

South Dakota Investing in Teachers

A closer look at the Governor's
proposal to reform K-12 education

Is merit pay effective?

- Merit pay is a key element of Daugaard's "South Dakota Investing in Teachers" initiative.
- This plan would reward the top 20% of teachers within a given district with a \$5,000 bonus.
- There is little, if any, evidence that merit pay produces any statistically relevant change in student achievement.
- There is abundant research indicating that merit pay plans do not increase student achievement.
- At a Town Hall meeting in Brookings on January 20, the Governor cited a merit pay plan in Tennessee in support of his proposal.
- A Google search turns up only one merit pay plan in Tennessee. The plan was implemented in Nashville. A recent article in *USA Today* indicates that this plan failed to produce positive outcomes.
- http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-09-21-merit-pay_N.htm

Does merit pay promote student achievement?

- The Governor's proposal does not tie merit pay to student achievement. It ties merit pay to teacher evaluations.
- The top 20% of teachers within a district would get the bonus, regardless of student achievement.
- In theory, every student in the Brookings School District could be failing, and 20% of our teachers would still receive bonuses.
- Conversely, 100% of our students could be excelling, and we would still only award bonuses to one out of every five teachers.
- Dugaard's plan does not reward teachers for student achievement. It awards teachers for competing with, rather than collaborating with each other.
- A plan truly aimed at student achievement would set benchmarks for student achievement and reward **EVERY** teacher who hit those benchmarks.

Is the methodology valid?

- The Governor proposes using the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching as a primary tool for determining which of our teachers receive merit pay.
- Per a recent interview published in *Education Week*, Danielson herself is opposed to the Framework for Teaching being used for these purposes.
- http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2011/06/straight_up_conversation_teacher_eval_guru_charlotte_danielson.html

Is the number one factor the only factor?

- At a Town Hall meeting in Brookings on January 20, Daugaard stated that the number one factor in student achievement is having an excellent teacher. He did not cite a source for this claim.
- Governor Daugaard quoted in January 14 article in the *Yankton Press & Dakotan*
“I don’t promise that this is the answer,” he continued. “I don’t promise that it will succeed. **I do observe that the current system isn’t working**, regardless of the fact that we’ve invested quite a bit more money into it. Simply putting more money into it hasn’t worked. **I believe a more targeted approach designed to target the single factor in school that research shows makes the difference, investing in great teachers**, I think has a good shot at moving our achievement bar.”
- Even if effective teachers are the number one factor in student achievement, it is dangerous to equate this to being the only factor in student achievement.
- For example, there is ample research supporting the link between smaller class size and increased student achievement.

One example: <http://www.education.com/magazine/article/child-class-big/>

Factors (continued)

- Our class sizes at the K-5 level have crept into the mid 20's due to the cuts in education funding. In grades 6-12, those numbers are even higher.
- Yankton cut 34 positions this year, Watertown cut 27 positions.
- Based on current funding from the State, Brookings is 2 – 3 years from having to make similar staffing cuts.
- Combined with projected student population growth, class sizes in Brookings will jump into the mid 30's if we are forced to make those cuts.
- Even great teachers will not likely be able to overcome these class sizes

A deeper look at the NAEP scores.

- The Governor has repeatedly (Town Hall meeting in Brookings, multiple newspaper citations, Argus Leader Editorial Board) cited South Dakota's drop in NAEP rankings from 2003-2011 as proof that the current system is not working and that his proposal is needed.
- South Dakota's drop in the NAEP rankings follows a corollary drop in per pupil spending rankings.
 - South Dakota was 39th in per pupil spending in 2004.
 - South Dakota dropped to 42nd in per pupil spending in 2009.
 - 0% increase in education funding in 2010
 - 8.6% decrease in education funding in 2011
 - it is likely that we have dropped even further in per pupil spending.

<http://febp.newamerica.net/k12>

A deeper look (continued)

- Fourth grade results:
- In 2003, only one state with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in math (North Carolina).
- No states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in reading.
- South Dakota ranked 18th in math and 14th in reading.
- In 2011, only three states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in math (North Carolina, Utah, Texas).
- Three states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in reading (North Carolina, Idaho, Utah).
- South Dakota ranked 25th in math and 34th in reading.

A deeper look (continued)

- Eighth grade results:
- In 2003, zero states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in math.
- Zero states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in reading.
- South Dakota ranked 7th in math and 5th in reading.
- In 2011, zero states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in math.
- Zero states with lower average per pupil spending ranked higher in reading.
- South Dakota ranked 9th in math and 13th in reading.

A deeper look (continued)

- There does not appear to be any evidence that any of the states that surpassed South Dakota in the NAEP rankings, in any of the four categories, has implemented a statewide merit pay plan.
- A total of 24 states surpassed SD in at least one NAEP category.
 - 19 spent more than SD per-pupil to begin with and continue to spend more
 - 1 spent less per-pupil to begin with and now outspends SD
 - 2 spent less per-pupil to begin with and continue to spend less now.
- 117 (out of 416) aggregate states ranked higher in NAEP scores across the four categories
 - 7 states had lower average per pupil spending.
 - 110 states had higher average per pupil spending.

A deeper look (continued)

- In 4th grade, there were 7 aggregate states that achieved higher NAEP scores with lower average per pupil spending.
 - North Carolina X3, Utah X2, Texas, and Idaho
- By 8th grade, South Dakota had surpassed all of them.
 - 4th grade: South Dakota trailed by an aggregate 64 places in the rankings
 - 8th grade: South Dakota led by an aggregate 90 places in the rankings

NAEP Results

- [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#)

Is K-12 education properly funded?

- In an Editorial Board with the *Argus Leader* last week, Daugaard states:
 - K-12 education in South Dakota is not under-funded.

<http://www.argusleader.com/section/VIDEONETWORK?bctid=1405197102001>
- Daugaard consistently makes an apples to oranges comparison in justifying his plan.
 - NAEP scores in comparison with other states
 - Education spending data isolated from other states
- Using the Governor's standard of NAEP scores, combined with nationwide per-pupil spending, it is difficult to argue that any other state produces better results with less funding.
- The data suggests that we don't score as well in 4th grade, but we make substantial gains by the time our students reach 8th grade.

Properly funded (continued)

- There does not appear to be any data suggesting that merit pay produces increased student achievement.
- There is substantial data suggesting that smaller class sizes produce greater results.
 - This is not the only factor, perhaps not even the most significant factor, but it is a major factor.
- Our education system isn't broken. It's under-funded.

Summary

- Data does not support effectiveness of merit pay.
- The proposed plan does not promote student achievement.
- The proposed plan assumes that exactly 20% of teachers in a given district are excellent, regardless of outcomes.
- The author of the Framework for Teaching opposes use of her model for merit pay.
- Great teachers are a significant factor in student achievement. They are not the only factor.
- Even great teachers cannot overcome projected class sizes. How will the other 80% fare?
- The Governor compares national NAEP trends to isolated spending data, creating a false perception that K-12 education in South Dakota is broken.
- When comparing apples to apples (both our test results versus other states and our per-pupil spending versus other states) it is difficult to conclude that our current system is anything less than excellent when it comes to K-12 education in South Dakota.

Conclusion

- Based upon the data presented, we believe that investing in the base formula, with enough money to reduce K-5 class sizes in **EVERY** district to less than 20 students per-class, will produce significantly greater results than any merit pay plan will produce.