

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 1:39 p.m. on February 19, 2004 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Anthony Hensley (excused)  
Senator Ruth Teichman (excused)

Committee staff present:

Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research  
Debra Hollon, Legislative Research  
Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Steinlicht, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Senate President Dave Kerr  
Chauncey Veatch, 2002 National Teacher of the Year

Others attending:

See Attached List

### **2002 National Teacher of the Year**

Chairman Umbarger welcomed visiting members of the Senate and the House of Representatives in attendance today.

President Dave Kerr introduced Chauncey Veatch, the 2002 National Teacher of the Year. President Kerr met Mr. Veatch just last year when he made a presentation at USD 308, Hutchinson. He invited Mr. Veatch to come to the Kansas Senate. Mr. Veatch is retired from the military and began teaching in 1995 and teaches by request, gang members, kids with drug and alcohol problems, kids who are young fathers and mothers. One-third of every class is in special education, yet the achievement of his students is remarkable. President Kerr believes we can all learn from Mr. Veatch and is proud to introduce someone who was born in Hutchinson.

Chauncey Veatch said he was here to share what has worked for him. He said he does not claim to have all the magical answers, but he does request the kids that other teachers are not quick to embrace. Mr. Veatch teaches in Thermal, California in the middle of the desert. His school has 3,500 kids; 99.9% are Hispanic, 98% speak Spanish at home and only 2% of the parents speak English. Most were born outside of the U.S. and 86% are part of the migrant community. The kids come and go as their families work crops.

Mr. Veatch is a retired Army Colonel and he said he wore his uniform with pride, but he always knew that he wanted to be a teacher and he has found nothing more rewarding. He, unknowingly, applied to teach at a bankrupt school district in California and was immediately hired. He let the school pick the subjects and the grade he would teach. He would teach 8th grade science and math. Before the first day of school he was also asked to teach social studies, reading, writing, and physical education. At this point he didn't think it was possible to succeed, but he had made the commitment and did not call the principle. As he was sitting that night working on his lesson plan, he realized he was not alone and he believes he was providentially guided. It occurred to him as he looked at the names of his students that he could focus on their names and connect them to names and places in history as a tool for reaching the kids and teaching them.

Mr. Veatch told the committee that he takes his heritage very seriously and wore the uniform because of the love he feels for the people. Ideals and the constitution are what unite the people. Kansas has been in the forefront. Kansas was one of the first places women were allowed to vote and Kansas is famous for the Brown vs. Board of Education case. He told the committee that those whose culture, religion and language is different from us should be celebrated, not tolerated. People have come from all corners of the world and all made contributions. Dreamers built the nation. The average education for parents in his school is 3rd grade. They have dreams of providing a better life for their children. Mr. Veatch believes these children are our gifts. He believes that when a child enters your classroom, you do the best for that

## CONTINUATION SHEET

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child that you can.

Mr. Veatch shared success stories of his students; a former gang member born in Mexico represented America and gave a 20 minute speech at the International Space Camp where students from over 50 countries are represented every year. Another student, a migrant worker whose father died of a drug overdose, made a perfect score on his ACT test and was accepted at three major colleges with a full academic scholarship. A 10<sup>th</sup> grade special education student born in El Salvador and a migrant worker, along with four others from his class represented the school in a historical performance. They went all the way to the national competition and won 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation. Two of them were former gang members, 2 were special education students and one a native Spanish speaker. Mr. Veatch said he used to say that nothing brought him more joy than the achievement of his students, but now he says that is not true, it is the pride of the parents in the achievement of their children.

Mr. Veatch believes teaching is a calling and invites anyone to come and join him by becoming a teacher today. Mr. Veatch is at the door every day greeting his students learning who they are and how to reach them. He tells other teachers to leave their problems and complaints at the door and focus entirely on the student. Everything in his classroom reflects the students, nothing is about him, it is about their future. Self esteem is so powerful. It doesn't happen overnight, it may take a couple of years. He tries to give them the tools to deal better with their problems away from school.

Mr. Veatch says if your don't like your students, you have picked the wrong profession. He says if you love them and believe in them, you don't have to tell them, they will know it and they will respond. You need to have high expectations so they can reach for them. In his last class of 34, 5 boys joined the service and served in Iraq, seventeen are in college and are going to become teachers.

As 2002 National Teacher of the Year, Mr. Veatch was invited to the White House. After speaking and being televised from the Rose Garden, an anonymous donation of \$6 million was made to his school. All of their special education teachers are now credentialed. Good things are happening in his school.

He told the committee that he has a family who supports him and a great life outside of his school family.

President Kerr thanked USD 308, for making it possible for Mr. Veatch to visit the committee.

A motion was made to approve the minutes for February 9 and February 10 was made by Senator Vratil. Seconded by Senator Corbin. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2004.