

Dear Fellow School Psychologists:

Let me begin this report by alerting you to some education bills which may have interest for you..

HF NO. 194 would repeal the Labor Day school start provisions.

HF No. 195 would modify the Labor Day school start provisions for two years.

HF No. 320 would allow school districts to pay the cost of a criminal background check on its employees.

HF No. 641 would create an Office of Early Learning.

HF No. 645 would require high school students to have education and career plans.

HF No. 664 would create model curriculum for mental health.

HF No. 673 would required statewide academic standards for physical education.

HF No. 679 would require schools to notify the parent of a student who bullies another student.

SF No. 660 would appropriate money for the statewide science, technology, engineering and math initiative.

HF No. 613 would enable school districts to focus on delivering academic services by transferring responsibilities for noncurricular athletic and fine arts activities for youth from school distircts to local governments.

HF No.614 would direct the state of Minnesota to stop implementing the No Child Left Behind Act.

SF No. 498 would permit 9th and 10th grade students to participate in college in the schools programs.

SF No. 529 would establish a grant program to help communities promote, practice, cultivate positive child and youth development.

SF 553 would require public school students to complete service learning hours as a condition of graduating from high school.

SF 514 would, among other things, for the school years 2010 and 2011, allow school districts to use safe schools levy funds for general education revenue. If you remember, these were funds which last session legislation was passed which indicated that a certain percent of these funds must be used for funding student support services.

SF No 19 would increase the compulsory attendance age.

SF No. 405 would create an alternative means of graduation of students.

Committee hearings recently have been held which dealt with alternative paths to teacher licensure, normal paths to teacher licensure, K-12 testing, a report on how Minnesota students are doing with respect to TIMMS, Q Comp., racial disparities in education achievement in Minnesota. The governor has come forth with a program called U Teach which would hopefully get more math and science teachers into the classroom; and a program called SMART which is a one-year teacher training program designed for mid-career changes. He is also promoting the Teacher Transformation Act which would, in essence, ramp up the standards to become a teacher in Minnesota.

In the committee session on testing the presenters were Dr. Yeh from UM, Dr. Mattson from the Department of Education and Peter Olson-Skog from the Roseville Area Schools. Dr. Yeh indicated that H.R. 655 (federal legislation) would permit fully adaptive tests for federal accountability purposes; that Oregon has implemented USDOE-approved partially adaptive testing; that Minnesota could implement partially-adaptive testing and, potentially, fully-adaptive testing. He indicated that there is need to improve student achievement-not just measure it; He stated that rapid classroom assessment systems provide the biggest bang for the buck.

Dr. Mattson traced the history of state assessments, spending over the last ten years, current spending, per test costs of current programming. He spoke to designing the MCA III, allowing students to be tested when they are ready rather than all on a certain date and time, different approaches to college and career ready assessment, the advantages and disadvantages of comprehensive end-of-grade tests and end-of-course tests.

Mr. Olson-Skog spoke to what state testing requirements mean to an individual school district, specifically in terms of costs. In summary, it was significant time and money. Each school in the district added a computer lab just to be able to handle testing requirements.

In terms of cost, I believe it was stated that the Department of Education in 2000 had five individuals involved with testing. Now it is 25. The cost figure for testing for the Department of Education is in the twenty plus million dollar range currently.

Finally, a professor from Michigan State came to speak to both the House and Senate Education Committees regarding results on the TIMMS tests between 1995 and 2007. Minnesota students have greatly improved in math at the fourth and eighth grade levels. Science ranking is about the same between 1995 and 2007. He attributed the math gains to curricular coherence, curricular focus and curricular rigor. He suggested that science is harder to show the improvement shown in math because it is not as tightly structured, there are more areas to cover.

That, in summary, is much of what has been happening in K-12 education at the legislature since my last report.

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