

Open letter sent by Dixie Allen, Vice Chair, State Board of Education, District 14 to Utah Senator Howard Stephenson:



Senator Stephenson,

Over the past several years, I have told my friends and colleges that if you only give Senator Stephenson the facts that he will make wise decisions. The last two statements from you about grading schools and firing teachers makes me wonder if you understand the facts.

The quality of the teachers in the field of public education in Utah has very little to do with the actual teachers in the field. The quality of the teaching force in America today and in Utah has everything to do with the value we place on the profession and the importance of education to our children, ourselves and our state and nation. Countries around the world are outpacing us in education -- because we as a state and nation have chosen to not value education and our teachers to the same level as other nations, who understand that being educated makes for a stronger individual, a stronger workforce and a stronger nation.

The quality of teacher in our classrooms has everything to do with the working environment we give to teachers, the autonomy of the educational direction of their classrooms, and the freedom of and perceived support of their profession by the "American Dream" ---" your worth as demonstrated by what you are paid". The quality of teacher in our classrooms today are a product of less pay, less control and more oversight. The quality of teacher in the classrooms today is a product of the loss of the captive workforce of educated women who in the past could not get high paying jobs in the corporate world -- but who now can choose to work where they are paid well.

Who of our current and future generations will want to go into education and stay in the classroom given the support both monetarily and creatively that we now give our teachers? Certainly not our best and brightest.

We must find ways to honor, appreciate and support quality teachers and keep them in the classroom. The duty of you and I is not to figure out how to fire teachers -- but how to keep them working effectively in the classrooms. It is our job to figure out how to properly fund education so that the teachers in the classroom know they are valued and that their job is one of the most important professions in the society. It is our responsibility to assure that the best and the brightest of the next generation wants to enter the "ageless profession" of teaching.

For those who think the corporate model of education, which defines our educational

system similar to other assembly line professions, will improve our educational standing in the world -- they must know that they are wrong. Education is a human experience with no common commodity to produce -- but a myriad of exciting possibilities for the complete range of individuals who make up our society -- an educated society.

I hope that you will join me in promoting an educational system that is valued and supported.

Dixie Allen

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"Education is the greatest equalizer!"