

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 27, 2000 LB 812

SENATOR BOHLKE: Thank you, Mr. President and members. And to you students in the balconies, it's an interesting time for you to be visiting the Legislature because this bill that we're talking about talks about standards in your classroom and about doing a statewide test for students, a test where you would have to write and that writing would be graded at three different grade levels, and then it would compare students in York, Seward, Lexington, Hastings, all across our state on how they were doing. The part that we're debating right now, Senator Beutler is wanting to mandate the standards to schools, and I...I had said to Senator Beutler if I were on the State Board of Education, and I wasn't, I would have thought mandating the standards would have been the best course to follow. But I did not run for the State Board of Education, have not served on the State Board of Education, and that is not the policy issue that they followed or the direction that they went. Which brings us back to what I was saying before lunch. The State Board of Education sets the policy. However, we, in the Legislature, who fund the schools, do have as our responsibility the accountability of schools and I believe that the writing assessment, one writing assessment statewide with the report card, meets our responsibility as far as being accountable with the public as to how our schools are doing. I believe, whether you mandate the standards and how clear they are or specific they are is a division of not the proper role for the Legislature but for the State Board of Education. And I think that's really at issue when we vote for or against the Beutler amendment, and I think it's one that it's good to debate it because I think it's always good to review those things. My personal opinion is that that is the function of the State Board of Education. We may not always agree with the decisions of another elective body, but, as I've said, the main concern of the Education Committee was accountability with the public. The report card and the writing assessment do that. The standards and how specific they are and if they are mandated I believe remain...should remain in the arena of the State Board of Education. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Bohlke. Senator Tyson, the Beutler amendment.