

SENATOR CONWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. The amendment that I offer to you is basically and simply, if you go to the green copy, is basically to reinstate the language of the formulas that we had created two years ago under LB 89. We have to go back to why did we support LB 89, and some of us wrestled with that very question, but in almost every case, the whole idea was the concept of incentives, the incentive to try to see that the teachers salaries were more competitive on a national basis on terms of the average, so, therefore, there was a pool of more money there, that we also knew that many of the school districts, by virtue of their property tax burdens, just were not able to bring to that level. We also had incentives that were concerned with the academic progress. If you go back to and read through your old files on LB 89, you'd see a lot of talk about how we need to do more to try to entice our professional educators to reach for advanced degrees and get more involved academically, and this may also be a pool of money that not only will there be incentive in terms of giving them higher rates for a master's degree plus, but also a situation by having the more money that those that didn't have a master's degree would have maybe a little easier time economically to be able to go and pursue it. So that was what some of that incentive and some of that bonus money was all dedicated to, and we had these lofty goals. We also had lofty goals associated with incentive to attract our brightest and our best people who are not in the profession now. In fact, many of us from time to time, I think, in that debate said things like this really isn't necessarily for the teachers that are there now, but we need to work on this because we are losing ground and we need to have a profession that is remunerated in such a fashion that it is not a deterrent to go into education, but we have our best people going in then. Now we are down to the bill where all that language is gone in terms of those incentives. We were going to have an incentive to try and get the minimum salaries up, and we were not going to give a school system and reward a school system for having low salaries by turning around and having us subsidize their incompetence, their inefficiencies, their justification, whatever that may be, for not having their salaries up at some minimal level. We also found we had a long protracted debate associated with that that a comment was made that a lot of the schools couldn't afford to have a salary threshold of 16,000 or 17, they just didn't have the money, and what we found was an inverse relationship in the studies that those school systems who were paying the least most often had