

Removal of Teaching Standards Fires Up Folks

Written by Kathleen Vinehout, State Senator 31st District
Monday, 01 June 2015 11:17

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/teaching-students-s5.jpg>



Last week, the Joint Finance Committee took action to strip away teacher standards, leaving education leaders and state citizens up in arms and more concerned than ever about the future of education in Wisconsin. Senator Vinehout writes about the importance of highly qualified teachers and calls on the public to contact legislators about this issue.

MADISON - "I'm counting on you," Tracy from Mondovi wrote me.

"The architects of the Joint Finance Committee's education budget package wrongly assumes that anyone can teach by allowing those with minimal qualifications and little more than a high school diploma to educate our children. Their action will degrade the quality of teaching in Wisconsin and represents a race to the bottom."

Tracy was one of many constituents who recently contacted me about a big change in the state's teaching standards.

In late night budget action, after freezing the school revenue limit and allowing no increase in aid, the Republican majority voted to strip away teaching standards.

As State Superintendent Tony Evers described in his statement, the changes "would require the Department of Public Instruction to license anyone with a bachelor's degree in any subject to teach English, social studies, mathematics, and science." Private schools or public schools would decide "that the individual is proficient and has relevant experience in each subject they teach."

In addition, the state would be required to issue a teaching permit for "individuals who have not earned a bachelor's degree, or potentially a high school diploma, to teach in any subject area,

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excluding the core subjects of mathematics, English, science, and social studies. The only requirement would be that the public school or district or private voucher school determines that the individual is proficient and has relevant experience in the subject they intend to teach.”

At the heart of this proposal is a complete disregard for the profession of teaching.

Proponents of this proposal assume that because you know something, you can also teach it. Any parent who has tried to assist a child with their math homework knows there is a big difference between knowing and teaching a subject.

Teaching shapes young minds for future learning. A great teacher has an impact on a youngster that lasts a lifetime. A poor teacher can have the same effect. The fifty-something who says “I can’t do math” might have been told as a youngster “you can’t do math.”

Learning comes differently to each of us. Part of the process of teaching is finding the unique learning style of each child and tailoring the lesson to allow each child to succeed. Knowing the content is the beginning, not the end of teacher education.

It’s been a long time since I took college classes to be educated as a teacher. But the lessons I learned follow me into every town hall meeting.

I thank the professors in the School of Education for the lessons they instilled in my intensive two-year teacher-training program. What I do in a public setting is effective because I consciously put in practice what I learned long ago.

Teachers know it is not just what you know but how you act that makes the difference for students mastering new knowledge or entirely turning off to a subject.

As Mr. Ryan, from Prescott, wrote to me, “Education preparation includes not only the history and psychology of education over time, it also includes opportunities for aspiring professionals

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to learn best practices, current theory, apply and collect data to develop proven methods, and much more. Moreover, it includes the most important aspect...live, in-person, human interaction and collaboration, ...with all the attention placed on accountability, why in the world would legislation be put forth that moves the state of Wisconsin to the back of the line in terms of teacher training and preparation?"

Why indeed? Do we want Wisconsin to lead the nation in a lack of standards for teachers? International research tells us high standards for teachers and intensive teacher education result in the best outcome for students.

We need a widespread public outcry to stop what's happening in this budget.

As Tracy told me, "I'm counting on you." But to stop the race to the lowest standards and below national average funding for local schools, I need Republican legislator's votes. They need to recognize, as the Pepin Superintendent wrote, "No one who votes for this budget can claim to support public schools."

Everyone in Wisconsin has a stake in providing the best education possible for the generations to come. Now is the time to get involved. Your grandchild's future depends on your action.

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