



Education Policy

Every child deserves the opportunity to start school and graduate from school prepared to succeed. Toward that end, I will fight for more state education funding for District 16 schools. I will advocate for educational opportunity for all of our children. They are our future.

My first priority is providing all school districts in Legislative District 16 a fair share of state aid to education. Most districts don't receive it now, because the state aid formula is biased against small and midsize districts with significant farmland. Last school year, eight of the nine schools in Burt, Cuming and Washington Counties received no equalization aid – the primary form of state funding for schools.

To change that, I will fight for new funding streams that benefit all schools, including small town schools with significant farmland. For example, the state could cover all or a greater portion of the cost of providing special education. Or, the state could provide all schools an additional per student payment. Either approach would help our small town schools and lower property taxes by reducing reliance on them.

More Options for Small Town Schools

Many small communities have faced the difficult decision of whether to consolidate schools in the face of declining enrollments and rising per pupil costs.

Decisions about whether to consolidate schools should be made locally, to reflect local circumstances, needs and preferences. The best role for the state is providing communities with additional options for increasing educational opportunities and improving efficiency.

I will promote legislation to create an incentive fund for innovative, cross district collaboration. The fund could be used to broaden offerings and improve efficiency by jointly delivering new courses to students using online delivery and other approaches. This can be particularly valuable in achieving greater cost effectiveness in higher level courses with a small number of students.

The fund could be used for formal affiliation agreements to share a superintendent to reduce per pupil administrative costs. It could foster sharing of sports programs and facilities, to reduce costs, broaden offerings and reduce demands for new facilities.



College and Career Readiness

The potential for cross district collaboration is illustrated by Pathways 2 Tomorrow, a collaboration of Educational Service Unit 2, Wayne State College, Northeast Community College and eight northeast Nebraska schools. The program offers career and technical education including training in computer science, health science, residential construction and education. It hopes to add programs in agriculture and transportation.

Career and technical education is a critical need that must be addressed in Nebraska. None of the schools participating in *Pathways 2 Tomorrow* could cost effectively meet the need on their own. But by joining together, they are opening new career opportunities and good jobs for their students, as they help strengthen the rural economy by providing better prepared employees.

I also strongly support dual credit courses, through which students earn both high school and college credits. Dual credit opens the door to higher education and can lower college costs and future college debt for students.

Early Childhood Education

I will champion state support for our school's efforts to provide preschool programs. And I will seek tax credits to make high-quality daycare affordable to modest income working families.

Both are critical to children who otherwise may not get what they need in the early years, whether it is because their families don't have access to affordable high quality day care or because of issues within the family.

When children don't get what they need in the early years, they start kindergarten far behind and in many instances never catch up. When those children face failure in their early school years, it can lead to a destructive pattern of giving up and rebelling. In some instances, the pattern continues throughout life. Ultimately, we all pay more for special education in our schools and prisons and public assistance for those who never get on the right track.

Every dollar we spend well to prepare children for success saves several dollars down the road addressing failure. It provides long term savings to taxpayers. We cannot afford not to invest in proven, cost effective early childhood education.

Strong schools, strong communities and strong families are the foundation for a strong Nebraska