

In a recent interview with the Argus Leader published on October 24, 2014, South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard expressed some views that the South Dakota School Superintendents Association (SDSSA) would like to address. The Governor said, "I think our goal in education should be student achievement. It should not be expenditure I think compensation does attract quality. You can't say that you won't obtain quality without high compensation. I was just at O'Gorman. The teachers at O'Gorman are paid, as a group, less than the Sioux Falls School District. Their students achieve better The state doesn't control teacher pay. To point the finger at the state and say you are the problem here, it just, it's not accurate. If (school districts) want to spend more money for teacher pay, that's what they can do."

We agree that the goal of education is student achievement, not expenditure. However, as research clearly shows, the role of the teacher is crucial to high student achievement, and, if we want higher student achievement, we need to expend a little more to recruit and retain more quality teachers. As with other areas of workforce development in our state, low wages have impacted the number of available workers in general, and specifically, a shortage of teachers in our schools.

We agree that compensation does attract quality. As with all workforce development, on average, higher wages tend to attract a higher quality of worker—see healthcare, corporate America, Main Street South Dakota, and education. We recognize that internal motivation, a positive workplace environment, job satisfaction, and being appreciated for the job one does, all add to an entities' ability to attract quality employees, but we all understand that higher wages attract quality candidates.

We agree that one cannot simply say quality won't be obtained without high compensation, it can be. We see that every day with our teachers in South Dakota schools. Despite the fact that they are largely underpaid and often underappreciated, most of our teachers deliver quality every single day.

As an association, SDSSA salutes the work of the private schools in our state. The students and staff at these schools should be recognized for the great work that they do. Most of them are quality schools and do a great job of educating students and preparing them for the future.

SDSSA does not believe comparing student achievement at private schools with student achievement in public schools and relating that to teacher pay is a valid comparison. There are a number of contributing factors that play a role in student achievement and many of those are different in a private school and a public school. Factors that impact student achievement that often differ include socioeconomic status, free and reduced lunch rates, the number of students who qualify for special education, and the number of students with limited English proficiency. We embrace these differences found in schools and welcome the opportunities and challenges they afford us. We would point out that we have many truly outstanding teachers in both the private schools and the public schools in South Dakota, and by any measurement, neither group is adequately compensated.

It is correct that the state doesn't control teacher pay. Salaries and benefits are set by local school boards. The state does, however, clearly control the amount of revenue that a district receives

annually based on the number of students enrolled. SDSSA would argue, as it has for years, the state per student allocation is too low and needs to be increased. In fact, the state per student allocation is still lower than it was in 2011 when it was reduced to address the state's budget deficit.

We believe that most school districts do want to spend more money for teacher pay, but because each local school district has unique needs, that looks different from one district to another. Each school board must consider their situation and allocate money for staff compensation accordingly. The reality is that many schools in South Dakota simply cannot spend money they do not have.

**DAN LEIKVOLD, 2014-2015 PRESIDENT,
SOUTH DAKOTA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION**