



K-12 Education

Maintaining the strong tradition of excellence in Minnesota's schools is one of my top priorities. The future of our state is shaped by the education we provide our children today. The importance of education in Minnesota can be seen through its share of the budget. Nearly 37% percent of general fund money is allocated, on a biennial basis, to K-12 education. There is always room for improvement, however, and for this reason I support a number of initiatives which would ensure our education system is second to none.

The first of these initiatives is simple. The era of exploding state revenues and automatic funding increases across the board is over. We, as a state, need to determine what areas are most important to us and fund them accordingly. By budgeting on priority order, we can ensure the most important budget areas receive full funding. I support all efforts to implement this style of budgeting and making K-12 education funding the first priority to receive funding.

Increasing funding to schools is not the only, or necessarily the best, way to improve our schools. We also need to look at raising standards, focusing on innovation and allowing more local control. These go hand-in-hand. Giving school districts to have more control allows them to be more responsive to the needs of students. Local control also spawns innovation, as teachers are able to find the most effective way to educate children rather than being forced to follow a formula. By raising standards teachers are incentivized to utilize these new methods of education to engage children in the learning process. The results are higher test scores, smarter children and a bright future for Minnesota.

One way to pursue innovation, and local control, is through alternative teacher licensure. By allowing school districts to get licensing professionals in their area of expertise to teach, our children will be educated by someone who knows exactly what knowledge is necessary. This is not to suggest training is not necessary. We cannot, however, continue to stand in the way of educated individuals who want to impart their knowledge on our children.

Alternative teacher licensure will also allow rural and underserved school districts to hire teachers more quickly. Successful programs such as Teach for America would be able to

expand throughout Minnesota. Underserved school districts would benefit by having educated and intelligent young people from across the country bring their experiences and methods to the classroom.

We owe it to the children of Minnesota to do everything possible to provide a top flight education. We need to budget education first to make sure our school districts have the funding necessary to do their job. We should implement alternative teacher licensure to get real life experience and introduce innovative teaching methods into the classroom. While there is no magic wand to turn around struggling schools, by setting priorities and implement reforms we can get them started in the right direction. Our children deserve nothing less.