

TESTIMONY TO 2010 COMMISSION
Dr. Tom Trigg
Superintendent, Blue Valley Unified School District No. 229
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I appreciate the work of the 2010 Commission and your dedication to all students in the state of Kansas.

My name is Tom Trigg, and I am superintendent of the Blue Valley School District USD 229. Blue Valley has about 21,000 students in grades prek-12 and services southeast Johnson County and a portion of Miami County.

As you know, this has been a very difficult year from a budget perspective for school districts across Kansas. I want to emphasize that by sharing with you what a drop in BSAPP from the legislatively promised \$4492 to the actual BSAPP of \$4280 for the 2009-2010 school year has meant to the Blue Valley School District.

During our budget planning process for next school year, we had to cut over \$4.8 million from the budget. Those reductions included the following:

- 5 district office administrative positions
- 18 district office positions held by teachers
- 18 custodial/maintenance positions
- 6 building paraprofessional positions
- 11 additional classified positions at district office
- 58 total positions

In addition, over \$500,000 was eliminated from the professional development budget and another \$1,200,000 was eliminated in material and supply budgets.

We made an attempt to keep cuts as far away from the classroom as possible. In reality, however, most everything we do has at least an indirect effect on the classroom. The reduction of 18 district office positions held by teachers will mean far less support in the classroom in the areas of math, science and school improvement. The reduction in professional development will set the district back considerably in its attempt to grow teacher leaders and strengthen our professional learning communities.

To make matters worse, this very tough year that we have gone through to balance the budget for 2009-2010 could get only tougher in the near future. That is not good for kids in the state of Kansas.

I also understand that the commission would also like to receive feedback on its various recommendations over the past several years.

This is an extremely difficult task. I believe that Education Reform and Professional Support are essential in improving the schools in our state. There is much literature to support the belief that quality leadership and instruction are instrumental components to outstanding student achievement. Without adequate funding, however, these components are not possible to implement. When I look at the seven recommendations under the Education Funding heading, I can agree that the first six have a rational basis, but in all honesty they result in little or no substantial change when compared to the magnitude of the funding issues now facing public education in Kansas. At this crucial time, I believe the Commission should be focused on the charge from the legislature which states "Review the amount of BSAPP and determine if the amount should be adjusted."

Lastly, I would like to comment on the Commission's recent decision to weigh in on the Special Education Catastrophic Aide situation. I find it disturbing that the Commission would recommend changing one aspect of the Special Education Distribution Formula without taking into consideration the unfair and disparate impact of the entire formula. Those who understand systems realize that tinkering with one small part of a larger system without considering the impact on the total system often creates imbalance in the system and unintended consequences. I suggest that the Commission consider waiting on this specific recommendation until after the task force assigned by the legislature to evaluate the entire special education funding system completes its work.

Thank you for your time.