

Oklahoma State Senate

August 25, 2009

Senate Review by Gary Stanislawski

With school starting, I'd like to talk about some important studies taking place that deal with education in our state. Education is very important to our families and the economic health of Oklahoma, which is why we spend a majority of our tax dollars on common and higher education.

We're always looking for ways to improve the state's educational system, which sometimes occurs through new legislation. The way we usually come up with new legislation is through interim studies and task forces.

I am serving on the Legislative Task Force on Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) which is meeting to conduct a comprehensive study of the ACE Act of 2005. This task force will consist solely of legislators who will be looking at various areas to include, end of instruction testing, policies to lower the state's dropout rates, increasing graduation rates and post secondary enrollment and completion. The task force will also be studying ways to better blend and utilize those services offered under Common Education, Career Tech, and Higher Education.

The first two meetings will be held this week on Tuesday, August 25 and Wednesday, August 26. Speakers at the first meeting will include the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sandy Garrett, the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Dr. Phil Berkenbile, and the Chancellor of Higher Education, Glen Johnson. During the second meeting, members will hear from teachers, unions, professional teacher organizations, along with organizations representing school boards and the business community. The task force must file its final report by November 30.

Next month I will begin chairing a task force on Internet based Instruction. The meetings will be held September 10, October 1st, 15th and October 29th possibly November 5, if we need additional time. This task force is simply an effort to ensure that our state's internet-based instruction is as efficient and beneficial to our students as the traditional classroom education. Since this type of education is becoming more and more popular, it is important that we do all we can to make sure students are being held accountable and learning everything they need to through this program.

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Remember, all of these meetings are open to the public. If you are in Oklahoma City on these dates and are interested in these issues, feel free to stop by and sit in on the meetings. Please remember that you can also watch the meetings live from www.oksenate.gov. Simply click on the "Audio/Video" link on the home page and then select Room 419C.

I hope that education in our state is just as important to you as it is to me. I served on the Jenks School Board for nearly eight years, and I am now a member of the Senate Education Committee because I want to do all I can to help ensure that our children are provided with every opportunity to succeed in life. We can do that by constantly working to improve our educational system to meet the needs of our students.

If you have a question or comment about state government, you can contact me by writing to Senator Gary Stanislawski, Room 427A, State Capitol Building, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, or you may call me at (405) 521-5624.

We have created a new website to help keep you informed and help you with issues you may encounter. If you would like me to keep you updated on these and other reform efforts in the Legislature, please e-mail me at Stanislawski@oksenate.gov or visit me on the web at www.GaryStanislawski.net .