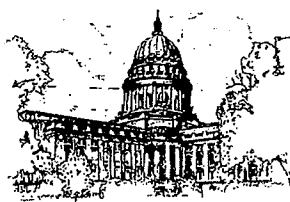


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November 9, 2012

Sen. Luther Olsen, Chair
Special Committee on
Improving Educational
Opportunities in High School
123 South, State Capitol

Rep. Paul Farrow, Vice-Chair
Special Committee on
Improving Educational
Opportunities in High School
105 West, State Capitol

Dear Sen. Olsen and Rep. Farrow:

I was unable to complete the on-line survey within the two-day timeframe. Please accept this letter as my response to your request for ideas on the direction the Special Committee should take.

From my perspective, the overarching challenge that the committee is addressing is how to help school districts put students on pathways that lead to successful careers, with special attention to careers that meet the needs of Wisconsin employers. The committee focused on the shortage of people who have the knowledge and skills to fill advanced manufacturing jobs. Another emphasis was on steering more students into science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) fields.

As we heard from testimony, many school districts have implemented innovative approaches to career guidance and career/technical education. However, we also heard that some school districts are cutting guidance counselors and technical education as part of cost-cutting measures. I believe we should draw on the best practices of school districts that are ahead of the curve in these areas and encourage other school districts to catch up.

In light of these identified challenges, here are my recommendations:

Statutorily modify Employment for Education to accomplish the following goals:

- **Embed career guidance into every classroom and every course.** Teachers should regularly talk to students about how the knowledge and skills gained in each class apply to jobs that are available and in demand in the job market.

Administrators, support staff, and others should talk to students about careers. This responsibility should not be left solely to guidance counselors.

- **Encourage an individualized academic and career plan for each student (Item B1).** The DPI has established a website, www.wicareerpathways.org, but it is not clear how many students, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and others are using this tool to help students choose a career path and achieve their goals. The plan will evolve as the student progresses and fine-tunes. Teachers, parents and counselors will all have access to the student's academic and career plan and help advise the student.
- **Prevent the "senior slide"** by encouraging seniors to earn technical college or college credits through existing channels or new channels.

Request an audit by the Legislative Audit Bureau of the following initiatives: Technical Preparation Program, Education for Employment, Youth Options, Youth Apprenticeship, and articulation agreements between students and technical colleges or universities. I believe we need to have more solid information on how well these initiatives help school districts achieve the goal of putting children on successful career pathways, especially in high-demand jobs. The audit should also report on initiatives created at the local level beyond the above listed initiatives. The audit should evaluate how well these initiatives are achieving their goals, and recommend changes to improve and streamline these initiatives. The audit should determine how well utilized the WiCareerPathways website is. Finally, the audit should ask which school districts require individual learning/academic/career plans for every student.


Continue the work of the Special Committee in future sessions. Based on the findings of the audit, develop legislation to consolidate and streamline the above initiatives and to increase awareness among students, parents, and teachers of the options for technical education.

Encourage greater regional cooperation, especially among rural and less-wealthy school districts so they can adopt some of the approaches that have been demonstrated to be successful.

Endorse Tony Evers' proposal to require the ACT suite of tests.

Thank you for considering my recommendations, and I look forward to the discussion at our November 19 meeting.

Sincerely,


Tim Cullen
State Senator

TC:kf