

Pawnee City Supt. Testifies at Education Committee Hearing

(KTNC) - The Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee has been meeting around the state, hearing from people about the formula used to fund K-12 education in the state.

One of the people who testified at the committee's hearing in Omaha earlier this month was Pawnee City Superintendent Stephen Grizzle.

Grizzle says he had never testified before a legislative panel before. But he says it was important for committee members to hear the perspective of a small school district that relies increasingly less on state aid and more on local property taxes for funding. He says local property tax payers are paying a greater percentage of the district's budget than they did when he became Superintendent five years ago.

Five years ago, he says state aid accounted for 31-percent of the district's budget and property taxes accounted for about the same amount. Today, he says state aid is about 26-percent while property taxes are 48-percent. More than 100 school districts in Nebraska receive no state aid. In that same five years, Grizzle says property valuations have increased by 61-percent in the Pawnee City School District.

Grizzle says it was a good experience to testify before the committee about the need for small school districts in the state to receive state funding.

Grizzle doesn't foresee the legislature making great changes to the state aid formula in the upcoming session, though he says they may make some minor tweaks to the formula.

Grizzle says committee members asked him whether he thought Pawnee City taxpayers would support a levy for the district's Early Childhood pre-school program. He says the district's Early Childhood program has been self-funded for the last two or three years, so he felt they would support the program.