

# Bill would increase state aid for gifted children

By Patti Gallagher

The gifted child. One who learns faster, reads earlier, retains more. One who is usually bored by the educational pace in the "regular" classroom. One who needs special programs to encourage his gift.

But for the approximate 12,500 gifted children in Nebraska, the procedure requires a program to operate for a full academic year before receiving state money.

That may change, however, if the Nebraska Legislature approves LB423.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Peter Hoagland of Omaha, would allocate a maximum of \$100 for each gifted child and would establish a separate Gifted Children Education Fund. The aid would still be administered by the State Board of Education, but would be considered separate from other educational aid.

Hoagland introduced an identical bill last session that was killed in the Education Committee. A hearing before the same committee has not been scheduled yet this year for LB423.

The current "after-the-fact" funding, according to Anne Crabbe, supervisor of the Nebraska Association for the Gifted, leaves school districts wondering how much to allocate for gifted programs.

The result is that the majority of schools spend far more than they receive, Crabbe said. If state funds don't cover what was spent the previous year, the programs end up being subsidized by the district itself.

### Two advantages

Although Crabbe said she "can't take sides" in her position, Hoagland's bill has two advantages.

If the proposed funding was fixed at \$100, schools would know in advance how much they were getting, and could set up programs accordingly, Crabbe said.

"It would be considerably more than what they are getting now," she said.

In 1980, the state paid \$413,000 for 1979 programs for the educationally gifted. Divided by the 12,500 considered gifted, each child received about \$33 for special programs.

In the Lincoln schools 2,700 children

were identified as gifted in 1980, said Jody Batten, gifted children consultant for the Lincoln Public Schools.

Lincoln received about \$60,000 from the state for gifted programs, Batten said, bringing the per-student payment to just more than \$22. The state fund was, however, augmented with \$315,000 from the Lincoln district, she said, bringing the total program cost to \$375,000.

The advantage of LB423, according to Batten are at least you'd know how much

you could spend and how much the district would have to spend."

### Present state aid

As it stands now, gifted programs are funded from what is called the "equalization portion" of state aid to education. Crabbe explained that the equalization formula is "designed to bring schools that are not as wealthy up to the level with wealthy schools."

Therefore, Crabbe said, each school—depending on its overall wealth—gets a different amount from the equalization fund. And the fund is not exclusively for the gifted, she said. It is divided among several programs.

Planning programs is difficult, she said, because, "schools do not know from year to year how much they can expect."

The problem is further complicated because the funding is actually a reimbursement. A school district considering a special program for a gifted child must first file a letter of intent with Crabbe, then conduct the program for a full year. The program is then evaluated by Crabbe.

She then makes a recommendation to the State Board of Education if a child should be considered gifted. The actual amount of reimbursement, however, is out of Crabbe's hands. It is decided by the board through the state aid to education formula.

There is no way to determine the cost of completed programs, according to Crabbe, nor any way to determine if the district is being under- or overpaid.

"The dilemma," she said, "is that they (the programs) can be virtually costless or they can be very costly. Some programs are within the class, but some kids are pulled out."



# Nebraska's 'Guard' leads in recruitment growth

By Hollie Wieland

The Nebraska National Guard's man power has grown to the highest level ever in a non-draft atmosphere, Major Bob Robeson said.

Nebraska leads all other states in such growth during the past two years, said Robeson, the state recruiting and retention manager for the National Guard.

More than 75 percent of National Guard members are using the 75 percent paid college tuition option, which

seems to be a definite attraction, Robeson said.

The Army Guard division is presently operating at 87.7 percent of its authorized statewide strength, he said, and the Air Guard is operating at close to 93 percent of its authorized strength.

The National Guard has not had this level of manpower since June of 1976, following the Vietnam war, Robeson said.

Several reasons can explain the growth in strength Robeson said.

"We like to think it is because of a new patriotism among Nebraskans, but there are probably some other factors," he said.

Another possible reason for growth could be the fact that economic problems have caused fewer job openings, he said.

"Since the Vietnam era, we have a new generation of young people," Robeson said, adding that these people seem to be aware that a community-based organization can offer education and experience.

"We are looking for 90 percent authorized statewide strength in two or three months," Robeson said.

Recruitment is the Guard's number one goal, he said.

Along with the growth in strength comes a growth in federal funds, allowing the Guard to offer more benefits to its members, Robeson said.

Less than 600 Nebraska positions are open in the Army Guard division, he said.



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