

# State education officials approve graduation changes

By John Milburn  
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — State education officials approved changes Wednesday in graduation and school accreditation requirements designed to ensure no child is left behind.

However, questions remain about whether Kansas has the money to bring its children along.

"This is the biggest change in expectations in 10 years, maybe more, while at the same time we are going through the biggest revenue crisis since World War II," said Mark Tallman, assistant executive director for the Kansas Association of School Boards.

As approved on an 8-2 vote, students graduating during the 2008-09 school year will be required to pass three units

of science and three units of history and government, instead of two.

Changes also were made in the criteria for accrediting schools under requirements enacted in 1991.

Known as QPA, for Quality Performance Accreditation, the criteria puts the focus on student and school performance, mandating that schools show progress in improving student achievement. The changes approved Wednesday assume no student will be exempt from testing standards.

All of the changes are designed to bring Kansas into compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act approved by Congress, which superintendents say will not come cheap.

"The theory is great but the practicality is a big stretch," said Bob

Hightree, superintendent of Anthony-Harper schools. "It is a huge unfunded federal mandate which will place an extremely burdensome expense on the state and all citizens."

Wichita Superintendent Winston Brooks said the board is imposing tougher graduation requirements as schools face trying to comply with the federal law. That combination will make it difficult to find enough money, he said.

"The problems finding the resources needed to increase graduation standards are going to be the greatest for the districts having higher numbers of disadvantaged students," Brooks said. His district is the state's largest, with about 44,000 students.

State board members said the

changes were a step toward bringing all students to competence in basic skills.

"This helps those who aren't going on to college to be better prepared to function in society," said Board member Carol Rupe of Wichita.

Val DeFever, whose last board meeting was Wednesday, said she supported the intent of the changes, but was concerned that the state would not have the revenue.

DeFever, of Independence, and John Bacon of Olathe voted against the changes.

State officials estimate the cost of implementing the additional graduation requirements at \$10 million to \$12 million statewide. They don't have a figure for how much the federal law will increase costs.

Kansas spends \$2.3 billion on public schools, the largest item in the state budget. Funding was reduced by \$17.5 million by Gov. Bill Graves as the state grapples with a potential \$1 billion budget shortfall.

Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius has promised to protect education funding during her administration.

However, most school districts have said they are prepared for further reductions in spending by as much as \$100 to \$300 per student over the next year.

Those reductions, said Jim Garner, superintendent of Kinsley-Officer schools, will make it tougher to maintain existing programs, let alone hire additional science and math teachers. Board member Bill Wagon of To-

peka said the state's changes do not raise the academic bar for students as much as they put the emphasis on a minimum level of competence for all students.

Wamego superintendent Doug Conwell said he agreed with increasing requirements to better prepare students but that the timing is wrong.

"I would hope that if the state does fund this proposal that it does not take away from money already earmarked for schools," Conwell said.

Board member Janet Waugh of Kansas City said the board would have the latitude to extend or cancel the increased requirements or grant waivers to districts if it became apparent that a lack of revenue was impeding implementation.

# Deputy nabs fugitive after wait in dark

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ered to be armed and dangerous and not to approach him.

The search continued through the day with officers from Thomas and Logan County sheriffs' offices, the Oakley and Colby police and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

They were joined by the Colby K-9 unit, officers with thermal imaging cameras, and an airplane from Hays equipped with special sensors.

Officers called back to ask for sandwiches and bottled water so they could continue the search.

The farm was searched, the sheriff said, but Erickson was not found, and both Logan County and Thomas County officers remained in the area into the night.

Jones said Erickson told him this morning that he had been hiding in the hayloft above the barn for a good portion of the time.

The sheriff said the officers had checked the loft and it appeared to be undisturbed.

Because nothing had been found in a search of the loft, the dog was not taken up into the area, which would have been difficult due to the small lad-

der that leads up to it.

The sheriff said Taylor, who had been on scene most of the day, drove back near K-25 and parked with his lights off to watch the countryside.

He saw movement, turned on his light and found Erickson out in front of him.

It was nearly 2 a.m. by the time Erickson was taken to Colby and booked into the Thomas County jail.

"I want to give my highest regards to Deputy Rod Taylor, who had great perseverance," said Jones. "He wasn't going to give up."

Erickson lists no permanent resi-

dence, the sheriff said.

The car he was driving had Indiana plates but was listed as stolen from California.

He is wanted by the U.S. Marshal Service out of Arlington, Va., for a probation violation.

Jones said they have been in contact with that office and will be talking to them again later today.

The Cadillac is being held for processing until it is decided which agency will conduct the investigation.

Charges are being filed in Thomas County for numerous traffic violations and possession of stolen property.

# Judge questions basis for secret sessions

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right to know about the core issues of government.

"We're not talking about planting roses in the garden, but a top-to-bottom review," Merriam said. "How could any issue be more of a core political issue than that?"

But Phillips said the transition office was not an agency as created by legislators.

"It's an association of people sitting in a room," he said.

Phillips also said issuing a temporary injunction compelling the groups to meet in the open served no purpose because the issue will become moot when Sebelius is inaugurated on Jan. 13. She has maintained that the groups would meet in public once she takes office.

Judge Rosen asked Phillips why, if Sebelius is only a private citizen, she was represented by the state.

Phillips said the office took it upon itself to represent Sebelius in order to see that good, talented Kansans are willing to serve government and not be afraid of the legal challenges that may confront them.

The transition office opened on the second floor of the Statehouse

in the days following Sebelius' election. Along with a web site and letterhead, the office has a budget of \$150,000 in state money that is shared with Gov. Bill Graves.

During the 90-minute hearing, the judge heard testimony that the Kansas BEST groups had met 18 times in four weeks. BEST stands for Budget Efficiency Savings Team.

Jeremy Anderson, policy director for the transition office, said the groups had met at the Kansas Corporation Commission and the state historical society offices. He said he helped the team leaders get the initial meetings started and there was limited staff support.

Phillips suggested a ruling in favor of the news organizations would amount to a sweeping expansion in the law that were never intended by the Legislature. He said such broad interpretation could be extended to legal discussions between the governor and attorney general or two workers at a state agency conferring about an issue.

Merriam replied that the law already has for 12 exemptions that allow for closed meetings, including attorney-client privilege.

# Christmas contest has its first \$50 winners

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been ticket numbers in the participating merchants' ads, and the lucky winners who have come to the newspaper office have received \$50 in scrip.

Winners so far are Calli McDaniel, Glenn Phillips, Jay Sharp, Kelly Hillman, Susan Jensen, Chris Westbrook, Cecil Schneider, Jean Halligan and Peggy Adams.

McDaniel got her tickets at Aten Department Store; Phillips got his at Frontier Equity Exchange; Sharp at Dan Brenner Ford; Hillman at Bowman's Heating and Air Conditioning; Jensen at Garia's Home Furnishings and Appliance; Westbrook at Dan



Westbrook



Schneider



Adams

Brenner Ford; Schneider at Medical Arts Pharmacy; Halligan at *The Goodland Daily News* and Adams at Garcia's.

Other participating businesses are American Communications, Hitch-

cock Inc., Mann's Jewelry, Knott Just Books, Goodland Greenline, Bankwest, Jacques' Hallmark, Western State Bank, Picnic in the Park, Grass Roots Lawn Service, Goodland Sheet Metal, Miller's Electronics, Elliott's, Curt's Corner Garage, Peoples State Bank, Eagle Cable Television and El Dorado.

If the last \$50 instant prize isn't claimed during the month, it will be

awarded at the grand prize drawing.

It's simple enough to win, but there are a few rules.

- You must be 18 to participate.
- Employees of participating businesses are not eligible at their workplace, but can collect tickets from other sponsors. *Daily News* employees are not eligible.
- All prizes will be awarded in scrip, which can be spent at participating businesses for good and services, but not for cash.
- The last day to collect tickets is next Thursday, Dec. 19.
- Winners must be present at the grand prize drawing and be able to show their winning ticket.

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