather by teachers in the state.

In response to a question by Representative Thoreson, Dr. Clapper said if our only reference is to courses, we have no way of knowing what students are learning--Is it low level? Is it going to be enough for our students to succeed in the future? She said we are not hurting anything by posing and attempting to address questions regarding what our kids should know and should be able to do. She said the question for the committee is do we, as a state, want to go further than benchmarking at grades 4, 8, and 12.

Chairman Holmberg called on Ms. Bev Nielson, Fargo Public Schools, who said people in North Dakota are not as disenchanted with schools as are people in other states. She said we do not have a clearly definitive line in terms of what should be taught and what should be learned. She said creating such a definition will help ensure continued confidence in our public educational system. She said Fargo has listed its courses and listed what it expects students to achieve or master, but what is missing is the ability to assess what students have learned.

At the request of Chairman Holmberg, Mr. Fraine Zeitler, Director, North Dakota Workforce Development Council, presented testimony regarding the committee's studies. He said there is a great deal of confidence in the North Dakota educational system. He said we need to address what is the purpose of K-12 education. He said we need to prepare students to be good citizens and we need to prepare students for careers. He said this does not necessarily mean preparing students for a four-year college degree. He said some people believe that the local community has the right to establish, or at least collaborate in the assessment of, the educational system. He said local businesses are the ones who will be employing the graduates. He said the committee should keep those suggestions in mind. He said the educational system is not broken, it just needs "tweaking." He said we need to ensure that we have flexibility.

Chairman Holmberg adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

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L. Anita Thomas  
Committee Counsel

ATTACH:1