

KING FOR HOUSE! Position Paper on Education 6 July 2010

Since 1984, I have taught full time in colleges and universities, mostly at St. Cloud State University. In addition, I am director of the Center for Economic Education at SCSU, which provides programs for teaching economics to K-12 teachers in Central Minnesota.

My understanding of what happens in our classrooms is rooted in my work.

It's been a privilege to meet some great teachers in Minnesota. Most teachers are effective, work hard and have the best interests of their students at heart. There are poor teachers, to be sure, but no more than poor managers in retail stores, or any other profession.

Our test scores on national tests are very good, yet we see dissatisfaction on many levels. I notice that, despite the good test scores, we find fewer and fewer students truly prepared for college. Once I looked at the rate of enrollment in two remedial courses in mathematics we teach at SCSU and almost a third of our entering class had to enroll in one or the other. These courses are those that the student was supposed to take in high school. Basic algebra and algebra II courses that are retaken at SCSU cost students and taxpayers extra because we are both paying for something twice.

By my estimate, taxpayers paid, in one semester, almost \$650,000 for fixing the math problem high school left behind.

The same is true in English classes. We see poor writing in many places. Overall, 29% of students entering one of our four-year state institutions need some kind of remediation, according to [a MnSCU report](#). Unfortunately, those students were not given the signal that their skills were not good enough. According to the same MnSCU report, 30% of those students who took a remedial course had a 3.0 grade point average from their high school.

So, how can I help?

1. I will support alternative teacher licensure so that more people can combine life experience and training in order to become licensed as a teacher in Minnesota. However, there must be good training of those in alternative licensure programs; I believe traditional teacher education programs can provide fast-track programs for teachers in alternative licensure.
2. I will support accountability measures for teachers and principals with the added requirement that the scoring of principals will follow them from school to school. Schools with good principals will attract good teachers, and produce better results.
3. Studies on early childhood education show that they are of benefit to children from distressed family backgrounds, particularly in closing the achievement gap between students of color and white students. But untargeted spending on early childhood education, such as universal kindergarten, does not seem to help. I will support targeted early childhood education programs, but I will not support more universal programs.

4. I will support maintaining our system of charter schools, as part of our state's great tradition of public school choice. While Minnesota provides an education credit, it should also provide a means for lower-income families to make meaningful choices for where their children attend school.

5. Nebraska and Oklahoma have recently enacted programs that give individuals, families and businesses to receive a tax credit for contributions to scholarship programs for children from lower-income families to attend private schools. In Nebraska the program is projected to save that state \$51 million over ten years, all of which went to public schools. I will propose similar legislation for Minnesota. (Background on Nebraska law [here](#).)